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# Trends in EU funding for CSOs: who still holds the lion's share?

9 April 2026

*This webinar is organised as part of CONCORD's Meaningful Engagement Project  
[visit our resources here](#)*






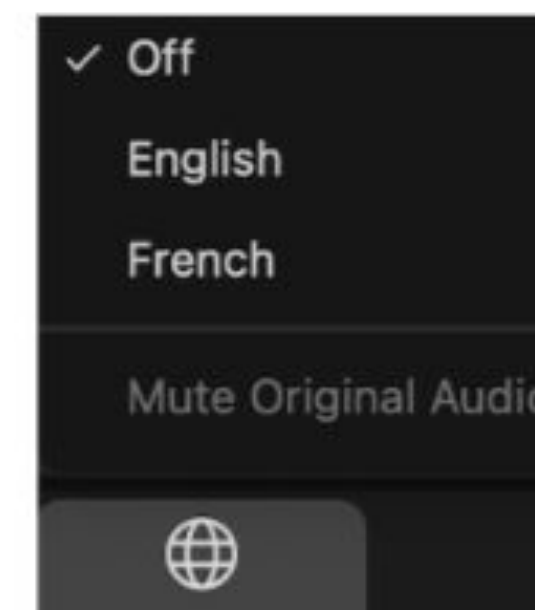
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# Housekeeping

-  This meeting will be **simultaneously interpreted** in **English, Spanish & French**. Please click on the globe button to select the language in which you would like to listen to this meeting.
-  Cette réunion sera **interprétée simultanément** en **français, anglais et espagnol**. Veuillez cliquer sur le bouton en forme de globe pour sélectionner la langue dans laquelle vous souhaitez écouter cette réunion.
-  Esta reunión será **interpretada simultáneamente** en **español, francés e inglés**. Haga clic en el botón con forma de globo terráqueo para seleccionar el idioma en el que desea escuchar esta reunión.



# Agenda

14:30 | Welcome

14:40 | Content

- Meaningful engagement and access to funding
- The EU and its budget
- Trends in EU funding for civil society
- Why does this matter now, and how to engage effectively

15:15 | Q&A

15:50 | Closing

# Meaningful engagement

A few months ago CONCORD launched a [Civil Society Meaningful Engagement Platform](#).

- One goal is to share knowledge and resources between CSOs on the meaningful engagement of civil society
  - ➔ Today's webinar !

What are we asking the EU to do?

- ❖ Involve CSOs early in the consultation processes
- ❖ Create opportunities for regular dialogue & feedback
- ❖ Move from consultations to co-creation



Access to funding requires meaningful engagement at multiple levels before a call is launched!



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# The EU and its budget



# EU and its budget

The **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) defines the EU budget for 7 years**, the current budget covers 2021-2027.

It encompasses different headings, including heading 6, **about 10% of the EU's total budget, dedicated to External Cooperation of the EU** with third countries.

**Heading 6 includes** the Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (**NDICI - Global Europe**).

## **Heading 6** **External Cooperation** **of the EU**

(around 72% - 79.462 bln to NDICI - Global Europe)



€ 79.4 billion

**Geographic**



**75% - € 60.388 bn**

- Neighborhood
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia and the Pacific
- Americas and the Caribbean

**Thematic**



**€ 6.358 bn**

- Human rights and Democracy
- Civil Society Organisations
- Stability and Peace
- Global Challenges

**Rapid response -**



**€ 3.182 bn**

- Crisis response and Conflict Prevention
- Resilience and linking humanitarian and development actions
- Foreign policy

Emerging challenges and priorities cushion (9.534 bn)

# A critical window: the next EU budget

- The next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034) will define EU priorities for the coming years
- Discussions are already starting on:
  - What the EU should prioritise
  - Which actors should implement programmes
  - Which funding tools should be used



These choices will affect **how accessible EU external action funding is for CSOs**

**This is not only a budget discussion**—it is a discussion about priorities, partnerships, and influence

# Why modalities matter?

## Direct management

Managed directly by the EU

More likely to include calls for proposals

More direct access for CSOs

## Indirect Management

Managed through intermediary actors

Often implemented by UN agencies, development banks, Member States, EIB  
**(pillar-assessed entities)**

Less direct visibility and access for CSOs



### The way funding is managed affects:

- who can access it,
- who makes decisions, and
- how transparent the process is



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# Trends in EU funding for civil society



# What is this analysis based on?



Based exclusively on publicly traceable EC data!

- **787** official EU programming documents - Sample of **40 countries**
- **€26.4bn** analysed (November 2021–May 2025)
- **Geographic & thematic** programmes
- Quantitative coding & qualitative insights (19 interviews)

# Moving away from direct CSO access

## Dominance of Indirect management

- **62%** of analysed funding is **indirectly managed**
- Sharp rise from **42% (2021) to 68% (2024)**
- **31% of the analysed budget is directly managed**

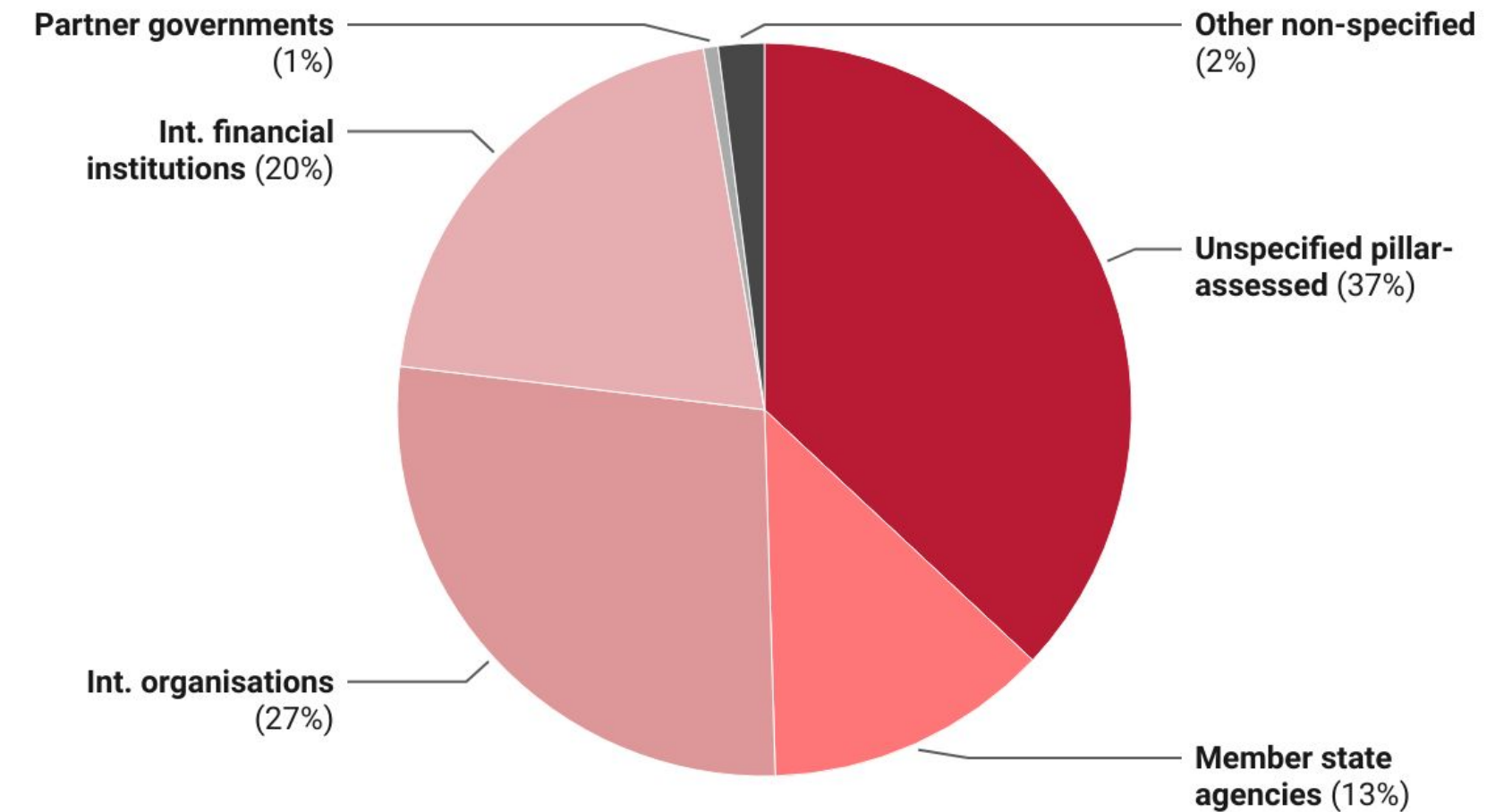
# Limited traceability

- **70% of funding**, it is non-assessable in terms of CSO access
- Implementing partners often **not specified** at programming stage
- Accountability and scrutiny are structurally weakened



**No traceability → no accountability**

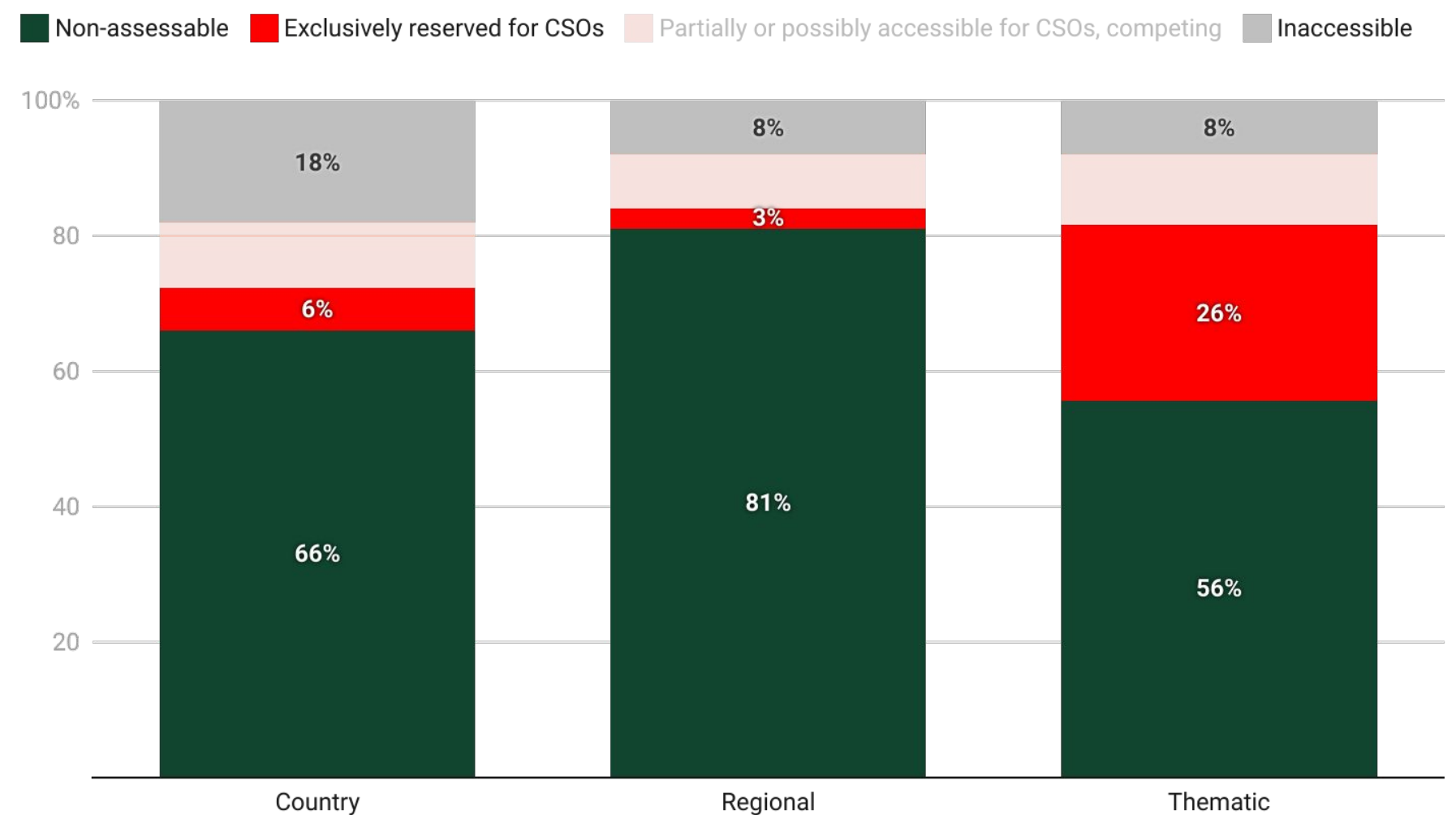
## Implementing partners for indirect management



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# CSO access exists—but in limited spaces

- **Only 10%** of analysed funding is **explicitly earmarked for civil society**
- CSOs funding concentrated in:
  - Governance
  - Rights
- Most funding sits in geographic programmes (less accessible)



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*Distribution of the budget in % by accessibility and by scope*

# Funding design favors scale over diversity

- Direct management relies heavily on **competitive calls for proposals**
- Increasing use of **large, consolidated calls & direct awards**
- Uniform administrative and compliance requirements



*Scale is prioritised over proportionality*

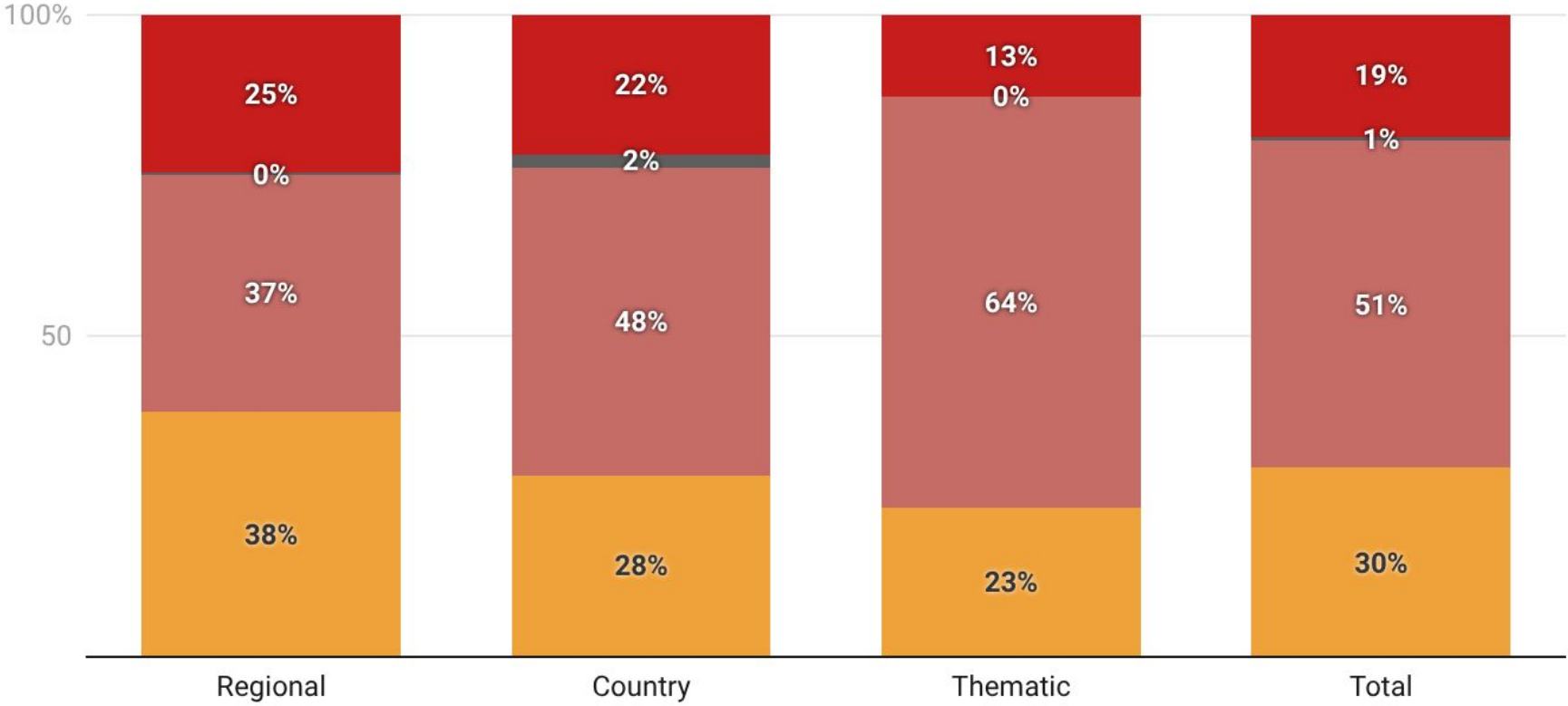
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*limiting access especially for smaller CSOs*

**Direct management budget in €M by sub-modality and scope**

(excl. budget support)

Direct Awards   Calls for proposals   Twinning   Procurement



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# Why does this matter now & how to engage effectively?



# Entry points

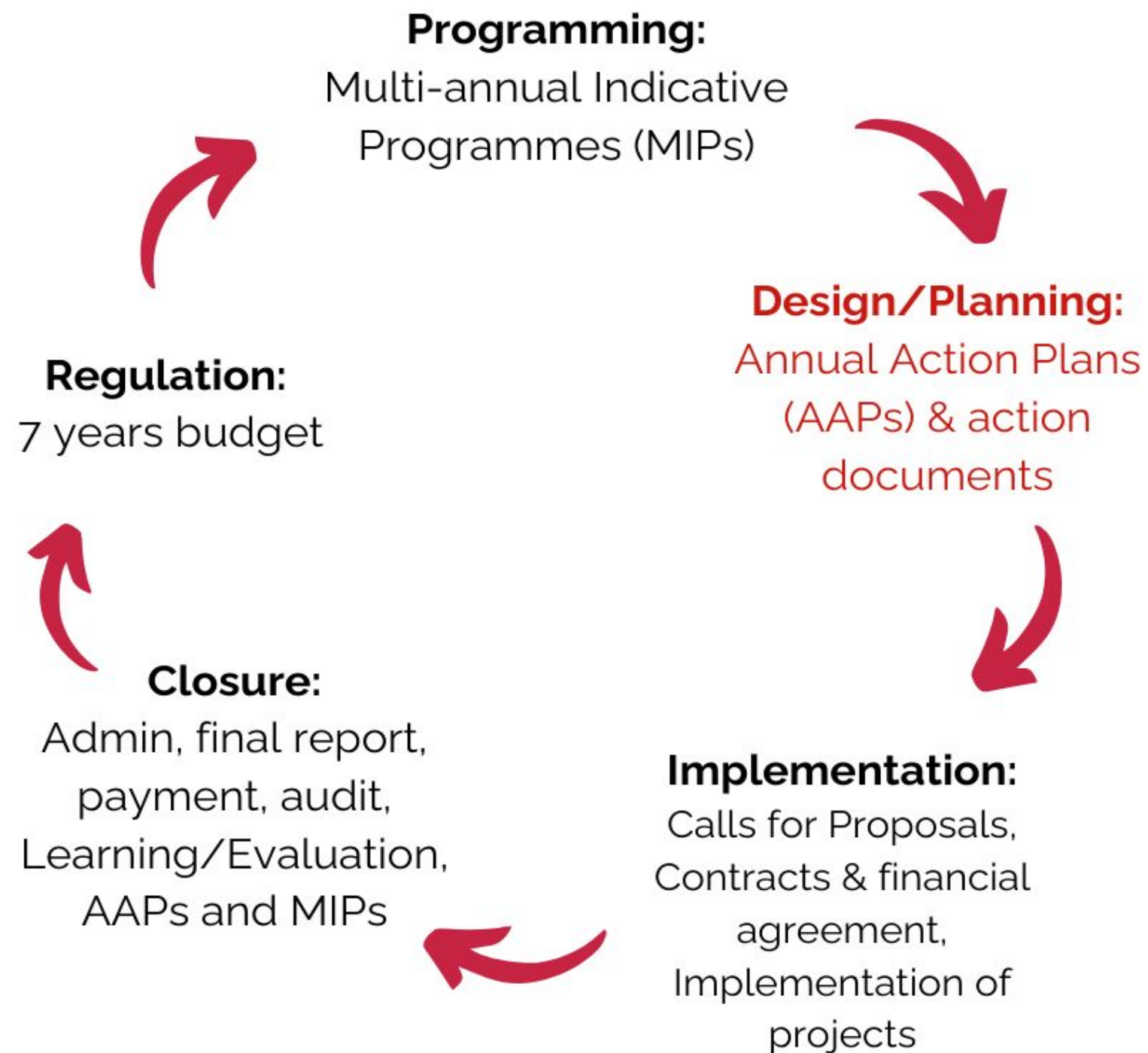
Upcoming key moments:

- Through consultations on priorities, including on Global Gateway and civil society roadmaps - right now!
- During programming processes - in 2028
- In discussions around Annual Action Plans

On an ongoing basis:

- Engage regularly with EU Delegations and relevant focal points — but do not overlook EU Member State embassies and their agencies.
- Build relationships before funding opportunities are published

# The programming cycle



Most CSOs engage at Calls for proposals stage



*BUT*

Most decisions are made at Programming and Planning stage

## Advocacy Asks at EU Delegation level

1. Strengthen accessibility and inclusiveness under indirect management
2. Use EUD capacity and resources to engage with CSOs more meaningfully
3. Organise earlier, more regular, and more inclusive consultations
4. Provide feedback on how CSO inputs are reflected in programming decisions
5. Support longer-term partnerships with CSOs, beyond one-off projects
6. Improve access to calls and simplify support for local and community-based organisations

# Tips for effective engagement

## Reach out

Share with the [EU Delegation](#) a hook for Dialogue.  
Find out if and when the CSOs consultations at Delegation level are happening. If not, request the Head of Cooperation to organise it.

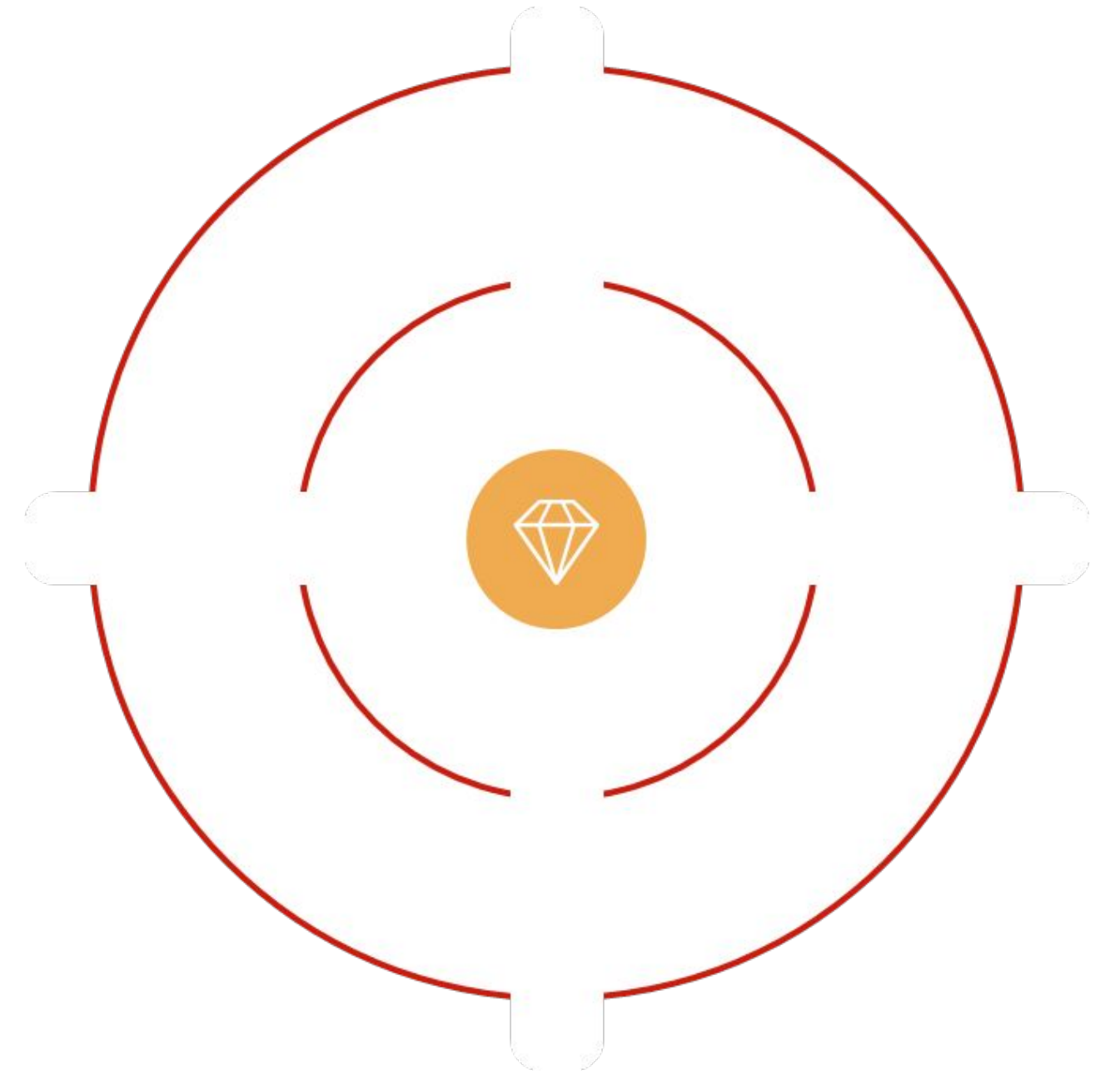
## Get organised

Join forces with national NGO platforms & other CSOs to ensure consistency of your programming advocacy and joint positioning.

## Be prepared

Read EUD documents (MIPs,(M)AAPs...) to understand country priorities

Use the ["Lion's share"](#) report to draft your concrete/clear messages towards the EUD.





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**¡Gracias! Thank you! Merci !**

**¿Preguntas? Questions ?**





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What does meaningful engagement look like?  
Share your experience!

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