

## CONCORD's recommendations on the EU Programming process for external instrument

*The programming<sup>1</sup> of the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) is a key process for the EU to translate its various commitments such as development effectiveness principles and human development, gender equality and human rights, climate action and environmental protection, to support civil society, into reality.*

*This paper proposes recommendations to inform the programming process for the 2021-2027 period - building on civil society lessons learned and experiences of the preceding programming process<sup>2</sup>- and in particular, the programming guidelines and consultations at country level.*

*To this end, it is important that clear and appropriate guidance - both on how best to operationalise commitments and how to have an inclusive process involving different stakeholders - is included in the programming instructions and documents.*

### Recommendations to ensure an inclusive, timely and participatory programming process

#### 1. Improve the overall transparency and accountability of EU programming

In line with the Busan principles, transparency and mutual accountability should be red threads which run through the whole process of programming, from initial reflections and analyses to final decisions on each multi-annual programme and its financing. To ensure this, the EU services and institutions involved - mainly the EEAS and its EU delegations, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR - should systematically make available relevant and useful information about the process and its development – e.g. announce opportunities/venues for civil society to engage, in a timely manner. This could be built on the example of the [joint programming tracker site](#).

#### 2. Ensure country ownership that is inclusive of local civil society

The development effectiveness principle of country ownership presumes that different stakeholders take part in the decisions that concern their own development. Therefore, the EU must commit to facilitating and supporting the meaningful involvement of a **pluralistic and diverse local civil society** with established connections to people living in poverty and exclusion. For that reason, it is important to map stakeholders working on a diversity of relevant issues. The EU Delegations should make active efforts to bring marginalised voices and groups to the table, creating safe spaces where people feel confident to speak.

Civil society should be involved from the beginning of the process - including the strategic assessments in countries for the geographic pillars and for the thematic ones at headquarters - in a timely manner, **with clear guidance on expectations and information on how their inputs**

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<sup>1</sup> The EU's programming refers to the process where EU priorities for its work with partner countries are defined in dialogue with them.

<sup>2</sup> More information on CONCORD's work on civil society engagement, here: <https://concordeurope.org/blog/2016/01/11/eu-relationships-publications/>

**will be taken into account and incorporated in the outcome documents.** CSOs can play a key role in supporting marginalised communities, women and youth, farmers and workers – including those living far away from the capitals, to communicate their views to decision-makers.

### **3. Build on existing coordination mechanisms and experiences**

EU Delegations have long been in dialogue with partner countries and stakeholders. Some examples are the human rights country strategies, the development of Roadmaps for the engagement with civil society, the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, to mention a few. In addition, EU Delegations have experience in coordinating with other donors present in countries. **It is key to build on the lessons learned and best practices from these different experiences during the programming process. This also means, reaching out to existing contacts and using the tools and spaces developed for these different dialogue processes so as not to duplicate efforts, whilst ensuring a wide outreach, e.g. to organisations/people in remote areas.**

For example, during the implementation of the CSO roadmaps, many EU Delegations have developed mappings of the CSOs present in country. EU Delegations could use these mappings to reach out to a broad and diverse group of civil society actors during the programming process. Moreover, it is important for EU Delegations to maintain an on-going dialogue with the existing platforms, networks and coalitions at the national and sub-regional level as they can increase the outreach and amplify civil society voices through internal consultations.

Since joint programming will be the preferred model to be used for programming in the 2021-2027 budget period, EU Delegations should be provided with common guidelines on how to involve different stakeholders, including civil society, in this process based on lessons learned from the 2014-2020 period.

## **Recommendations to reflect EU principles and commitments in the programming guidelines**

The guidelines for the EU's bilateral and regional programming will guide EU Delegations in the definition and drafting of the strategic framework documents to shape the EU's cooperation with partner countries. Below are CONCORD's key recommendations for the programming guidelines.

### **1. Ground your actions in EU principles and values and in the 2030 Agenda**

The European Consensus on Development sets out a framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in cooperation with partner countries, taking due account of the framework provided by the Lisbon Treaty. In line with this commitment and with other EU international commitments, the universal principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law must inform and guide all EU programming. This means:

- Make the human rights-based approach a cross-cutting element throughout the guidelines and reflect it in the programming documents.
- Conduct and include human rights, democracy and civic space risk assessments that also refer to actions that could be undertaken by the EU and MS in case of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in the programming documents.

Moreover, the 2030 Agenda's commitment to Leave No One Behind should be part of the guidelines and documents, so as to ensure that inclusiveness is the starting point of all programmes. This means ensuring approaches are people-centered, gender-responsive and evidence-based, thereby putting those who are stigmatised, criminalised, marginalised and living in vulnerable situations at centre stage in the programming. This includes supporting community-led and community-based responses.

## 2. Base your decisions on country allocations on objective criteria including levels of multidimensional poverty and inequalities

The EC should adopt a clear and holistic approach for country allocations that includes criteria based on the multidimensional causes of poverty and inequalities. Such criteria should rely on a variety of indexes such as the Human Development Index and inequality indexes (e.g. Poverty Gap Index) as well as qualitative criteria relating to the marginalisation of specific groups in society, the exposure and vulnerability to climate change impacts and natural resource depletion, the access to and coverage of social protection and services or other indicators of deprivation. That would strengthen the focus on people most in need rather than primarily countries most in need.

## 3. Conduct a context analysis that informs tailored strategies at country and regional levels

Ensure **relevant tools for analysis** are used as part of a country assessment, whether in a systematic way (e.g. gender analysis), or as relevant depending on a specific national context (e.g. conflict-sensitivity analysis, resilience assessment<sup>3</sup>). In addition to the SDG profile developed by DG DEVCO and the general data related to the development status and the domestic human and financial capacities and policies as well as the sustainable development plan(s) or strategy of the country, the context analysis must include but not be limited to:

- An analysis of the situation of human rights - including the situation of human rights defenders, fundamental freedoms and democracy, including civil society space.
- An analysis of progress towards human development objectives (incl. education, health and SRHR), social inclusion, climate and environment protection, food security and nutrition.
- A comprehensive analysis of the drivers of multi-dimensional inequalities as recommended in the staff working document on addressing inequalities in partner countries.<sup>4</sup>
- An analysis of the situation of women and girls in the country, reflecting the Gender Inequality Index (GII), identifying barriers and challenges and possible ways to address it, including via advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

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<sup>3</sup> As per the January 2018 Council Conclusions on Integrated Approach to external crises and conflicts, "joint conflict analyses are to be systematically carried out and updated for countries that are at risk of or facing conflict or instability and where the EU has a significant engagement (...). These analyses are to inform other processes of strategic engagement of the EU, such as regional and national programming and Joint Programming."

<sup>4</sup> European Union: European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document: Addressing inequalities in partner countries, 14 June 2019, SWD(2019) 280, available at: Commission Staff working document on, June 2019 at [https://eudevdays.eu/sites/default/files/swd\\_inequalities\\_sw\\_d\\_2019\\_280.pdf](https://eudevdays.eu/sites/default/files/swd_inequalities_sw_d_2019_280.pdf)

- The analysis should further take into consideration levels and intersectionality of inequalities based on the principle of 'leave no-one behind'.

The outcome of this exercise would **duly inform context-specific programming choices**. In addition, the programming of EU assistance should be aligned to the duration of national/regional cycles and take into account specific countries' situations in different contexts (e.g. fragile countries; countries in conflict, etc.). In this sense, **flexibility around timeframe** should be ensured.

#### **4. Ensure coherence and complementarity between geographic and thematic priorities and between multiple strategies and cooperation initiatives**

Greater coherence and complementarity between geographic and thematic priorities is welcomed and should be reflected in the framework documents. This refers to **ensuring complementarity between instruments and between components within instruments**. In addition, **the coherence and complementarity between the EU geographic and thematic priorities must be duly considered and effectively addressed in geographic programming, at country and regional level**.

In the same way it is important to make sure that there is **coherence and complementarity between the various processes of dialogue and cooperation that are pursued by different Commission DGs and by the EEAS**. In particular, it would be important to make sure that the pilot countries for the nexus between development, humanitarian aid and peace, the economic diplomacy conducted by the EEAS or the compacts on growth and jobs developed under the Africa-EU Alliance are not disconnected from or contradictory to the analysis and conclusions in the SDG country profiles. There is a risk that these separate processes take precedence and shortcut the programming process if coherence and coordination is not ensured at EU Delegation level.

Last but not least, based on an analysis of civil society space, both geographic and thematic programming should foresee actions to address the possible limitations and threats, as well as support, to civil society in countries. The best way to achieve this would be to create a **dedicated civil society envelope** under each geographic programme, identifying mechanisms and funding modalities adapted to the conditions in which civil society operates in a given country and to the diversity of civil society (including small CSOs and communities) while respecting their right of initiative. Mechanisms and modalities include extending support to successful programmes and providing long-term and institutional support to CSOs, thereby strengthening long-term processes of societal and political change.

#### **5. Link development with peace and humanitarian efforts at country and regional levels**

Greater consistency of EU policies, instruments and approaches also means **strengthening policy and operational linkages between development, humanitarian and peace actors** at country and regional levels, while respecting their respective mandates.<sup>5</sup> This is more important now, taking into consideration that about 500 million people living in extreme poverty

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<sup>5</sup> See the OECD/DAC recommendation on the Humanitarian Development and Peace Nexus: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf>

live in fragile contexts and projections are that this will rise by 80% by 2030. Building resilience of communities at local level is key.

The programming process is a key opportunity for the EU to ensure that the nexus approach is reflected upon in the strategic assessments as well as in the outcome documents, clearly indicating how the EU plans to approach cooperation with countries and regions from the three perspectives and how they relate to one another. Of course, this entails involving relevant actors - in particular, ECHO technical offices and other humanitarian and peacebuilding actors - from the very beginning of the process.

## **6. Meet the EU targets via smart reporting that informs programming**

Ensure that the **benchmarks and targets set in the NDICI** (i.e. for climate and environment, human development and social inclusion, and gender) are **duly reflected in programming** at country and regional level. Benchmarks are important to assess whether strategic goals are being achieved, to ensure accountability and to measure impact. Timely monitoring/reporting should feed into the mid-term review and later into the next programming phase.

**Indicate, especially in the early phase of programming, how these benchmarks and targets will be taken into account - through mainstreaming and/or dedicated actions - and how much funding is expected to be dedicated to the benchmarks** on human development and social inclusion, climate and environment and to the gender targets based on the programming of geographic envelopes. **Such assessments should inform the programming** of the thematic programmes to balance the funding and ensure the targets are reached.

**Identify existing and missing tools in the strategic frameworks for an effective implementation of the benchmarks and targets. These could include a mapping of donor coordination mechanisms** on each of the thematic issues highlighted above.

In the same way, it would be useful to conduct a **capacity assessment** on the resources in the EU Delegations on these issues and to identify the support needed in terms of adequate human resources, analysis, training and other tools.

