

How will the EU support peacebuilding after 2020?

EPLO's position on the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework

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Introduction

The EU has made a number of important commitments related to peace and security in recent years. In 2016, the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy included a clear acknowledgement of the importance of 'preventing conflict, promoting human security, addressing the root causes of instability and working towards a safer world' and 'peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions' as key factors for ensuring the EU's own security.¹

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) strongly believes that increased investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding represents a cost-effective and sustainable contribution to reducing the conflict risks and other security challenges which the EU is attempting to address both internally and in its partner countries.

EPLO also believes that the establishment of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) represents a major opportunity for the EU to ensure that it has the necessary means to maximise its potential as an effective global peace actor. In this context, we have developed the following set of overarching recommendations:

1. Increase the external actions component of the MFF and keep it separate from other priorities

Although it is possible that the post-2020 framework will be smaller than the current one, the scale of the challenges facing the EU's partner countries will almost certainly continue to grow in the coming years. If the EU is serious about fulfilling its various commitments to peacebuilding, gender equality, development co-operation, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy support, rule of law etc., it should aim to increase the size of the external actions component ('heading') of the next MFF.

For the sake of its own credibility, the EU should – at the very least – ensure that the ceiling which is foreseen for the successor to Heading 4 (Global Europe) is set at no less than its current level.²

In addition to ensuring that it is properly funded, the EU should ensure that the successor to Heading 4 remains distinct from the successor to Heading 3 (Security and Citizenship). Although there may be interest in merging the two headings, this would risk subverting the objectives of EU external action to internal priorities such as border management and migration control. Similarly, the EU should not use the successor to Heading 4 to support its Member States' security and defence co-operation or to build the capacities of military actors in its partner countries.

¹ See https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf, p. 14

² The ceiling for Heading 4 in the 2014-2020 MFF is set at € 66.3 billion. (NB/ This does not include the European Development Fund.)

2. Continue to allocate specific funding for activities aimed at conflict prevention and peacebuilding

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is currently the main source of funding for the EU's actions in support of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In 2017, the main recommendation of an external evaluation of the IcSP was that it should be maintained in the next MFF.³ EPLO welcomed this recommendation and we continue to support it. However, if the EU decides to reject it, it must ensure that the types of peacebuilding actions which are currently supported through the IcSP continue to receive adequate financial resources through whatever external financing instruments are included in the post-2020 framework.

In the event that the EU decides to dramatically reorganise its external financing instruments in the next MFF, in addition to increasing the financial resources which are currently available to support peacebuilding actions through the IcSP,⁴ it should also ensure that the various elements which have made the IcSP so highly-valued as a mechanism for supporting peacebuilding (e.g. flexibility, speed of implementation, geographic coverage, range of partners supported, implementing rules, expertise of administrators etc.) are also maintained in the new external financial instrument(s).

3. Ensure that all EU external action is conflict- and gender-sensitive

Given the high number of its partner countries which are either at risk of violent conflict, conflict-affected or post-conflict, it is essential that the EU ensures that all of its external action respects the 'Do No Harm' principle (i.e. it does not inadvertently cause conflict or exacerbate existing conflicts) and has the maximum possible positive impact on conflict dynamics. In order to do this, it should capitalise on the various efforts which have been undertaken to promote conflict sensitivity in recent years by making conflict analysis, which must include gender analysis, a legal requirement of all EU external action in the next MFF.

4. Include conflict prevention and peacebuilding as objectives in all external financial instruments

Given that the majority of funding available under Heading 4 is channelled through geographic financing instruments, it is essential that the EU also uses them to build peace in its partner countries which are at risk of violent conflict, conflict-affected or post-conflict. The EU should, therefore, ensure that conflict prevention and peacebuilding are included as specific objectives in the successors to the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) so that they can also be used to support ODA-eligible peacebuilding activities in those countries.⁵

5. Strengthen the involvement of civil society in EU external action

Civil society actors, including civil society organisations (CSOs), play a central role in helping the EU to fulfil its commitments to peacebuilding, gender equality, development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy support, rule of law etc. in its partner countries.⁶ The EU must ensure that the broadest possible range of CSOs are able to access funding through all of the external financing instruments which are included in the next MFF. It should also try to maximise the effectiveness of its external action by making the meaningful involvement of civil society actors in dialogue on the design and implementation of all of its various policies and programmes a legal requirement.

European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)

EPLO is the independent civil society platform of European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), NGO networks and think tanks which are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.

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³ See <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/key-documents/icsp-mte-final-report.pdf>

⁴ The total amount allocated to the IcSP under the current MFF is € 2.34 billion (3.5% of Heading 4).

⁵ This means that they can be counted as Official Development Assistance (ODA) according to the criteria set out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC).

⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/csos-la-mip-2014-2020_en.pdf (p. 4) for the EU's definition of 'CSOs'.