

OVERVIEW

Advocating for a Strong Global Europe Instrument within the EU MFF 2028–2034

(21.07.2026) Global Responsibility is working together with Austrian and European civil society partners, e.g. CONCORD Europe, to call for a strong, adequately funded and accountable external action budget in the next EU *Multiannual Financial Framework* (MFF) 2028–2034. Our focus is on the EU's external financing instrument, currently proposed as the new *Global Europe Instrument*.



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The financial decisions taken in the coming years will shape how the European Union contributes to poverty eradication, sustainable development, human rights, humanitarian action, inequalities reduction, and international partnerships worldwide. As representatives of Austrian civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, Global Responsibility is working to ensure that these priorities remain at the heart of the next EU budget and represent the EU values as well as the interests of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Global South.

Taking a closer look: The EU MFF and a strong *Global Europe Instrument*

The *Multiannual Financial Framework* is the European Union's long-term budget. It determines spending priorities for a period of seven years and provides the financial foundation for EU policies and programmes. For development cooperation organizations, the negotiations on the proposed *Global Europe Instrument* within the 2028-2034 MFF — a merger of the former *Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument* (NDICI) and the *Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance* (IPA III) — are particularly important because they will determine the future of EU external action financing. This merger could lead to significant

changes in the structure and priorities of EU development cooperation, including reduced thematic programming and the removal of dedicated funding windows for civil society organizations. It could also see humanitarian assistance integrated into a broader framework, rather than maintaining a distinct budget heading and instrument — despite the earmarking of 25 billion euros for humanitarian action.

The latest proposal from the Cypriot Presidency, issued in June 2026, suggests allocating 170 billion euros to the *Global Europe Instrument*.

This is 30 billion euros less than indicated in the proposals previously made by the European Commission (July 2025) and the European Parliament (autumn 2025). As part of the CLUB DE MADRID, **former EU leaders** have called for more global ambition in the next MFF and criticized the planned funding cuts. Nevertheless, their critique is in line with EU plans which aim to protect spending more directly linked to internal EU priorities, competitiveness, and geopolitical interests. Consequently, civil society's concern is that a disproportionate share of budgetary adjustments to the EU's external action financing may severely disadvantage civil society and human development.

In comparison to former MFF external financing instruments, the proposed *Global Europe Instrument* places greater emphasis on leveraging private investment, blended finance, and guarantees, potentially at the expense of long-term grant-based development cooperation. In its analysis and recommendations which we published a [summary on our website](#), CONCORD Europe emphasizes that growing reliance on investment-driven approaches and private finance may weaken the EU's development mandate. It diverts attention away from reducing worldwide poverty, achieving gender equality and human rights, expanding civic space, and addressing the needs of the most marginalized populations. It also undermines progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reduces debt vulnerabilities in partner countries, and impedes grant-based cooperation and the development of more equitable, locally led partnerships.

Global Gateway: EU's flagship investment initiative

Under the *Global Europe* framework, the EU's flagship investment strategy for infrastructure and connectivity projects in partner countries is the *Global Gateway Initiative*. It is financed through a mix of instruments and private-sector investment. However, it remains unclear how much of the future *Global Europe Instrument* budget will be channeled towards *Global Gateway* priorities in the new EU MFF. CONCORD Europe has raised concerns that the growing flexibility and political importance of the initiative could divert funding away from earmarked development priorities,

while privileging investment-driven projects largely implemented by financial institutions and private companies. CONCORD also highlights the lack of transparency and meaningful participation mechanisms for CSOs, noting that their role in the initiative remains unclear despite the potential impacts on local communities in partner countries.

The Global Gateway Team Austria explicitly aims to support Austrian companies in accessing *Global Gateway* projects — further underlining the initiative's strong business and investment orientation and raising questions about the role of CSOs, the protection of human rights standards, and whether the initiative will primarily contribute to sustainable development in partner countries or to securing European economic interests and access to strategic raw materials.

Our focus: Perspectives of the Global South

For countries in the Global South, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable communities, it is crucial that the EU's external action budget is strong, ambitious and predictable within the 2028-2034 MFF. This would enable them to tackle poverty, inequality and fragility, advance the SDGs, respond to crises, and build the foundations for long-term prosperity and stability.

Within our internal working group on co-financing, *AG Kofinanzierung*, a dedicated MFF Task Force was established in early 2026 to coordinate advocacy efforts on the future of EU development financing, exchange information from partners and prepare joint letters. The task force was initiated by representatives of the Austrian Red Cross, CARE Austria, Horizont 3000, Caritas Austria and Global Responsibility. Its objective is to strengthen Austrian civil society engagement in the MFF negotiations and to ensure that development cooperation perspectives are reflected in national discussions, including at the MFA and Austrian Chancellery.

Our work at European level

Our advocacy builds on the work of European civil society networks, particularly CONCORD and its project group on *Financing and Funding for Development* (FFSD), where discussions on the next MFF and the *Global Europe Instrument* take place on a regular basis. Through this engagement, we contribute to the exchange of information, analysis and advocacy strategies among European development organizations.

CONCORD works closely with Civil Society Europe, ONE campaign and VOICE through a joint MFF Hub. Together, these networks monitor developments, analyze proposals from the European Commission and the European Parliament, prepare policy recommendations, and develop joint advocacy positions (see below).

The Austrian context

Austria is generally considered part of the group of so-called 'frugal' EU Member States, which traditionally advocate for budgetary restraint and caution regarding increases in the overall EU budget. At the same time, discussions with Austrian stakeholders have highlighted the importance of maintaining support for civil society and ensuring that EU external action remains adequately financed. As negotiations proceed, Global Responsibility will continue engaging with national decision-makers and providing evidence-based recommendations from a development cooperation perspective.

Our demands

- To ensure that the EU remains a credible and effective global development actor, dedicated thematic programmes and budget lines should be reinstated, including strong funding instruments for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, building on the experience of former *EuropeAid* and *ECHO* mechanisms.
- The next financial framework should safeguard and increase grant-based financing, rather than relying on loans and investment instruments that may exacerbate debt vulnerabilities in partner countries. *Official Development Assistance* (ODA) from the EU should be increased, and the goal of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA should be maintained.
- Moreover, the next MFF should reaffirm the central role of civil society by ensuring meaningful participation in policy dialogue and providing predictable, accessible, and adequately resourced funding for civil society organizations, particularly those working with the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

The Irish Presidency: An opportunity to reinforce commitments

The negotiations on the next MFF will continue throughout 2026. While member states negotiate the overall budget figures and the European Parliament finalizes its position in the fall, discussions in the council are expected to become more substantive towards the end of the year. The Irish Presidency, which began in July 2026, will also host a meeting of EU Development Ministers in Dublin in October, offering an important opportunity to reinforce commitments to development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, including on food security, gender equality, and poverty and hunger reduction.

Letters and joint statements

A core component of our work has been participation in joint advocacy initiatives together with CONCORD and partner organizations. Since fall 2025, Global Responsibility has signed and/or co-signed the following letters and petitions to EU and national Government: (more recent listed first)

Letter by Civil Society Europe and CONCORD (18.06.2026): Civil Society to European Leaders: Deliver a Budget that is Up to the Challenge!

More than 300 civil society, education, research, cultural, philanthropy and social economy organizations from across Europe are calling on EU leaders to adopt a stronger EU budget for 2028–2034 that is fit to address major challenges such as climate change, geopolitical instability, technological change and growing social needs. The letter urges leaders to ensure that the next EU budget prioritizes new investments, thereby

protecting funding for social cohesion, sustainable development, research, innovation, youth, culture, external action and the green transition. It also calls for new EU-level revenue sources to create a more sustainable and ambitious budget, arguing that Europe needs adequate resources and a collective approach to deliver its values and long-term objectives.

Letter by CONCORD (05.05.2026): Letter to all Development and Foreign Affairs Ministers of EU Member States

In a letter to EU Development and Foreign Affairs Ministers, CONCORD calls on member states to ensure that the next EU budget maintains poverty reduction, sustainable development, human rights and gender equality at the heart of EU external action. The signatories warn against diverting development funding towards short-term geopolitical and economic interests, advocate for at least 10% of the EU budget to be dedicated to external action, and stress that the *Global Gateway* should complement, and not replace, grant-based development cooperation. In addition, they call for stronger transparency, accountability, and local ownership, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts where long-term, predictable support is essential for the world's most vulnerable people.

We forwarded this letter to Claudia Bauer, the Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family, on 6 May.

Joint call by CONCORD, EPLO and VOICE (24.03.2026): Ensuring that the Global Europe Regulation strengthens the EU's ability to address fragility

The joint call urges the EU to ensure that the future *Global Europe Instrument* is better equipped to address fragility, conflict and crises, recognizing that a growing share of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The organizations call for the EU's external financing architecture to maintain dedicated resources for addressing fragility, prevention and resilience, and to preserve flexible, needs-based and grant-based funding that can respond to long-term development, peacebuilding and humanitarian challenges. They also stress the importance of conflict sensitivity, local ownership and stronger links between humanitarian, development and peace efforts (the *triple nexus*) so that EU external action can more effectively support populations affected by conflict, instability and displacement.

Links

MFF and Global Europe Instrument

- CONCORD: **MFF Resource Hub and Presidency project**
- CONCORD (05.12.2025, last updated April 2026): **Analysis of the European Commission's proposal for the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework and the Global Europe Instrument**
- CONCORD presidency project (16.07.2025): **Joint statement from 30 organizations: Commission Global Europe proposal "potentially game-changing"**
- CONCORD (19.03.2025): **Who Still Holds the Lion's Share? Funding Concentration, Shrinking Access and the Narrowing Space for Civil Society**
- CLUB DE MADRID (17.06.2026): **Former EU leaders call for more global ambition on MFF**

Global Gateway Initiative

- CONCORD (03.06.2026): **Rounding out the EU's Global Gateway: 360 Degrees for Human Development**
- CONCORD (27.03.2026): **CONCORD's Reaction to the European Parliament's Report on the Global Gateway**
- CONCORD (12.03.2026): **Unlocking the Potential of the EU's Global Gateway: Meaningful engagement with civil society**
- CONCORD (12.02.2026): **Blended finance and the illusion of development: Lessons from the EFSD+ for the next EU budget**

(kk/written with the help of AI)

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