

Multiannual Financial Framework Post 2020 Proposals by Civil Society Organisations

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared in cooperation with several civil society organisations and networks that are active in various areas of EU policy work either with actions on the ground or on advocacy.

Our perspective is to shed light on issues that are important for the future financial framework from the perspective of civil society organisations and the citizens we represent. We would also like to highlight the contribution that civil society can bring to the European Union.

In designing the new Financial Framework, the Commission should ensure stronger participation of independent and representative civil society organisations as they play a crucial role in promoting active public participation in the democratic process at EU and national level. In addition to the welcome upcoming EC consultation, we call the European Commission as well as the Council of the European Union and the Parliament for a specific dialogue with CSOs.

2. An ambitious financial framework with a strong civil society component

We believe that the important challenges that the European Union is facing today: increasing social and economic disparities, youth unemployment, impact of migration, climate change, environmental degradation, globalisation, polarisation in society, shrinking civic space, conflicts and violence, human rights violations, will not be addressed with a reduced budget at EU level. The current ceiling needs to be increased.

The future EC proposal must be also ambitious in terms of its content and move away from the current framework, by proposing headings that are more understandable to the general public, expenses that are enshrined in its goals, and that do not only respond to real and urgent challenges, but also address long term needs.

Civil society organisations and the citizens they represent must be adequately consulted on the definition of the future framework both by the European Commission, the European Parliament, but also by national governments. In this sense we welcome the European Commission consultation, but this is not enough. Civil society must be

engaged in a real dialogue which should happen also at sectoral dialogues on the different areas of spending. Furthermore Governments must also consult their citizens and be transparent on their position in the decision-making process at all levels as recommended by the European Ombudsman.

The future framework must recognise the important contribution that an independent, diverse civil society committed to EU values and fundamental rights across Europe brings to the European Union, notably by supporting the active participation of citizens to the EU and national democratic process, by contributing to more effective and equal policies with bottom-up solutions, by bringing concrete solutions to sustainability and growth, by enhancing culture and education, by providing humanitarian aid, and by engaging volunteers on the ground.

Reinforcing civil society is essential to develop democracy and sustainability, but also a secure society. Such a contribution must be visible in the future budgets. For this reason, we would like to draw caution to excessive simplifications of existing financial instruments and the merging of EU programmes.

This is also at the core of defining what is an **added EU value**. This cannot be interpreted in a restrictive or institutional way, based on the mere examination of the EU competence. For instance, in areas such as education and culture where EU competence is limited, there is a strong added value for coordination and exchange. For civil society organisations active on the ground at all levels, it is clear that the wellbeing of people in the EU in all the dimensions, including access to quality employment, the protection of the environment, high quality education, innovation, migration, access to culture, etc. cannot be achieved just at local and national levels. Rather, coherent action at EU level is needed.

It is important that citizens are able to see what the results of EU spending are, as suggested by the emphasis on an **EU budget by results**. Nonetheless, it is critical to acknowledge that not all expenses or investments, especially if they concern human development or intervention in fragile environments or areas can be easily quantified or measured in a few years' time span. Many of the successful actions that are carried out by civil society are on the long term. The EC also stresses in its reflection paper on the future of EU budget that some achievements that are less tangible and material than others are equally important. Nevertheless, not all projects however well planned and carried out can be successful, especially in areas such as democracy, fundamental rights, peace, humanitarian aid or social inclusion. A challenging environment may also lead an excellent project "to fail", though it has been implemented correctly. Evaluation methodologies must take this into account. **There needs to be a dialogue between the**

European Commission and civil society organisations on what is meant by results and how they can be measured.

We understand that it is important to ensure a certain **flexibility** in the next multiannual budgetary framework. A more effective flexibility instrument and global margins covering both commitments and payments should be applied to the whole budget. In addition, contingency reserves should be created within each heading for the main instruments and when transfers occur they should respect the primary objectives of the originating funds. Also, reserves should be used for additional unforeseen needs and not for changing priorities. Finally, a separate reserve must be maintained for humanitarian aid and increased given the important use made during the current MFF.

Flexibility must not be at the detriment either of the **transparency** of the budget or of **predictability**. This is because of the nature of civil society organisations that do not generate financial profits and cannot rely on stable sources of income. For civil society it is important to favour grants, and multiannual financial agreements with civil society organisations. It is also critical to maintain both action and operating grants so as to allow a greater diversity of funding options. In this context it is also important to design future instruments in a way that they allow for a civil society component also through funding of smaller or grass-roots actions. This can also be achieved, for instance, through a system of re-granting.

2) Specific proposals by policy areas

We have regrouped our suggestions according to the areas covered by the different consultations that have been launched by the European Commission. We also have some further comments relating to external EU funding and humanitarian aid.

2.1 Investments, research and innovation, SMEs and Single Market

2.1.1 Research

Innovation and research are a key area of EU policy which is particularly critical to produce benefits to citizens in critical areas such as social inclusion, health, the environment, mobility, in respecting privacy concerns in an increased interconnected society, food safety as well as addressing societal challenges. Future investments in this area should be geared towards these priorities.

We are in favour of increased support to research and innovation. However we believe that further funding as compared to the current Horizon 2020 should be allocated to support cooperative research. Furthermore there is inconsistency in the allocation of

resources as regards social and human issues for which there is an underinvestment in percentage terms, compared to the demand of scholars, but also of citizens that consider social inequalities and unemployment among their major concerns.

In this context, a **new collaborative programme on Democracy and the social dimension with a strong social and civic participation dimension** should be included **in the future Framework Research Programme**, as also called for by the European Alliance for Social Science and Humanities. CSE and EASSH will be issuing a joint paper on this matter.

Furthermore, civil society participation should be enhanced in the development and evaluation of future research programmes so as to ensure that these correspond to the real needs and concerns of citizens.

2.1.2 Health

Protection of a high level of human health and wellbeing is entrenched in the Treaties of the European Union. EU collaboration in the field of health is therefore indispensable for the future of Europe and rebuilding the trust of citizens in the European Union.

CSE supports the #EU4HEALTH Campaign led by EPF with EPHA: <https://epha.org/eu-do-more-for-health-campaign/> which calls on the European Commission to step up coordinated EU action to tackle cross-border health challenges.

- **Securing an increased budget for health collaboration in the next MFF;** additional resources for the health programme, justified by the return on investment and economy of scales to date;
- **Enhancing health profile in Cohesion policy – linking structural funds to health status of the regions;**
- **Health should be a priority in research budget FP9** in order to make the link between health research and health policy a virtuous circle;
- **Funded actions and policies should not damage health** (CAP, health impact assessment);
Environmental, mobility programmes – priority to health enhancing actions.

2.2 Cohesion

2.2.1 European Structural and Investment funds

Cohesion funding must be reinforced as a key instrument to reduce disparities as regards social and economic development in Europe.

The EU budget should support people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in a context where social disparities are increasing. In this regard, the **European Social Fund (ESF)** is extremely important, as it has helped millions of people to get decent jobs, safe workplaces and become included in the society. In the next financial programming period 25% must be earmarked for the ESF and at least 20% must be dedicated to social inclusion and poverty reduction.

Because of its important impact at the national and local level, and because social inequalities and unemployment and problems in economic development are a reality in many regions across all EU Member States, **it is critical that all EU regions continue to benefit from this funding**, using GDP as a criterion, but also the socio-political scoreboard, demographic change, unemployment and migration.

However, there are a number of problems in implementation that can arise depending on the aims and competence of public administration in Member States, which have the power to either facilitate successful results or create obstacles. Implementing the [partnership principle](#) will ensure that civil society and beneficiaries can be a part of the funding process from design to implementation to evaluation. The **partnership principle** obliges Member States to set up agreements with socio-economic actors, local authorities and CSOs to help shape how funds such as the ESF are implemented at national level. The partnership principle must be therefore strengthened and implemented at all stages of the programme cycle. The Commission should review its implementation when reviewing the operational programmes, and at a later stage when participating in the different monitoring committees.

CSE calls on the European Commission to ensure that **technical assistance provisions**, designed to boost capacity building are open in all countries to civil society organisations.

We also call on setting up effective mechanisms to **maintain the current ex ante conditionalities in the ESIF** including fundamental rights, equality between men and women and non discrimination, accessibility for persons with disabilities, and civil society participation, while **reviewing their implementation**. This should include the development of adequate indicators, report on progress made on the different elements covered by the conditionalities in the annual report, provision of adequate supporting documents, certification or legislation in areas such as accessibility or the environment.

We also support the development of a **Human Capital Fund or ESF +** linking ESF and FEAD which will allow integrated approaches to fight poverty and social inclusion. However this should remain part of the ESF and of the cohesion funds. Co-financing rates should not be increased, but more flexibility in terms of advance payments, lump sums, an increased rate for smaller projects should be foreseen as to allow greater participation by civil society organisations.

There should also be better synergies between the ESF, the different programmes in the social area and the European Solidarity Corps and better implementation of the **Asylum Integration and Migration Fund** strand on integration of migrants into the Labour market, which is currently underused.

Finally the **health profile** in Cohesion policy – linking structural funds to health status of the regions - should be enhanced

CSE welcomes the proclamation of a **pillar of social rights** and believes that it must be supported by an adequate budget in the future MFF.

2.3 Security, defence and crisis/emergency response

2.3.1 A holistic approach to Security & Safety

While we believe that security and safety are important dimensions of EU policy, we believe that these must be addressed through a **holistic approach**. In many countries we see an important investment in security at the detriment of key areas such as culture, education, social inclusion, fight against discrimination, prevention of violence, human rights... All these latter areas are not only important by themselves, but critical to ensure a safe and secure society on a longer term basis. Increasing social divisions, discrimination, educational deficits provide fertile ground for conflicts and radicalisation.

2.4 European values and mobility

2.4.1 Civic Space & Democracy

Recent reports both by EU institutions and civil society show a regression of the rule of law and increased instances of shrinking civic space within Europe, putting the values on which the EU is based in danger. We call, therefore, for an overall EU strategy on promoting civic space, which includes proactive and positive actions.

The next MFF after 2020 must **contribute to supporting the development of a vibrant,**

independent and democratic civil society. As mentioned before, the visibility of EU funding for civil society is critical and is also one of the criteria for measuring civic space.

We call for the creation of a **European Fund for Democracy and human rights within the EU**, modelled on the existing initiatives that are designed to strengthen democracy outside the EU (e.g. the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights or the European Endowment for Democracy). This fund should support citizens' actions to promote and defend the values enshrined in article 2 of the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental rights both at national and cross border level. A detailed proposal on such fund has been presented by the [Civil Liberties Union for Europe](#). It is critical that the fund is open to the diversity of civil society organisations, regardless of their primary activity focus, that it includes operating grants, and benefits also small organisations or unregistered organisations through a regranting mechanism. Furthermore **such a fund should come as an additional tool** to existing programmes, thus not at the expense of current funds supporting civil society and active citizenship initiatives in the EU.

2.4.2 Education and Youth

There are concerns about education and lifelong learning in Europe, due to recent developments to weaken EU cooperation in this sector: the Education, Training and Youth Forum, the only major EU-level conference for civil society in the sector, will be replaced by an Education Summit, in January 2018. There is a lack of clear ownership within the European Commission on education and training, which are disputed between DG EAC and DG EMPL. Also education tends to be considered more and more as a pathway to employment, missing an holistic approach. On the contrary, education and culture bring a strong added value to tackling societal issues such as social inclusion, active citizenship, well-being and building an awareness of European culture and identity.

CSE supports the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL), European Youth Forum (YFJ) and Eurodesk campaign calling for a more ambitious **Erasmus+** programme. The [#Erasmusx10 campaign](#) is based on the rationale of 10 reasons why 10 times more, which includes the need to widen participation among underrepresented groups, promote active citizenship and support reforms of national education systems. The full list of reasons can be viewed in the campaign [concept note](#).

Youth should also be mainstreamed in the next MFF post 2020. More support should be given to CSOs investment in the development of young people's skills and competencies through non formal education.

2.4.3 Citizenship

This is also a critical area for the European Union, who must invest in its citizens and find ways to engage them closely in its future development.

Europe for Citizens is the only mainstream EU programme where citizens are at the centre. By bringing citizens of all ages and backgrounds in their different communities together Europe for Citizens contributes to reducing the democratic deficit. The programme enables citizens to participate directly in shaping Europe's future, increasing their understanding about the European Union, its shared culture, exchange knowledge and strengthen their understanding of common challenges. The programme contributes to better delivery for all citizens by developing joint solutions leading to a more secure future for all, while at the same time bringing down walls. Despite the success of the programme, with a rising number of applicants, the funding has been cut in the current Multiannual Financial Framework and therefore only a limited percentage of projects are selected, 6% which is extremely low compared to other programmes.

Europe for Citizens is a must for the European Union which is currently seeking ways to bridge the gap with its citizens, involve them and their representative organisations. Therefore, it should be further reinforced through an increased budget, further communication, and be made more accessible to new potential beneficiaries in order to reach out to citizens and civil society from where they stand, and learn from them.

CSE calls for an **increase of the current budget of Europe for Citizens to at least 500 M €.**

2.4.4 Consumer protection

Consumer policy is one of the very few Union policies to which people living in Europe can relate too. Yet Europeans often do not feel adequately protected nor sufficiently resourced to claim their rights.

Beyond maintaining the current objectives of the **consumer programme** in the next financial period as well giving it adequate resources, it is vital to further invest in this field and particularly in **supporting consumer organisations both at EU and national level.** They can play a role in strengthening democratic EU decision-making and representing the general public interest in an area where the business sector has overwhelming resources.

In several EU Member States it is very difficult for consumer organisations to access public funding. Therefore there is a lack of adequate representation of consumer

interests in the wide variety of relevant fields. As a consequence, consumer organisations are unable to play an adequate watchdog role and therefore contribute to the enforcement of legislation. National consumer organisations, if adequately funded, could play an important role of market watchdog through for instance product testing, mystery shopping, or consumer surveys.

Under the current consumer programme it is not possible for national organisations to receive either operational or project-based funding (in addition to very useful capacity building programmes). We believe therefore that in the future programme **a much stronger emphasis should be put on enforcement of rights of consumers and citizens at large**. The programme should include **funding for national consumer organisations for both capacity building (training and network building) and private enforcement activities** including through projects for EU wide enforcement actions in case of EU wide infringements. Furthermore the co-operation of national consumer authorities and consumer organisations should be promoted to ensure implementation of the new Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation that foresees consultation of consumer organisations and entitles them with an alerting role of authorities on potential infringements of consumer rights. Co-operation with other sector specific national authorities, such as data protection or market surveillance authorities with consumer organisations should also be supported.

Campaigns to raise consumer awareness and innovative consumer education, advice and information programmes should also be included in the future programme.

2.4.5 Culture

Culture has emerged as a systemic element for the future of the Union. Freedom of movement, a fundamental European principle, rests on European citizens learning to live together in multicultural societies. Hence, CSE welcomes the joint commitment expressed by European leaders in the 2017 Rome Declaration towards a Union 'where citizens have new opportunities for cultural and social development' as well as discussions on culture and education during the Gothenburg Summit.

The European Commission's Communication on 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture' presents a welcome step forward to start building a European Cultural dimension, at a time where exclusionary nationalism is gaining ground across Europe. A **new European Agenda for Culture must be designed**, built on the economic, social, humanistic and artistic dimensions of culture, and promoting the

contribution of culture across EU policies. A new European Agenda for Culture requires **proper financial support for culture, the arts and heritage** through the allocation of **at least 1% of the next MFF to culture across policy domains and doubling the budget of Creative Europe in absolute terms.**

Creative Europe is severely underfunded, representing a mere 0.14% of the total budget (MFF period 2014-2020), out of which under one third (31%) is earmarked for Culture, leading to extremely low and diminishing success ratios of only 15,83 % in the Culture strand. These very limited resources are time and again re-allocated towards new and ever wide-ranging initiatives, hence CSE calls for the establishment of the principle of 'new money for new initiatives'. The next MFF should maintain a balance among funding mechanisms, adopting an equal and tailored approach to all cultural and creative sectors; as well as providing stronger support for independent and diverse cultural productions.

2.5 Natural resources

2.5.1 The Environment

The environment is at the forefront of citizen's concerns in the EU. In the most recent [Eurobarometer survey on the environment](#), 95% of the citizens questioned consider that protecting the environment is important to them personally. There is a clear role to play for the EU in funding environmental activities, with 84% of respondents believing that more EU funding should be allocated to supporting environmentally-friendly activities.

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, the Agenda 2030 for sustainable Development, and the UN Convention of Biological Diversity, **the EU must guarantee that all programmes and a funding instrument of the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework are in line with these international commitments.** This means concretely that:

- Any **subsidies** or support to actions **that are harmful** to the environment, climate and biodiversity **should be phased out**;
- Clearly defined and binding **earmarking** for climate, nature conservation and environment measures **across all EU budget instruments** must be introduced;
- **Ex-ante conditionalities** for all instruments must be required to ensure that funding is properly spent and environmental, social and economic aspects fairly balanced;
- The next EU budget must address the current lack of **policy coherence** for Sustainable Development and policies become mutually reinforcing and current

inconsistencies are eliminated.

Following the above principles, decision makers should concretely pay attention to the following policy areas:

- **The Common Agricultural Policy must be redesigned to boost environmental measures** and introduce a fair and sustainable alternative to direct payments to deliver on environmental and societal challenges, rather than allow for the continued environmental degradation.
- The importance of the **LIFE programme**, the only financial instrument under the EU budget wholly dedicated to the environment, nature conservation and climate change, should be recognised. However, as it has very limited resources (0.3% of the current EU budget) its funding should be **increased to at least 1% of the total EU budget and the general co-financing rate raised to 75%** to allow as many NGOs and public bodies to apply for funding.
- Through the EU's external action, the EU should deliver its international financial commitments on climate and biodiversity, in order to support climate action and conservation in those countries with the least capacity and the most vulnerable.
- To make the Paris Agreement a reality the next EU budget should support a **people-centred and just transition to a low carbon economy** and EU ETS auctioning revenues should be centralised under a dedicated funding stream for climate action under the EU budget.
- Environmental and climate objectives should be mainstreamed throughout the **regional policy** and strong **climate and biodiversity proofing for infrastructure projects must be guaranteed**. Performance indicators should furthermore be introduced to assess progress towards existing EU targets in the field of environment, climate and sustainable development more broadly.
- **The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund** should support the implementation of the EU's fisheries policy, ensuring that the expenditure is maintained at least at current levels and conditioned to sustainable management of the marine environment by Member States. A minimum allocation of these funds for biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network of nature protected areas should furthermore be guaranteed.
- Through the Connecting Europe Facility a **trans-European "Green Infrastructure" funding line** should be established to ensure connectivity and restoration of habitats and ecosystems in selected priority areas of EU added value.

2.6 External policy

2.6.1 International Cooperation

EU leadership in development cooperation must be maintained and reinforced, as part of values, implementation of the EU Consensus on Development, and international human rights commitments, but also because of strong citizen's support.

In the next MFF, external action should be maintained as a separate heading with an increased budget allocation and should **go beyond minimum international commitments** such as the collective objective of the 0,7% of gross national income, and the Addis Agenda Target of allocating 0,2% of the Gross National Income to the least developed countries. Also, the integration of the **European Development Fund** in the EU budget should not lead to an overall decrease of EU development aid.

EU future development cooperation must be focused on the following **long term objectives: eradication of poverty, tackling inequality and exclusion, promoting democratic governance and human rights and enhancing inclusive and sustainable development.**

The share of development funding should be increased and it should be reserved for **development cooperation** exclusively and be kept **separated in an own heading from EU's internal policies relating to migration, asylum and security** to avoid any instrumentalisation of development aid. In practice, development aid should not be used to fund measures such as externalisation of reception centres and application procedures for refugees, cost of forced return or reintegration in the country of origin. On the contrary, development aid must address factors that lead people to migrate (inequalities, poverty, human rights abuse, conflicts, climate change, etc.), protection for population forced to leave their communities, creating legal pathways for migration.

Human rights should continue to be an important dimension of the EU external policies.

A dedicated **instrument for stability and peace** should be maintained with a strong focus on human security rather than on state security issues. Actions in this area must be people-centred: promoting human rights and equal opportunities, paying particular attention to groups at risk, gender equality, strengthening governance and civil society participation, preventing conflicts and emergencies, addressing climate change.

Given the attacks on democratic governance taking place around the world, the EU must step-up its support for democracy within the EU but also outside. Democratic and

accountable governance is key to sustainable development, respect for human rights and lasting peace. The **EIDHR should therefore be reinforced under the new MFF**.

The EU must invest strongly in civil society, by developing actions to strengthen a diverse and independent civil society, by supporting human rights defenders, by protecting and enabling civic space by:

- **A separate human rights and democracy instrument** with a dedicated civil society programme to be maintained and reinforced. This is critical in order to ensure support to civil society organisations and human rights defenders. Bringing this programme under the Development Cooperation Instrument as currently being discussed would jeopardise independent access by civil society without the consent of the national government. Furthermore this instrument is very valuable as it offers flexibility allowing access by different type, size, and status of organisations as well as individual human rights defenders.
- Introducing a **CSO support fund** within national/regional indicative programmes within all geographic areas.

There should be a move towards ensuring **transparency and accountability of external funds**: budgetisation of the European Development Fund and strict limits on **trust funds**.

2.6.2 Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid at the EU level has proven its genuine added value: the critical volume of aid at EU level enables funded actions to have greater impact. It also allows the EU and its Member States to build a common position and influence the international humanitarian system.

With only 0.6% of EU budget in the 2014-2020 MFF, the EU – through its partners - provides life-saving humanitarian assistance to more than 120 million victims of disasters or conflicts around the globe. And most of EU humanitarian aid is delivered through NGOs which, as stated in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, are a direct expression of active citizenship at the service of the humanitarian cause and solidarity with crisis affected populations.

The EU humanitarian aid has been and should remain based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and provided according to a needs based approach. That is why the next MFF should:

- maintain a **separate and specific budget line for humanitarian aid**, based on the current regulation/instrument, as a guarantee for the respect of humanitarian principles, a needs-based approach and flexible and timely delivery of aid;
- provide an **increased allocation for humanitarian aid** in order to answer growing needs, implement the commitments taken at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and improve aid efficiency;
- foresee an **equal level of commitment and payment appropriations** for humanitarian aid to avoid any liquidity crisis;
- ensure access to an instrument such as the current **Emergency Aid Reserve** to address crises arising in non-EU countries and used as a flexibility instrument, i.e. mobilised in exceptional cases, on top of a humanitarian aid budget already fit for purpose.

Beyond the humanitarian budget line, the next MFF must provide the means to **implement the WHS commitments**, including in other relevant policy sectors: investments, can also be preventive, through development funding and policy focused on disaster prone contexts well before an emergency strikes, and should be part of an overall strategy to reduce and manage risks at the national and community level.

2.7 Mainstreaming

2.7.1 Gender Equality

Gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming are principles that need to be applied in the next MFF. EU public money must be spent in a transparent and accountable manner and the EU budget must deliver results that increase the well-being of all women and men living in Europe.

Gender budgeting as defined by the [Council of Europe](#) is the “application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary processes. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditure in order to promote gender equality.”

Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective through the EU budget and taking into account gender inequalities and the different situations of women and men can make the limited EU budget more efficient and allow it to have a real impact. Without proper gender equality objectives, targets, indicators, and gender-segregated data, it is not possible to know whether EU financed projects and activities in fields such as energy, environment,

development, and transport are successful in their specific aims and whether they contribute to greater gender equality or perpetuate gender inequalities. Introducing elements of gender budgeting into EU budgetary processes will take the EU's Treaty commitment to gender mainstreaming one step further and fill the well-documented gaps in the existing gender mainstreaming practices within EU financing programmes. Implementing gender budgeting has already a legal basis in EU law and the EU budget is easily amenable to gender budgeting. Understood as the application of gender mainstreaming in budgetary processes, gender budgeting is rooted in the articles 2 and 3 of TEU and the horizontal clause 8 of the TFEU.] Experience in Sweden and Denmark shows that it is straightforward to implement gender mainstreaming in budgets that are, like the EU budget, activity-based and result orientated. The [feasibility study](#) on gender-responsive budgeting at EU-level confirms that despite its unique features, the EU budget is suitable for gender budgeting. It concludes that considerations of a gender dimension in the EU budgetary process should take place in the planning phase for the MFF. Because the MFF will be agreed by the Council and the European Parliament, the ownership of and commitment to gender budgeting of all the European Institutions will be ensured. Gender-responsive budgeting would require the involvement of experts, training and some investment in specific resources.

The EWL recommends that the EU introduces gender budgeting in the post-2020 MFF through three simultaneous processes:

- 1)The post-2020 MFF itself must be gender-sensitive in terms of sources of revenue, expenditure categories, and governance tools. Therefore, the MFF has to be subjected to gender impact assessment before it is adopted;
- 2)The proposal for the next MFF must make a commitment to gender budgeting and introduce structures needed to ensure that the gender mainstreaming of budgetary processes will be properly supported and monitored in all the Directorate Generals (DGs). These structures could include a strong coordinating structure within DG Budget or within the Secretariat General, the creation of a gender budgeting focal point in every DG and the creation of an inter-service gender budgeting working group consisting of officials from different DGs, and the allocation of the appropriate financial and human resources;
- 3)The commitment to gender-responsive budgeting in the MFF must go side-by-side with a similar commitment in the regulations of the post-2020 financial instruments and programmes and the operationalisation of these commitments must be ensured in corresponding strategic documents.

2.7.2 Sustainable Development Goals

In line with international obligations, **Sustainable Development Goals** should be mainstreamed in the next MFF.

2.8 Communication

CSE believes that the EU needs to be shaping differently EU Communication campaigns and engagement with citizens.

This is also true as regards communication on EU funding: The EU must be communicating the added value of EU funds and investment to its citizens, also at national level.

We also believe that the EU must show its commitment to human rights and democracy both in its external and internal actions. It should therefore fund an information campaign on fundamental rights and the right of redress for citizens, as well as promoting the added value of civil society.

Dialogue with citizens at national level should be re-organised so as to develop these bottom up in dialogue with representative and mainstream CSOs and citizens movements, and allow them to reach out more effectively to a much larger public.

3. Better access to funding for CSOs

Ensuring access to funds for CSOs in the next funding programmes generation: in discussions on legislative programmes particular attention should be paid to:

- access by CSOs to the different types of funds;
- the need for specific sub programme or priorities for CSOs, level of co-funding, allowing possibilities for smaller grants;
- maintaining operational grants.

Diverse funding modalities and mechanisms should be available to civil society within all instruments and programmes both within internal policies and external aid.

4. Dialogue with civil society

To ensure an EU budget with added value and results, **civil society organisations must be fully engaged** not only in the **preparation and discussion** of the next MFF,

but also **in programming** (definition, implementation and evaluation) throughout all instruments and programmes within the different headings.