

EU development programming for biodiversity and climate must heed people's voices

The EU is the world's largest aid donor and a major political actor with a strong influence over global policies. The EU recognises civil society as an essential actor in policy making and implementation, specifically in the development sector. Therefore, it is committed to maintaining an inclusive political dialogue with civil society organisations (CSO) at both the regional and the national level.

European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on development, climate, the environment, and social justice welcomed the external dimension of the [European Green Deal](#)¹ in 2019 as it could be used as a tool to align the EU's global development, climate and biodiversity policies.

The programming of the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – which was launched in November 2020 – can truly shape coherent EU support and funding for human development, governance, gender justice, climate, and biodiversity.

In line with the [NDICI regulation](#)² which states that '*civil society organisations should have a specific complementary and additional role by virtue of its global nature and its independence of action from the consent of the governments and public authorities of the third countries concerned*', programming should include a wide range of civil society actors and organisations representing local beneficiaries including women in every step of the process.

In most EU partner countries, initial consultations on the NDICI's programming took place, although the quality and transparency of the process varied greatly on the ground. EU Delegations are now working on finalising their multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs). Yet, despite the European Green Deal being one of the five core priorities for partnerships with third countries, EU Delegations' capacities and resources for climate and the environment vary a lot across geographies.

Leveraging the expertise of CSOs working on trade, social justice, governance, human rights, climate, and environmental policies on the ground and at European level would ensure EU Delegations' programming priorities respond to the needs of women, youth, Indigenous and other community groups.



¹ *Making the European Green Deal work for International Partnerships*, February 2020, <https://www.fern.org/publications-insight/making-the-european-green-deal-work-for-international-partnerships-2088/>

² Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) (COM(2018)460), June 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A460%3AFIN>

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic's strong impact on the programming timeline, partnerships with civil society in devising inclusive, holistic, and accountable solutions should not be put aside. As MIPs are being shaped, the upcoming months represent an important opportunity for strengthening the voices and participation of civil society stakeholders including NGOs, and Indigenous and local communities.

Failure to engage the affected communities can seriously undermine the integrity of climate and environmental programming in EU partner countries, in many of which corruption is a serious problem. Increased civil society participation and oversight, on the other hand, can help strengthen accountability and trust.

Granting NGOs and local communities a meaningful role will ensure that programmes are well designed to address the root causes of social, gender, environmental and climate injustices.



Assistance under the thematic programmes for human rights and democracy and civil society organisations should have a specific complementary and additional role by virtue of its global nature and its independence of action from the consent of the governments and public authorities of the third countries concerned"

NDICI regulation

Recommendations

- » The European Commission should provide further guidance to EU delegations to organise transparent, adequate, and inclusive consultations during the programming process. Consultations at country level should be held in person as much as possible, and be inclusive of civil society's diversity, allowing stakeholders to provide inputs into core programming documents throughout the programming phase and during implementation.
- » EU delegations must ensure better access to information (such as through clear and transparent announcements on official EU delegations' websites) about the programming process, and publish the outcomes of these consultations.
- » The Commission and EU delegations should strengthen collaboration with relevant EU NGOs as they can support outreach efforts to all relevant CSO stakeholders, particularly those working with vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- » EU delegations should guarantee more diverse participation in the future. Because inclusion of climate and environmental actors is limited in CSO roadmaps, future revisions of CSO roadmaps and outreach should incorporate a more diverse range of civil society, from grassroots, Indigenous, youth and women's groups, to climate justice activists and environmental defenders.

Participatory and effective consultations will be key for agreeing ambitious and impactful thematic and geographic programmes under the NDICI that are socially just, and rights-based, and truly address the global biodiversity and climate crises.

It is crucial that the EU reflects its commitments under the European Green Deal, multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027, and European Consensus for Development.