

## Funding Working Group on (Future) European Funding Opportunities

Report based on inputs from:

- the Funding working on 16/04/2026
- and available public sources
- Please find [here the link to the presentation from the European Civic Forum](#).

### Quick recap

The Funding Working Group of the European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity held a meeting to discuss funding opportunities and challenges facing member organizations. Participants shared experiences about declining national government funding and the need to diversify funding sources, including exploring EU programs like Erasmus+ and CERV calls, as well as private foundations and partnerships. Information about the ongoing Multi-Annual Financial Framework negotiations and potential impacts on EU funding for civil society organizations were shared. Members discussed strategies for adapting to changing funding landscapes, including using Global Citizenship Education as a framework to access different types of funding, and explored potential collaboration opportunities. The group also heard about ongoing research into the relationship between global citizenship education investments and public attitudes toward development cooperation, and discussed a potential citizen petition related to civil society support.

### Context and purpose of the meeting

This meeting of the Funding Working Group brought together representatives of European NGO platforms, networks and academic partners to exchange insights on the rapidly changing funding and political landscape for civil society and global solidarity work. The primary aim was to jointly assess current and future funding opportunities at European and national levels, share intelligence on policy developments, and explore possibilities for collaboration. The meeting took place against the backdrop of shrinking civic space, declining national budgets, increasing competition for EU funding, and a broader shift towards private-sector involvement and security-driven spending at EU and national level.

### Participants

FINGO (Finland), CISU (Denmark), COP (Italy), 11.11.11 (Belgium), Grupa Zagranica (Poland), LAFEDE (Catalunia, Spain), PARTIN (Netherlands), LAPAS (Lithuania), SLOGA (Slovenia), La Guilde (France), Lianes Cooperation (France), EWNT (Thüringen, Germany), CLI (Germany), Radboud University (Netherlands), Wilde Ganzen (Netherlands)

### Overview of the funding landscape

Participants shared views and intelligence on the most relevant EU funding instruments. Considerable uncertainty remains around the future of the DEAR programme, particularly whether further calls will be launched within the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). While there is no indication that DEAR will disappear as an instrument, it is not

clearly earmarked within the next MFF (2028–2034), and competition is expected to intensify significantly.

Alternative EU instruments were discussed. Erasmus+ was generally seen as offering limited strategic value for this group due to its relatively small budgets and high partner demands. Greater attention focused on the CERV programme, particularly the anticipated “Union Values” sub-granting call. Several participants noted that, while global education cannot be the primary framing, elements such as democracy, active citizenship, decolonisation and civic engagement can be used to meaningfully connect global solidarity work to EU values. Horizon Europe funding was identified as a possible growth area, as budgets in this programme are increasing. However, access is contingent on strong academic leadership, and NGOs typically play a supporting role focused on dissemination and societal impact. Participants emphasised the importance of building long-term relationships with universities in order to engage meaningfully in Horizon consortia.

### **Political developments and the next MFF**

An extensive exchange took place on the evolving EU budgetary framework. (See the [presentation](#) from the European Civic Forum). The European Union is currently negotiating the next seven-year budget (2028–2034), with fewer thematic headings and programmes than in previous cycles. While this brings greater flexibility through annual budget procedures, it also reduces the level of earmarked funding for specific sectors, including civil society. Several participants highlighted that an increasing proportion of EU funds will be managed at national level, heightening political risks in countries where civil society funding is under pressure. Particular concern was expressed about the growing role of defence expenditure and private-sector financing chains within EU external action, notably through initiatives such as the Global Gateway. At the same time, there may be opportunities for large, well-positioned consortia to engage in negotiated funding rather than purely competitive calls.

### **National funding context**

Across countries, participants reported similar trends: cuts or stagnation in national development budgets, greater politicisation of funding decisions, and increasing pressure to direct funds to private companies rather than civil society organisations. Examples were shared from France, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Slovenia and elsewhere, illustrating how funding originally intended for NGOs is increasingly channelled through or shared with the private sector, often under the banner of impact, innovation or security. This context reinforces the urgency of diversification strategies and cross-border collaboration.

### **Reflections on engagement with the European Commission and advocacy**

Participants underlined the importance of continued coordinated advocacy through platforms such as CONCORD and national NGO platforms. Particular attention was drawn to efforts to safeguard minimum spending targets for civil society within the Global Europe instrument and to secure recognition of global citizenship education and citizen initiatives as essential components of development cooperation. Engagement with MEPs and national

governments was seen as critical but uneven across countries. While some delegations enjoy direct access to key rapporteurs or officials, others face limited political leverage. The discussion underscored the importance of speaking with a collective voice and avoiding fragmented, organisation-by-organisation lobbying.

### **Collaboration opportunities**

Several concrete collaboration opportunities were identified. There was broad interest in exploring a joint application for the upcoming CERV “Union Values” sub-granting call, provided a suitable lead applicant with sufficient organisational capacity can be identified. Participants also expressed willingness to align on advocacy messaging related to the future of DEAR-type instruments and civil society funding in the next MFF. In addition, a potential EU-level citizen initiative was introduced, aiming to mobilise support for the protection of civic space and the role of civil society in Europe. While still in an early stage, participants were encouraged to remain alert and prepared to engage.

### **Research and knowledge collaboration**

A research initiative was presented that examines the relationship between investments in global citizenship education and public support for development cooperation, using Eurobarometer data and national policy analysis. Participants were invited to support the research by sharing policy documents, contextual insights and networks. In return, the research team offered early access to findings that may be strategically valuable for advocacy and positioning.

### **Emerging strategic directions**

Across the discussion, several strategic directions emerged clearly. First, competition for EU and national funding will continue to intensify, making collaboration, scale and strategic positioning increasingly important. Second, funding narratives must be carefully reframed to align with dominant policy agendas such as democracy, values, security and societal resilience, without losing core principles. Third, private funding and foundations are becoming more important but require clear ethical frameworks and long-term relationship building.

Finally, participants emphasised that this working group should function as a “coalition of the willing”: a space to share intelligence, test ideas and form flexible consortia, rather than a formal structure requiring full participation in every initiative.

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## **Main takeaways**

### **Funding pressure is structural and increasing**

Across countries, participants reported shrinking or stagnating national budgets for development cooperation, global citizenship education and civil society support. At the same time, competition for EU funding is increasing, partly because larger NGOs that previously relied on Global Europe or national funding are expected to “move into” programmes such

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as CERV or Agora. This creates pressure on organisations traditionally active in citizen initiatives and global education.

### **DEAR remains important but uncertain**

There is no concrete information confirming another DEAR call within the current Multiannual Financial Framework, although there may still be limited “leftover” funds under the current period. Despite uncertainty, participants expect DEAR-type instruments to remain relevant in the future EU budget, although likely under stronger competition and less earmarking.

### **CERV (Union Values) seen as a short-term opportunity**

The upcoming CERV “Union Values” sub-granting call (expected in autumn) was widely seen as a realistic opportunity. However, participants emphasised that projects must be framed around democracy, active citizenship and EU values rather than global education as such. Reframing global solidarity work (e.g. decolonisation, democracy, civic space) is essential for eligibility.

### **Horizon funding offers scale but requires universities**

Horizon Europe budgets are large and growing compared to civil society funding streams. However, successful participation generally requires a **university lead partner** and a more academic approach. NGOs typically fit best in dissemination, societal impact and practice-based components. Building long-term partnerships with universities was highlighted as strategically important.

### **Shift towards private sector and negotiated funding**

Multiple participants noted a growing role for private sector funding and blended finance, both at EU and national levels (e.g. Global Gateway). This presents both risks and opportunities. Some argued that large consortia of NGOs could attempt to access negotiated funding streams, but this would require scale, co-financing capacity and clear positioning.

### **Civic space and democracy are losing political priority**

Several participants reported decreasing political interest in democracy, values and civic space at EU level, including in the European Parliament. Budgets for programmes such as Agora may be reduced, while funding for defence and security is expected to grow. This reinforces the need for stronger advocacy and coalition-building.

### **Advocacy must be collective**

There was strong consensus that individual organisations lobbying “on their own” is increasingly ineffective. Collective advocacy via national platforms, CONCORD and EU-level coalitions is essential, especially in discussions around the next MFF, Global Europe, and minimum spending targets for civil society.

### **Global Citizenship Education as a strategic bridge**

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) was identified as a useful conceptual bridge to connect global solidarity work to EU priorities such as democracy, values, citizenship and decolonisation. UNESCO’s framing of GCE was referenced as helpful for positioning projects within CERV and related programmes.

### **Research and evidence matter**

A research initiative was presented examining whether investments in global citizenship education correlate with public support for development cooperation and ODA budgets.

Participants were invited to support the research with policy insights and documentation, in exchange for early access to findings that could strengthen advocacy and positioning.

### **The network as a “coalition of the willing”**

The funding working group was reaffirmed as a flexible space for sharing intelligence, forming ad-hoc consortia, and supporting each other’s initiatives. Participation in specific projects is voluntary, and the value lies in openness, trust and timely information exchange.

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## **Links shared in the chat**

### **CERV & EU funding**

- Latvian national overview of CERV calls (in Latvian):  
<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/cerv-konkursi-0>
- Indicative calendar of CERV calls (2026):  
[https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/1f0d875e-c3b4-4933-ac09-de44ae1c4e20\\_en?filename=Calls%20for%20proposal%20CERV%202026\\_indicative%20planning.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/1f0d875e-c3b4-4933-ac09-de44ae1c4e20_en?filename=Calls%20for%20proposal%20CERV%202026_indicative%20planning.pdf)

### **Horizon Europe**

- Horizon call on democracy and governance:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-05>

### **Global trends, data & analysis**

- OECD report on private philanthropy for development:  
[https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/03/private-philanthropy-for-development-third-edition\\_c4f4bea1/98e676c0-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/03/private-philanthropy-for-development-third-edition_c4f4bea1/98e676c0-en.pdf)
- OECD Insights: historic decline in foreign aid (preliminary 2025 ODA data):  
<https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2026/04/a-historic-decline-in-foreign-aid-preliminary-2025-oda-data.html>
- Article on far-right philanthropy:  
<https://couriernewsroom.com/news/andrea-levere-why-far-right-philanthropy-keeps-winning/>

### **Global citizenship & civic space**

- UNESCO – Global Citizenship Education:  
<https://www.unesco.org/en/global-citizenship-peace-education/need-know?hub=87862>
- Civil Society Interest Group (MEPs supporting civil society):  
<https://civilsocietyinterestgroup.eu/>