

Funding Working Group on (Future) European Funding Opportunities

Based on:

- Funding Working Group meeting of 8 October 2026
- Previous Funding Working Group report (April 2026)
- Updated analysis of European funding developments shared prior to the meeting

Quick recap

The Funding Working Group met to exchange updates on funding developments across Europe and to reflect on the implications of emerging European budgetary decisions. Participants confirmed that the trends identified earlier in 2026 are continuing and, in many cases, intensifying. National funding for civil society organisations, global citizenship education and international solidarity remains under pressure across most countries. At the same time, uncertainty persists regarding the future of the DEAR programme and the role of civil society within the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

The discussion highlighted growing concern about the impact of funding cuts on national NGO platforms and civil society infrastructures. Participants also explored alternative funding opportunities, including CERV, Erasmus+, EEA/Norway Grants and private foundations. There was broad agreement that future proposals will increasingly need to be framed around democracy, civic participation, democratic resilience and European values.

Participants

Representatives participated from: CISU (Denmark), HAND (Hungary), COP (Italy), RESACOOOP (France), Lafede, (Catalonia/Spain), Partnership Fund (Poland), EUCan Aid (Belgium), Wilde Ganzen (Netherlands)

Developments in the European Funding Landscape Since the Previous Meeting

The Working Group reviewed developments in the European funding environment since the previous meeting and compared these with the findings of the earlier analysis prepared by the working group. Participants noted that several developments that were still uncertain during the previous discussions have become significantly clearer. While the overall trend of increasing competition for funding remains unchanged, the policy and institutional framework within which future funding opportunities will emerge is now becoming more visible.

The Next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034)

A major development since the previous meeting is the publication of the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework proposal by the European Commission. The proposal foresees a significantly restructured EU budget architecture, with greater emphasis on flexibility, consolidation of programmes, and implementation through national and regional partnership mechanisms.

Participants noted that this development confirms several concerns previously identified by the Working Group:

- increasing competition for EU resources;
- reduced visibility of smaller thematic funding instruments;
- greater influence of Member States on implementation priorities;
- increased importance of national-level advocacy alongside Brussels-level engagement.

Particular concern was expressed regarding the potential implications for independent civil society organisations in countries where civic space is under pressure.

The group concluded that influencing national governments may become increasingly important for securing access to future European funding streams.

Transformation of CERV into AgoraEU

The Working Group discussed developments concerning the future of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme. The proposed MFF foresees the creation of a new programme called AgoraEU, which would bring together the current CERV programme and Creative Europe. Participants noted that while this proposal eliminates CERV as a standalone programme after 2027, support for:

- democracy,
- active citizenship,
- participation,
- civil society,
- European values,

is expected to continue within the new programme architecture. The group agreed that this development reinforces the importance of positioning Global Citizenship Education and international solidarity initiatives within wider democracy, participation and civic engagement agendas.

Continued Opportunities Under CERV Until 2027

Although discussions increasingly focused on the post-2027 environment, participants emphasised that important opportunities remain available under the current CERV programme.

The recently adopted multiannual work programme confirms the continuation of:

- Union Values calls;
- intermediary and regranting mechanisms;
- operating grants;
- European civic participation actions;

through the end of 2027.

Participants therefore considered CERV to remain one of the most promising short-term opportunities available to members of the network.

Future of the DEAR Programme

The future of the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme remained one of the most important topics of discussion.

Participants noted that while no successor instrument has yet been formally confirmed, DEAR remains operational and continues to be recognised by the European Commission as an important mechanism for promoting Global Citizenship Education, sustainable development awareness, democratic participation and citizen engagement.

Several participants referred to indications that resources may still remain within the current programme and that opportunities for continued advocacy towards EU institutions remain important.

The group concluded that maintaining pressure on national governments, European Parliament members and Commission officials remains essential to secure future support for Global Citizenship Education beyond 2027.

Growing Relevance of Horizon Europe

The earlier analysis identified Horizon Europe as a potentially important source of funding for organisations capable of participating in research partnerships.

Participants noted that this assessment has become even more relevant following the increasing prominence of democracy, democratic resilience and civic participation within EU policy discussions.

The European Commission has linked future research investments to priorities such as:

- democratic resilience;
- protection of democratic institutions;
- combating disinformation;
- citizen participation;
- social cohesion;
- democratic governance.

The group agreed that organisations working on Global Citizenship Education possess practical expertise that could make them attractive partners in future university-led consortia.

Civil Society Funding and Operating Grants

Participants discussed growing concerns expressed by European civil society networks regarding the future of structural support for EU-level civil society organisations.

Recent reactions from civil society umbrella organisations have highlighted concerns regarding:

- the visibility of civil society funding under the new MFF architecture;
- future access to operating grants;
- adequate consultation of civil society within funding governance structures.

The Working Group noted that these developments underline the importance of continued collective advocacy and cooperation at European level.

Increasing Importance of Philanthropic Funding

The Working Group confirmed findings from the previous analysis that philanthropic funding is becoming increasingly important as government-funded opportunities decline in several countries.

Participants observed that major foundations are increasingly supporting initiatives related to:

- democracy;
- civic engagement;
- democratic resilience;
- social cohesion;
- citizen participation.

This trend aligns closely with emerging EU policy priorities and may create new opportunities for organisations capable of connecting Global Citizenship Education with these themes.

Strategic Implications for the Network

Based on both the updated funding analysis and the discussion during the meeting, participants agreed on several strategic conclusions:

- CERV remains the strongest European funding opportunity until 2027.
- Advocacy concerning the future of DEAR should remain a network priority.
- Horizon Europe should be explored more systematically through partnerships with universities and research organisations.
- National-level advocacy will become increasingly important under the proposed MFF architecture.
- Global Citizenship Education should increasingly be connected to democracy, participation and resilience narratives while maintaining its international solidarity perspective.
- Consortium-building and joint fundraising are becoming essential strategies for network members operating in increasingly constrained funding environments.

The main conclusion of the earlier analysis remains valid: funding opportunities for international solidarity and global citizenship education are becoming more competitive while political priorities increasingly favour democracy, security, resilience and strategic autonomy.

Several updates were noted:

Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034)

Participants discussed the recently proposed EU budget architecture.

Key concerns included:

- Consolidation of programmes into larger funding instruments.
- Increasing influence of national governments on funding priorities.
- Reduced earmarking for specific thematic areas.
- Greater uncertainty regarding dedicated funding for civil society and global citizenship education.

The proposed Agora framework, which is expected to absorb a range of existing programmes, was mentioned as an example of this shift toward larger and more flexible funding envelopes. Participants expressed concern that increased national influence may create challenges in countries where civic space and civil society support are under pressure.

DEAR Programme

The future of DEAR remained a major concern throughout the discussion. Participants noted:

- No official confirmation exists regarding DEAR's place in the next MFF.
- Signs from recent interactions with the DEAR team remain cautiously positive.
- Approximately €27 million is believed to remain within the current DEAR budget line.
- Questions remain about whether a final call under the current MFF could still be launched.

Several participants stressed the importance of maintaining advocacy efforts towards national governments, DG INTPA and European decision-makers to ensure that some form of DEAR-type instrument survives beyond 2027.

National developments

France

The most alarming update came from France. RESACOOOP reported that funding earmarked for national development networks had effectively been withdrawn after organisations had already incurred costs. This has left several networks facing acute financial uncertainty and cash-flow challenges. Organisations have already committed expenditure and now risk significant financial deficits.

Hungary

HAND reported that no structural government funding exists for development NGOs, a situation that has persisted for many years. Current activities depend largely on:

- DEAR projects,
- Erasmus+ projects,
- CERV sub-granting opportunities,
- Norway/EEA Grants.

A positive development was the unexpected publication of a new governmental call on awareness raising regarding global issues. However, concern remains over the future disappearance of DEAR funding.

The reopening of Norway/EEA civil society funding after years of political tensions was also noted as a potentially important opportunity.

Italy

COP reported continuing uncertainty regarding future government support and future calls for global citizenship education. Political developments and upcoming elections add to the uncertainty surrounding future funding opportunities.

Spain/Catalonia

LAFEDE reported increasing concerns linked to upcoming elections and possible political shifts. Although current support remains relatively stable, organisations are actively seeking diversification strategies in anticipation of potential future reductions in public support.

Denmark

The situation remains relatively stable compared with many other countries. Nevertheless, participants observed growing pressure on funding streams dedicated to global citizenship education and international solidarity.

Netherlands

Wilde Ganzen clarified that the Netherlands currently represents a more positive exception. Funding levels for global citizenship education and citizen initiatives remain relatively strong, allowing Dutch organisations to continue participating actively in European partnerships and co-financing arrangements.

Belgium

EU Can Aid reported serious indirect impacts from budget cuts. Smaller organisations increasingly face:

- growing competition for private donations,
- increased numbers of partnership requests,
- declining financial stability among medium-sized organisations.

Funding reductions in refugee support, social services and homelessness programmes were highlighted as indicators of wider societal pressures affecting the civil society sector more broadly.

Private funding and foundations

An important emerging trend concerns philanthropic funding.

Participants noted that major European foundations increasingly focus on:

- democratic resilience,
- civic participation,
- democratic institutions,
- citizen engagement.

This development reinforces the conclusion reached in earlier meetings that Global Citizenship Education may be most successful when positioned as a contributor to democracy, participation and societal resilience rather than solely as development education.

Collaboration opportunities

CERV

CERV continues to be regarded as the most promising short-term opportunity for joint initiatives.

Participants agreed that successful proposals will likely need to focus on:

- democracy,
- active citizenship,
- civic participation,
- democratic resilience,
- European values,

while connecting these themes to international solidarity and global citizenship.

Erasmus+

The group revisited earlier discussions on unsuccessful Erasmus applications. Interest remains in revisiting project concepts if suitable opportunities emerge, although no concrete resubmission process is currently underway.

Horizon Europe

The earlier conclusion remains valid that Horizon Europe offers substantial opportunities but primarily through university-led consortia. Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining relationships with academic institutions.

Joint fundraising

Interest was expressed in future joint fundraising initiatives and consortium development. Several organisations indicated their willingness to participate in future proposals when opportunities are identified.

Strategic discussion: reframing the narrative

One of the most important strategic discussions concerned positioning and language. Participants reflected on how international solidarity and global citizenship education can be framed more effectively within emerging European funding priorities.

Possible framing concepts included:

- democratic resilience;
- active citizenship;
- civic engagement;
- citizen participation;
- defence of democratic values;
- European solidarity;
- democratic culture.

At the same time, participants stressed the importance of maintaining an international perspective and avoiding a complete shift toward inward-looking European narratives. The

challenge will be to connect global solidarity with European democratic priorities in a coherent way.

Agreed follow-up actions

Advocacy

- Continue monitoring developments concerning DEAR.
- Explore possibilities for obtaining clearer information regarding the remaining DEAR budget and possible future calls.
- Follow lobbying initiatives targeting the Council and national development ministries concerning DEAR's inclusion in the next MFF.

Funding opportunities

- Monitor upcoming CERV calls closely.
- Explore consortium opportunities among interested members.
- Share leads regarding Erasmus+, Horizon and foundation funding.

Network collaboration

- Maintain the Funding Working Group as a flexible "coalition of the willing".
- Use the network actively for intelligence sharing and consortium formation.
- Continue informal exchanges on narrative development and proposal positioning.
- Main conclusions

The meeting confirmed that the trends identified earlier in 2026 are becoming more pronounced:

- Competition for funding continues to increase.
- National funding environments are deteriorating in several countries.
- The future of DEAR remains uncertain but advocacy opportunities still exist.
- CERV remains the most promising short-term European funding route.
- Democracy and citizen participation are becoming the dominant funding narratives.
- Private foundations increasingly prioritise democratic resilience.
- Collaboration and consortium-building are becoming essential survival strategies for organisations working on global citizenship education and international solidarity.

Next meeting

This was not discussed. Therefore, the secretariat proposes the 8th of April 2026.

The proposed theme would be 'Other than EU opportunities to fund support for CIGS'. You can register through [this registration page](#).