



Regional webinars on Understanding EU funding mechanisms and application procedures

Report

Table of contents

I. Executive Summary.....	2
II. Overview of CSO and LA Funding.....	2
III. Main Discussion Points (Global).....	3
IV. Regional Summaries.....	4
V. Annex: Questions and Answers	6

I. Executive Summary

The European Commission's Directorate General of International Partnerships, via the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), organised a series of regional information sessions to provide an overview of the overall framework and tools for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Local Authorities (LAs) access to EU funding under NDICI-Global Europe. The sessions, delivered with the participation of representatives from the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships, brought together more than 1600 participants from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean to learn about the thematic programme Civil Society organisations and available frameworks for local authorities and how to access funding, and ask clarification questions. Three sessions were held on the 15 and 17 April with interpretation in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

The presentations provided a detailed overview of DG INTPA's financial support to civil society, including a global allocation of approximately €1.2 billion for CSOs for the period 2021-2027, with phased commitments across the programming period, and an estimated €500 million accessible to local authorities through geographic programmes. The presentations explained calls for proposals managed by EU Delegations, the application process (concept note and full proposal), and the use of digital tools such as PADOR and PROSPECT.

Participants raised a broad range of questions related to access, eligibility, partnerships, and procedural complexity. Key issues included co-financing requirements, the ability of smaller and grassroots organisations to access funding, the role of intermediaries, and the practical functioning of mechanisms such as Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP). Additional questions addressed the participation of local authorities, the absence of a dedicated thematic funding line for LAs, and opportunities linked to broader EU initiatives such as the Global Gateway strategy.

The European Commission responded by clarifying the regulatory framework, application procedures, and available support tools. They emphasised the importance of early preparation, alignment with call priorities, and bringing capacity and strong and well-structured partnerships. The role of EU Delegations was highlighted as central in defining country-level priorities, managing calls for proposals, and facilitating dialogue with stakeholders.

II. Overview of CSO and LA Funding

The EU has allocated approximately €1.2 billion for civil society programming over the 2021–2027 period under NDICI-Global Europe, with phased allocations of roughly €717 million for 2021–2024 and €428 million for 2025–2027. The full presentation with regional allocations

can be found [here](#).

Local Authorities (LAs), while not benefiting from a dedicated thematic envelope, can access approximately €500 million through geographic programmes. These funds are implemented at country level and require alignment with national and regional priorities defined by EU Delegations. An overview of the toolkit for LAs can be found [here](#).

In parallel, the Global Gateway strategy serves as a broader investment framework, mobilising over €306 billion to date, particularly in infrastructure sectors such as digital, climate and energy, transport, health, and education and research. A public page on [Global Gateway](#) can be found on capacity4dev [here](#).

Access to EU funding is structured through a standardised application system and set of mandatory procedures. Applications are submitted through a two-stage process, beginning with a concept note and followed, upon pre-selection, by a full proposal. Applicants are required to use specific digital tools, including the creation of an EU Login account, registration in the PADOR (Potential Applicant Data Online Registration) system, and submission of proposals via the PROSPECT platform. EU grants also require co-financing, meaning that applicants must contribute a portion of the project budget—an element that can present challenges for smaller organizations with limited financial capacity. Calls for proposals are managed in a decentralised manner by EU Delegations, making proactive engagement at country level essential for accessing funding opportunities and understanding local priorities.

Several tools have been developed to facilitate access to EU funding and support applicants throughout the process. These include the [INTPA Learning Academy](#), an e-learning platform designed to guide organisations in preparing concept notes and full proposals; the [Capacity4Dev](#) platform, which provides a repository of guidance materials, resources, and shared knowledge; and the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) mechanism, which enables re-granting and allows smaller or grassroots CSOs to access funding indirectly through larger projects.

III. Main Discussion Points (Global)

Across all regions, participants raised a consistent set of questions reflecting common challenges in accessing and navigating EU funding. A central concern was whether application procedures could be simplified. In response, it was clarified that while tools such as PROSPECT and the INTPA Learning Academy have improved usability, the overall complexity remains necessary to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of public funds. Participants also asked whether more funding would be directed directly to local actors in line with localisation commitments. The response highlighted that, although this is a strategic priority for the European Commission, progress is gradual due to risk management considerations, with mechanisms such as Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) serving as

interim solutions to broaden access.

Another frequently raised question concerned how organisations can access information on upcoming funding opportunities early enough to prepare competitive proposals. Participants were advised to regularly monitor EU Delegation websites, the Funding & Tenders Portal, and platforms such as Capacity4Dev, as well as to engage in networks and dialogue processes. The importance of early preparation was repeatedly emphasised, including setting up EU Login accounts, completing PADOR registration, and familiarizing organisations with application tools before calls are published.

Questions also focused on what makes a proposal successful. Responses consistently stressed the need for strong alignment with call priorities, clear identification of target groups, and a coherent logical framework linking objectives, activities, and budget. Well-structured and meaningful partnerships were identified as critical, with evaluators placing greater importance on clarity of roles and complementarity than on the size of consortia. Participants further asked how smaller organisations can realistically compete, to which the guidance emphasised leveraging niche expertise, engaging in partnerships, and accessing funding indirectly through re-granting mechanisms where available.

Finally, participants highlighted the need for more accessible capacity-building support and clearer communication. In response, presenters pointed to existing tools and training opportunities, while acknowledging the need for broader dissemination and more localised support.

IV. Regional Summaries

Across the regional sessions, while many questions were shared globally, each region raised specific concerns reflecting its context, capacity, and level of engagement with EU systems. In **Africa**, participants focused primarily on access constraints and structural barriers. A key question was how smaller and grassroots CSOs can realistically meet co-financing requirements and administrative standards. The response emphasised that while co-financing is unlikely to be removed, organisations can mitigate this through partnerships, combining funding sources, and, where allowed, in-kind contributions. Participants also asked whether simplified funding windows or direct access mechanisms exist for local actors. Presenters clarified that although no dedicated simplified calls are systematically available, mechanisms such as Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) provide an important indirect entry point for smaller or non-registered organisations. Another recurring question concerned how to access funding without relying on international intermediaries. While direct access is possible through standard EU systems, it requires strong financial and operational capacity, which explains the continued reliance on larger organisations. Finally, participants sought guidance on engaging EU Delegations, with responses stressing the importance of participating in consultations, monitoring local calls, and using coordination platforms. With €175.5 million

allocated, Sub-Saharan Africa represents a major focus area.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**, the focus shifted from access barriers to strategic positioning and alignment with EU priorities. Participants frequently asked how to better align proposals with EU expectations and improve competitiveness. The response emphasised careful reading of call guidelines, strong alignment with Delegation-defined priorities, and integration of cross-cutting themes such as governance, climate, and inclusion. Another key question concerned the role and influence of EU Delegations in shaping funding opportunities. It was clarified that Delegations play a central role in defining country priorities, and that stakeholders can influence programming through structured dialogues and consultations. Participants also showed strong interest in engaging with the Global Gateway strategy, asking how CSOs and local authorities can participate. The response highlighted that while direct access to large-scale investments is limited, organisations can engage through partnerships, soft components of projects, and early dialogue with implementing actors. Questions on funding opportunities for local authorities were also prominent; presenters clarified that although there is no dedicated thematic envelope, local authorities can access funding through geographic programmes and specific calls where eligible.

In **Asia and the Pacific**, discussions were shaped by regulatory environments and procedural complexity. A central question was how national laws and restrictions affect eligibility for EU funding. The response emphasised that compliance with both EU rules and national legal frameworks is required, which in some cases necessitates partnerships with eligible intermediary organisations. Participants also asked whether EU procedures could be adapted to local contexts. While core systems remain standardised, presenters explained that EU Delegations can tailor priorities and provide contextual guidance, though they cannot fundamentally alter application processes. Another major concern was how to manage the technical and administrative complexity of applications. Participants were directed to tools such as the INTPA Learning Academy and Capacity4Dev, and encouraged to build internal capacity or partner with more experienced organisations. Questions also focused on how smaller actors can remain competitive; responses highlighted the importance of niche expertise, local knowledge, and participation in consortia or FSTP-supported initiatives.

Key messages for funding access:

- Importance of engagement with EU Delegations at country level
- Early preparation significantly improves success rates
- Networks and associations (e.g., local government platforms) play a key role
- Engagement in information sessions and training is critical
- Best practices for successful applications: early preparation, strong alignment with call objectives, clear demonstration of impact and feasibility, and well-structured partnerships.

V. Annex: Questions and Answers

Sub-Saharan Africa

1. How can smaller, local CSOs overcome co-financing requirements?

Co-financing remains a standard EU requirement and is unlikely to be removed. However:

- Applicants can **combine multiple funding sources** to meet co-financing thresholds
- **In-kind contributions** may be accepted in some cases (depending on the call)
- Partnering within **consortia** can help distribute financial obligations

2. Are there simplified or dedicated funding windows for grassroots organisations?

There are no universally simplified calls, but:

- **Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)** is specifically designed to channel funds to smaller actors
- Some calls may include **smaller grant lots** or targeted eligibility criteria
- EU Delegations may tailor calls to **local contexts**, including accessibility considerations

3. How can organisations directly access EU funding without intermediaries?

Direct access is possible but requires:

- Registration in **PADOR** and use of the **PROSPECT system**
- Demonstrated financial and operational capacity
- Active monitoring of EU Delegation calls for proposals

That said, intermediaries remain common due to risk and compliance requirements.

4. How can organisations better engage with EU Delegations?

- Participate in **info sessions and consultations** organised by Delegations
- Build relationships through local coordination platforms and networks
- Monitor Delegation websites and communication channels regularly

Engagement is strongly encouraged and can improve understanding of priorities.

5. How can FSTP mechanisms be expanded or better used?

- FSTP is embedded in project design—its expansion depends on **lead applicants incorporating it**
- Organisations should seek partnerships with projects using re-granting mechanisms
- Advocacy for wider use is ongoing within EU programming discussions

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

1. How can proposals better align with EU priorities?

- Carefully review call guidelines and evaluation criteria
- Align with country-level priorities defined by EU Delegations
- Integrate cross-cutting themes (e.g., governance, climate, inclusion)

Alignment is a key evaluation factor.

2. What role do EU Delegations play, and how can actors engage with them?

- Delegations define priorities and manage calls at country level
- Engagement is possible through:
 - Participation in structured dialogues
 - Engagement in consultation processes
 - Ongoing communication via networks and platforms

3. How can CSOs and LAs engage with the Global Gateway strategy?

- Engage through projects linked to infrastructure and investment priorities
- Partner with larger implementing organisations involved in Global Gateway initiatives
- Monitor opportunities via EU platforms and Delegation communications

Direct access may be limited, but **indirect participation is realistic.**

4. Are there specific funding streams for local authorities?

- There is no dedicated global envelope exclusively for LAs
- LAs access funding through geographic programmes and thematic specific calls
- Some calls explicitly encourage or require **LA participation**

5. How can partnerships be structured to increase competitiveness?

- Ensure clear roles and responsibilities
- Demonstrate complementarity of expertise
- Build partnerships early and align with call objectives
- Avoid tokenistic inclusion of partners

Strong partnerships are often decisive in evaluations.

Asia and Pacific

1. How do national regulations affect eligibility?

- EU funding must comply with both EU rules and national legal frameworks
- In restrictive environments, organisations may need to:
 - Partner with eligible intermediaries
 - Adjust operational models to remain compliant

2. Can EU procedures be adapted to country contexts?

- Core procedures are standardised and cannot be significantly altered
- However, EU Delegations can:
 - Adjust call priorities and focus areas
 - Provide context-specific guidance

3. How can organisations manage complex administrative requirements?

- Use available tools:
 - INTPA Learning Academy for training
 - Capacity4Dev resources
- Invest in internal systems and staff capacity
- Partner with experienced organisations when needed

4. What support exists for capacity building?

- Online learning platforms and guidance materials
- Participation in info sessions and proposal workshops
- Learning through consortium partnerships

Capacity building is available but requires proactive engagement.

5. How can smaller actors compete with larger organisations?

- Focus on niche expertise and local knowledge
- Join consortia led by experienced partners
- Leverage FSTP opportunities where available

Cross-Regional Questions (Global)

1. Will EU procedures be simplified?

- Some improvements have been made (e.g., PROSPECT system)
- However, accountability requirements limit major simplification

2. Will there be more direct funding to local actors?

- The EU is committed to localization in principle
- In practice, progress is gradual due to risk management and compliance constraints

3. How can organisations access early information on calls?

- Regularly monitor:
 - EU Delegation websites
 - Funding & Tenders Portal
 - Capacity4Dev
- Engage in networks and mailing lists

4. What are best practices for building strong proposals?

- Start preparation early
- Align closely with call objectives
- Demonstrate impact, feasibility, and sustainability
- Build strong, relevant partnerships

5. How can capacity-building tools be better used?

- Increase awareness and outreach
- Integrate tools into organisational training
- Encourage peer learning and knowledge sharing