

EU external action instruments – the post-2020 architecture under the next MFF

EaP CSF position paper

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The EU external action financing instruments are currently undergoing the mid-term review. The evaluation reports have been drafted for each instrument and has declared those relevant for the Eastern Partnership (ENI, EIDHR, NSA-LA under DCI) fit for purpose. At the same time, the debate about the post 2020 architecture of the instruments has been launched. The idea presented during the hearing at the European Parliament in February 2018 by the EEAS and the European Commission, DG DEVCO, is to unite all instruments under one roof as of 2020. Under a single instrument, multiple envelopes would cover thematic and geographic priorities. Besides supporting implementation of the EU Global Strategy with principled pragmatism as the guiding policy approach, this proposal mainly aims at providing greater flexibility in moving funds from one place to another in response to burning issues like migration.

The EaP CSF does not support the “one instrument proposal” based on the following arguments:

1. The EaP CSF believes that the instruments structure should reflect the way the EU positions itself towards the neighbourhood and the rest of the world, respecting the principle of differentiation, based on contractual relationships with the partner countries. In this context, the EU neighbourhood, especially its Eastern dimension covered by the Eastern Partnership policy, has a special status (especially the countries with AA/DCFTA in place). The ENI as a specific geographic instrument is fit for purpose and can well address the needs of various partner countries as well as various stakeholders on the ground, including civil society, and link them together.
2. It is unclear how one instrument would avoid replicating the current situation, with geographic and thematic focuses resulting in too many envelopes, without oversimplification. One instrument is not a magic solution and does not automatically bring about smart flexibility; proper governance, programming and assuring complementarity of the existing instruments is a better guarantee of the dilemma of EU values versus interest being addressed in a balanced manner.
3. One single instrument could take away tools for specific and tailored civil society support – it is advisable to improve the existing structure, to better link civil society funding to other areas of reform oriented support and to focus on targeting a wide range of civil society actors, based on geographic and country-based expertise.
4. There is a danger that, on the road to the final compromise for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, the EIDHR, as a specific tool operating without a consent of the governments and addressing human rights and democracy issues that are not inherently conducive to principled pragmatism approach, could be lost. It would inadvertently damage the image of the EU as a promoter of these values.