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The EU's New Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

What Will Change for Civil Society and Philanthropy?

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AThe consultation process launched by the European Commission for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) covering the 2028-2034 period has become a priority not only for EU institutions but also for philanthropy and civil society networks across Europe. As a member of Philea (Philanthropy Europe Association), TÜSEV is contributing to this process through joint advocacy, emphasizing the need for a new EU budget that strengthens democratic participation, social inclusion, and solidarity.

What Is the New MFF and What Will It Change?

The MFF sets the European Union's budget and spending priorities for the next seven years. The draft proposal for the upcoming period has been introduced under the title "EU Budget 2028-2034: For a Stronger Europe" and will cover the years 2028 to 2034.

The Commission proposes a more streamlined, harmonised, and flexible financing architecture compared to the current period. National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRP) will be created to improve coordination between funds, bringing together the European Social Fund Plus(ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) under one framework.

While this restructuring has the potential to reduce administrative complexity and speed up access to funding, our joint assessment with Philea members highlights key concerns. The lack of binding commitments behind the proposed 14% target for social policies may weaken Europe's social mandate - particularly when compared to the previous binding minimum of 25% allocated for social inclusion. Additionally, performance-based financing could further disadvantage small-scale social economy actors.

A notable shift is the removal of a dedicated budget line for the European Social Fund. Allocations for social inclusion, child poverty reduction, and local capacity building are now left to the discretion of member states. This shift risks moving social priorities away from EU-level commitments to national political agendas.

Where Philanthropy Meets EU Policies

Like all Philea members, TÜSEV believes that philanthropy should engage with EU policies in a more systematic and impactful way. The MFF review presents a critical opportunity: foundations, donors, and social investors in Europe should be recognized not only as funders but also as partners who design and scale innovative solutions.

Our joint policy paper with Philea underlines three strategic roles for philanthropy within the EU budget landscape:

1. **Co-funder and implementation partner** – providing grants or investments alongside EU programs;
2. **Knowledge and network builder** – bringing grassroots insights and trust-based relationships into EU policy processes;
3. **Policy partner –** contributing to the development of strategic aims in fields such as social economy, environment, culture, and youth.

Philea has proposed a set of concrete measures to EU institutions, including:

- Establishing a central entry point within the European Commission to coordinate dialogue and co-funding opportunities across DGs,
- Developing a more structured dialogue,
- Consideration of more tools for collaboration between EU institutions and philanthropic organisations: co-investment and co-granting mechanisms aligned with EU priorities; matching funds and post-EU funding instruments; an EU Seal of Excellence to enable private donors to benefit from EU due diligence checks; and the possibility for foundations to participate in follow-up funding rounds.
- Creating flexible framework that accommodates the diversity of philanthropic actors across Europe and intersectoral approaches
- Ensuring simplified administrative and reporting procedures, proportionate to the local and small-scale nature of many foundation-led initiatives.

These recommendations align with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP). As Philea members, we call for earlier and more meaningful engagement of community-based organizations, foundations, and CSOs in shaping EU policies.

AgoraEU and Cultural Programs: New Opportunities, Familiar Challenges

Under the proposed MFF, the new AgoraEU program brings together culture, media, democracy, and civil society fields, with a total budget of €8.6 billion structured into three pillars:

- **Creative Europe – Culture (€1.8 billion)**
- **Media+ (€3.2 billion)**
- **Democracy, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (€3.6 billion)**

This integrated model recognizes the crucial role of cultural expression, independent media, gender equality, and civic participation in social resilience. However, the precise positioning of civil society within these programs remains unclear.
The increased budget is promising – yet ensuring equitable access for CSOs and supporting impactful, local-driven initiatives will be key.

On Social Rights and Local Participation

Although the new MFF reflects Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's ambition to eliminate poverty in Europe by 2050, the current draft lacks the instruments needed to deliver on this goal.

Alongside Philea, we advocate for:

- Protecting a dedicated budget for social investments,
- Maintaining a strong European Social Fund,
- Ensuring at least 5% for combating child poverty and 25% for broader social inclusion as binding minimum allocations.

While increased flexibility could enable some member states to invest more in social priorities, without binding rules, others may reduce their commitments. This threatens progress toward the EU's 2030 and 2050 poverty reduction targets.

Why Does This Matter for Türkiye?

As an EU candidate country, Türkiye currently benefits from the IPA III (2021-2027) funding instrument. Decisions made under the new MFF will shape the design of the next financial assistance instrument (Global Europe), directly influencing civil society's future access to EU funding.

Shifting priorities in social economy, culture, climate action, and youth may reshape the landscape of EU support for Türkiye's civil society. At the same time, stronger emphasis on green and digital transitions, local participation, and social innovation can open new collaboration channels for Türkiye's philanthropic sector within European networks.

In this context, TÜSEV continues to advocate for the meaningful recognition of philanthropy and civil society in Türkiye throughout the EU accession process – and for a more inclusive civic space vision at both EU and national levels.

A Shared Goal: A More Participatory and Solidarity-Driven Europe

As organizations under the Philea umbrella, we emphasize that philanthropy is not merely a financial resource - it is a democratic and social force. The principles we promote in the MFF process are directly tied to Europe's future: participation, fairness, solidarity, and inclusion.

TÜSEV will continue contributing to this collective voice - bringing Türkiye's civil society experience into this dialogue. As negotiations on the final proposal continue in the coming months, we stand with Philea members in advocating for a European budget where civil society plays a meaningful role in decision-making.