

Press release: Europe cannot afford to turn its back on the world

How can Europe become stronger globally if it cuts the resources it needs to act? This question will be at the heart of the EU budget proposal that will be presented by the Irish Presidency this Saturday, and the EU summit taking place next week. EU leaders say they want to strengthen the EU's global role and build resilient partnerships in a rapidly changing world. Yet a 40% cut to Global Europe, the EU's future seven-year budget for external action (2028–2034) is being suggested. This would mean less capacity to respond to crises, support development and peace beyond its borders.

External action funding is one of the **EU's key tools for turning its commitments into action**: from poverty reduction and humanitarian assistance to peacebuilding, human rights and gender equality. It also builds the resilience and long-term partnerships needed to address shared global challenges.

As Executive Directors of civil society networks representing 2700 NGOs working with the EU on **international cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding**, we call on EU Member States to maintain the €200 billion proposed by the European Commission for Global Europe.

The cuts to Global Europe that are being floated feel like a déjà vu. When EU Member States negotiated the EU's current seven-year budget (2021-2027), cuts to external action were discussed. In 2020, EU Member States agreed on significant cuts to the proposed external action budget, including a 10% reduction to the NDICI-Global Europe envelope. Civil society warned then that neglecting external action would exacerbate global inequalities and undermine the EU's ability to respond to global crises in times of political turmoil and climate emergency. Events proved those warnings right. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are off track, humanitarian needs are at a record high, conflicts are on the rise and the EU lacks the funding needed to respond. The EU Member States cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the last MFF negotiations.

Cuts to Global Europe are as bad an idea, in the current global turmoil, as they were back then. Five years on, the alarm is sounding again, only this time much louder, given the size of the cuts envisaged, the current ODA crisis and the scale of the global challenges the EU and its partners are facing.

73% of EU citizens want the EU to have more means to face global challenges, according to the [Spring 2026 Eurobarometer](#) survey. The European Commission's proposal of €200 billion for Global Europe, put forward in July 2025, reflects its

understanding of the scale of the challenges the EU faces globally. **The European Parliament went a step further, asking for an increase in that amount and for the external action budget to remain at 10% of the overall MFF.** The message from these two institutions and European citizens is clear: the scale of global challenges requires sustained EU capacity to act beyond its borders. Active conflicts are at their highest number since the end of World War II according to [the Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#), while humanitarian needs have risen dramatically, with crises becoming increasingly protracted and complex. Almost a quarter of a billion people are estimated by the [UN Global Humanitarian Overview](#) of 2026 to need humanitarian assistance. At the same time, and [as highlighted by the United Nations](#), only 36% of the targets in the SDGs are on track. Poverty and inequalities are rising, and climate change is intensifying.

These are not distant challenges. Europe's safety, prosperity and resilience cannot be separated from the world around it. The EU knows this, so it must act accordingly. Conflicts and forced displacements beyond our borders have direct repercussions on our trade routes, energy supplies, food security and social cohesion. Soaring inequalities between countries and within countries hold back many nations from developing stable markets for trade, from which the EU would also benefit. **Withdrawal, weakening and inconsistencies in European engagement globally would undermine the alliances** we need with like-minded partners to defend global governance and global norms. The failure to respond, or to respond adequately, to human suffering and affronts to basic human dignity weakens the foundations upon which the world order is built.

The EU's external action funding is needed more than ever to support such cooperation. It is also essential if the EU wants to be an influential global actor and build the long-term partnerships needed to address shared challenges.

EU Member States should maintain the Commission's proposed €200 billion envelope and should above all safeguard the EU's ability to act with credibility on the global stage.

Don't repeat the mistakes of the past, and don't turn your back on the world.

Tanya Cox

Director of [CONCORD](#) (Confederation for Cooperation of Relief and Development NGOs)

Sonya Reines-Djivanides

Executive Director of [EPLO](#) (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office)

Maria Groenewald

Director of [VOICE](#) (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies)