



## Wrong at all levels: Civil Society Response to the December 15 MFF Negotiating Box

On 14-15 December 2023, 26 EU leaders agreed on an [MFF negotiating box](#) that puts forward:

- €7.6 billion for external action (Heading 6) to fund the EU's migration priorities, of which €4.5 billion in redeployments by siphoning off:
  - €2 billion of decommitments - de facto cuts - from the NDICI
  - €0.6 billion of decommitments - de facto cuts - from the IPA
  - €1.9 from the NDICI flexibility cushion, freed up by covering Ukraine support via the new Ukraine Facility
- No reinforcement of the humanitarian aid budget line and a de facto reduction of the yearly funding that can be made available for external humanitarian aid.
- €2.1 billion redeployments from Horizon Europe and €1 billion redeployments from the already small (€5.3 billion) EU4Health programme.

This proposal goes against the budgetary rules and principles set out in the NDICI regulation, puts the EU's relationship with strategic partner countries at risk, and damages the EU's credibility as a global actor.

**At the European Council meeting on 1 February, we urge EU leaders to:**

- **Reject any redeployments from the NDICI and EU4Health and Horizon Europe.**
- **Respect and act in line with the spirit of the NDICI regulation.**

**We urge the European Parliament to:**

- **Seek urgent clarification about how the proposal will be implemented and forcefully reject any distortion of the EU's NDICI regulation.**
- **Defend its position on the MFF MTR and reject the proposed use of decommitments - de facto cuts - which represent a bad deal for Europe and its partners.**

Given that strong alliances and partnerships are vital for the future of Europe, its competitiveness and global influence - which will be all the more important if the US steps back from multilateral action following elections later this year - it is incomprehensible that this proposal:

On foreign aid:

- **Ignores the views and proposals of the Commission and the Parliament.**

- Is not in line with the rules set out in the NDICI's regulation, which in art. 30 states that when an action is not implemented, the corresponding funding needs to be made available again **to the benefit of the budget line of origin**. Gathering decommitted funds from the NDICI and moving them to NEAR migration programmes **is therefore not legally allowed**.
- Fails to take into account that at this stage of the budget cycle it is not possible to accurately assess what the level of decommitments will be, which budget lines they will come from, and when those funds will be available. As the €2.6 billion in decommitments would be re-programmed for migration as of 2025, the **only way to quickly implement the EU26 proposal is to cut the NDICI and IPA**.
- Creates a dangerous precedent whereby the Council can decide unilaterally to transfer funding from long-term programmes to address the priority of the day, **distorting the legislators' intention** as expressed by art. 30 which was to shield funding for long term objectives.
- Creates a **geographical and thematic imbalance**, in particular putting at risk the EU's ability to meet its legal obligation regarding the amounts foreseen for sub-Saharan Africa and its climate target of 30% within NDICI.
- Is **in stark contradiction with the EU's development policy objectives**, and the widely promoted ambitions of Global Gateway, the joint EU-Africa Strategy and the European Green Deal.
- Siphons off €1.9 billion in flexible funding for migration priorities. While €1.9 billion previously committed to Ukraine in the NDICI cushion would be covered by the Ukraine Facility, **earmarking this freed up funding to be programmed for migration purposes leaves the EU with very little flexibility until 2027**. Given the global challenges ahead, this is irresponsible.

#### On humanitarian assistance:

- **Cuts by €1 billion** the increase in the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR) put forward in the EC proposal.
- Suggests that the EAR - which is the only portion of the SEAR that can top-up external humanitarian assistance - would only benefit from 1/3 of the reduced funds: **up to €508 million instead of up to €935 million in the EC proposal**. This represents a **46% cut** in the funding that can be made available to reinforce the humanitarian budget throughout the year. Worse, this represents a **17% cut in the funding currently available** for this purpose (€615 million), defeating the objective of the revision to make more resources available for humanitarian crises worldwide.

#### On health and research:

- **€2.1 billion redeployments from Horizon Europe and €1 billion redeployments from the already small (€5.3 billion) EU4Health programme, which will damage the EU's competitiveness and innovation capacities, as well as its ability to respond to its citizens' health needs**. Two years after the EU's publication of a Global Health Strategy and still recovering from the Covid-19, this would totally contradict all the lessons learned from the pandemic.