

EU Multiannual Financing Framework (MFF) 2028-2034

A key opportunity to invest in human rights

The European Union (EU) is currently elaborating its next 7-year EU budget. Investing in human rights is an investment in the EU's core values. It contributes to strengthening democratic resilience, rule of law, security, social cohesion, and the EU's global leadership. Dedicated funding to reduce exclusion and inequality, and to support fundamental rights protection, human rights institutions and civil society reinforces the very foundations on which the Union is built.

The Representation Office to the EU of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is making the below recommendations to seize this opportunity to further progress on the realization of human rights in the EU and its Member States.



Ten key messages to EU legislators

1 Uphold human rights in line with international and regional obligations

The future MFF should uphold the human rights obligations that States and regional organizations have committed to in EU legislation and the UN core human rights treaties which all EU 27 Member States have ratified.

2 Put human rights at the centre of EU economic and budgetary decision-making

The future MFF should invest in human rights and place people and the planet at the centre of economic, fiscal, business and social investment decisions.

3 Use UN human rights recommendations to guide EU spending priorities

The EU should systematically use recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms as an evidence base for setting priorities under the MFF and related policies, including the National and Regional Partnership Plans, the European Semester, Global Europe, Global Gateway and humanitarian programming.

4 Mobilize the maximum available resources for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The future MFF should help generate and channel sufficient resources for human rights. Member States should step up efforts to mobilize public resources, including through increased use of EU funds for human rights, progressive taxation, fair tax systems, and stronger international tax cooperation aligned with human rights principles.



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5 Ensure funding matches real human rights needs

EU funding should be simplified, flexible and responsive to actual needs to reduce underspending, improve absorption of funds and ensure that resources reach people and communities facing the greatest human rights challenges, while continuing to ensure full participation, transparency and accountability

6 Invest for long-term impact through sustainable funding

The MFF should promote sustainability and continuity of investments by supporting long-term programmes, multi-annual funding and follow-up national investments, ensuring that human rights gains are not lost when EU funding ends.

7 Ensure EU funds do no harm to human rights

All EU-funded investments should be fully aligned with international human rights standards. Human rights impact assessments, effective monitoring, safeguards, complaints mechanisms, suspension clauses and disability-rights conditionalities should be embedded throughout the funding cycle.

8 Protect social investment, non discrimination and leave no one behind in EU funding

Non-discrimination should remain an explicit horizontal principle of the new budget framework, and should be included as such in the Budget Expenditure Tracking and Performance Framework. The implementation of the social spending target under the NRPPs should be guided by human rights standards to ensure adequate investment in social inclusion, poverty reduction, equality and social cohesion, particularly for people in vulnerable situations. EU funding should prioritize those furthest behind and ensure that marginalized groups can effectively access and benefit from funding opportunities.

9 Strengthen participation, transparency and accountability in EU funding

People affected by funding decisions, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and equality bodies should be meaningfully involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EU funds. Budget information and performance data should be transparent, accessible and human rights-sensitive.

10 Use the MFF to strengthen the human rights ecosystem

The future MFF should support institutions and frameworks that protect democracy, rule of law and human rights, including the UN Human Rights Office and mechanisms, as well as justice systems, anti-corruption bodies, national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and human rights defenders, while ensuring coherence with EU and UN human rights commitments.

