



Inside the
Global
Gateway n°1

CONCORD

European Confederation of NGOs working on
sustainable development and international cooperation

Unlocking the Potential of the EU's Global Gateway: Meaningful engagement with civil society

March 2026



The scale-up of the Global Gateway strategy takes place against a backdrop of shrinking civic space globally, continual cuts to Official Development Assistance (ODA), and an increasing role for the private sector in the EU's international cooperation.

While not a panacea for the challenges that the scale-up of the Global Gateway entails, the improved engagement of civil society at all levels combined with stronger monitoring, transparency, and accountability mechanisms, will go a long way to improve its relevance, quality and impact.

1 The European Commission - Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)

Unveiled by the European Commission in 2021, the Global Gateway strategy has been characterised by some as a "ship being built while sailing". This approach to rolling out the strategy has led to a certain lack of clarity, gaps in communication, and challenges for civil society to engage with it meaningfully. Sound policy-making should be based on calls for evidence, impact assessment and other forms of consultation, whereas no such action was undertaken ahead of the Global Gateway's launch. Additionally, the limited transparency and lack of detailed information on the Global Gateway's functioning, financing and projects is widely lamented, even amongst its supporters and beneficiaries, including European companies.

To remedy these critical gaps, to contribute to improved accountability and effective monitoring, we recommend that the European Commission:

Involving civil society throughout the project cycle improves:

Relevance - as integral part of communities, civil society organisations represent diverse voices and are in touch with local knowledge and experiences

Quality - by promoting and defending fundamental rights, through creating positive change and innovation, and ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience

Impact - by enhancing the efficacy, reach, and accountability in projects which, in turn, boosts legitimacy and reinforces trust in the EU

- Make detailed project information for the Global Gateway and Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) publicly available via a centralised, standardised and user-friendly public portal that includes for each project:
 - key characteristics, aims and expected impacts
 - all actors involved (including who is responsible for oversight)
 - the funding source and financing tools used and amounts mobilised, (evolving commitments
 - key performance indicators¹, including the indicators required by EU regulations, the [Human Rights Based Approach \(HRBA\) Toolbox](#), and international commitments the EU is signed up to
 - milestones and updated information on stage of implementation
 - information on which SDGs the project contributes to advancing, as well as the gender, disability and inequality marker scores, thereby making the positive contributions of the projects more visible and highlighting which principles and crosscutting issues have been integrated²
 - a contact point and link with information on complaints mechanisms and how to access them, as relevant
- Publish methodology and evaluation criteria for project selection and finance allocation, including the use of financial instruments and guarantees (such as the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus [EFSD+]).³
- Standardise guidance and methodologies for inclusion of civil society and provision of information throughout the project cycle at all levels; make these resources publicly available.
- Strengthen, and introduce where necessary – processes and mechanisms to allow for public and parliamentary scrutiny of the Global Gateway, both in Europe and in the countries where projects are implemented.
- Conduct a public consultation with all stakeholders, including civil society⁴, to evaluate the Global Gateway to date and to gather inputs to shape its future orientations as well as the EU's new foreign economic policy.

2 The Civil Society and Local Authorities Advisory Platform (Brussels)

The Civil Society and Local Authorities Advisory Platform (hereafter: **CSO/LA platform**, or Platform), is mandated to:

1. "to contribute to the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy, enhancing its overall effectiveness and ensuring alignment with its key principles, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the 2030 Agenda;
2. to ensure the transparency and accountability of the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy at all stages and Global Gateway financing, as well as
3. to hold the EU to account for respecting and fulfilling EU values as stated in the Treaties."⁵

To date, the CSO/LA Platform's mandate on paper is not effectively translated into action and the body is not adequately embedded in the governance and oversight of the Global Gateway. A coordination mechanism between the Global Gateway's various governance bodies is yet to be put in place despite repeated requests from the Platform's Steering Group to meet with other governance bodies such as the Global Gateway Business Advisory Group (BAG). Beyond coordination issues, stakeholders cannot expect follow-up actions or responses from those responsible to points raised regarding the Global Gateway strategy and its implementation, as no mechanism for accountability exists. The Platform is not involved in the orientation of the strategy, selection of projects, nor in their design, implementation, or monitoring. The degree of influence and efficacy of the Platform, in its current form, are suboptimal and should be enhanced.

To maximise the positive contributions of the Platform to the Global Gateway strategy and projects, the European Commission urgently needs to:

- Reconsider and adjust the strategic and operational governance of the Global Gateway. For example, adapting the composition and agenda setting of its Board, and as ECDPM has suggested: "[build] on opportunities for engaging local authorities and promoting genuine dialogue with CSOs".⁶
- Involve the Platform more meaningfully and systematically in policy dialogues and coordination mechanisms in a multi-stakeholder fashion (e.g. Global Gateway Investment Hub, Global Gateway Forum, Business Fora, etc.).
 - For the Platform to fulfil its mandates, there needs to be greater information sharing and a willingness from the European Commission to receive and work with recommendations coming out of the governance bodies.
 - Create regular and standard moments for structured exchange between representatives of the different parts of the Global Gateway governance architecture.
 - All actors of the governance should be represented as observers to proceedings of the Global Gateway Board and the foreseen Global Europe Investment Board⁷.
- Review and transform the mandate of the CSO/LA Platform:
 - Mandate the Platform to make recommendations to DG INTPA, DG GROW, DG TRADE, the Council of the EU (CODEV, RELEX-HQ), the Global Gateway Board, and the foreseen Global Europe Investment Board; invite co-chairs of the Platform (or members of its Steering Group) to be invited to meetings of the Board and INTPA/TRADE/GROW Committees responsible for implementing the Global Gateway strategy.
 - Renew the Platform's membership to allow for the inclusive participation of more representatives from partner countries, particularly those operating at a regional level. Bringing in experts from partner countries to add to knowledge is a good practice which should be built on.

3 In partner countries - EU Delegations

The European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) linked the “cornerstone of the Global Gateway's success” to “its meticulous engagement with the genuine needs of partner countries” where “Global South governments, parliaments and civil society are equals in project design and implementation.” Multi-country regional Global Gateway infrastructure projects come with their own challenges, notably ensuring the active participation, consent, and support of a wide range of actors who are not organised regionally. Ensuring they have their say can counter the risk of a top-down approach by balancing ownership and alignment with partner priorities with the EU's interests.

The most recent [2024 Report on EU Delegations' Engagement with Civil Society](#) concludes that engagement around Global Gateway in partner countries expanded in 2024 (an 18.8% increase in consultations and dialogue with CSOs compared to 2023, but that it “remains incipient”). Among the solutions identified, the report recommends “expanding consultation practices beyond traditional EU-CSO formats and embedding them in multi-stakeholder approaches [...] to bridge perspectives and interests.”⁸ In addition to this, we urge the EU to speed up implementation of several recommendations which remain valid from the [2023 Report on EU Delegations' Engagement with Civil Society](#), on how to expand dialogues to include CSOs that represent communities in order to “enhance the efficacy, reach, and accountability of [its] rollout, ultimately strengthening its impact and sustainability”.⁹

- At project level, involve relevant CSOs from the inception of projects, with specific resources allocated to foster meaningful partnerships. Their participation should be integrated into all stages.
- Establish more regular and strategic dialogue with a broad range of CSO actors involved in Global Gateway initiatives.
- Engage with affected communities. Systematically consult women and youth-focused CSOs.

- Policy dialogue should be multi-stakeholder, with all relevant actors represented and enabled to participate, contributing to policy and strategy development and monitoring.
- For “hard” infrastructure projects, “inform and empower CSOs representing communities directly affected to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods (such as investment decisions, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, and the development, implementation, and monitoring of related management plans).”¹⁰
- Additionally, the EU must also take swift action to:¹¹
- Adopt a decentralised, multi-actor EFSD+ identification model that includes civil society to enhance local ownership and impact.
- Enhance coordination at the central level to improve communication among key stakeholders and foster knowledge production at global level

At a practical level, to overcome shortcomings and bottlenecks:

- Ensure an active role for local actors and civil society in the selection, design, and implementation of all projects receiving financial support from the EU.
- In regions and along corridors invest in and “establish new dialogue spaces where the various stakeholders who hold a legitimate interest in Global Gateway projects can share their views constructively and equitably.”¹²
- Earmark and guarantee access to Global Gateway flagship resources for local CSOs and affected communities to support their role in project selection, assessment, design and implementation.

- Continue ongoing efforts to support EUDs to engage with local CSOs on the Global Gateway and TEIs, building on the new guidance communicated to EUDs in 2025 and the ongoing update of the CSO Roadmaps (4th generation).
 - Share good practices, refresh mappings of CSOs engaged in the Global Gateway priority areas, strengthen structured dialogues, and conduct sectoral and specific consultations on Global Gateway projects.
 - Share information and provide feedback loops to ensure (local) CSOs can engage meaningfully¹³ in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects in each country.
 - The Regional Hubs anticipated in the restructuring of the EU's External Action Service offer an opportunity, working in conjunction with the established network of EU Delegations, to deliver coherent and coordinated action to strengthen engagement with civil society at a regional level.

4 Other actors involved in the Global Gateway – Member States, DFIs, PDBs, MDBs

To complement the Team Europe approach¹⁴, the European Commission is promoting a "Team National" coordination format for Member States "to effectively make a bridge between development, financing and trade promotion."¹⁵ The Global Gateway Investment Hub, a pipeline for project origination aiming to improve coherence and visibility of EU action via the Global Gateway has been proposed yet, at the time of writing, does not outline any role for civil society. We suggest that:

- Member States include civil society systematically in the coordination mechanisms set up at MS level to strengthen the Team National approach (whole-of-society approach).
- The EU offer incentives to reinforce systematic reporting by implementing partners on how and where they involve CSOs.

As the number of actors and intermediaries involved in a project multiplies, their roles become opaque to public scrutiny, accountability along the value chain becomes increasingly complex, and risks to the reputations of the EU and its implementing partners increase. The use of financial instruments, budgetary guarantees and indirect management all contribute to this increased complexity and the number of intermediaries involved in a project. Wherever its funds are allocated, the EU must be able to guarantee the respect of human rights, high social and environmental standards and alignment with EU values and commitments, including consultation and dialogue with civil society and affected communities—throughout the project cycle, by all involved. To this end, we call on the European Commission to:

- Work with the EIB, DFIs and other PDBs to ensure harmonised application of EU rules and standards, reporting and that they provide maximum transparency possible on project contracts, projects assessments, and impact reports.
- Strengthen accessibility and inclusiveness of funding under indirect management. The EU gives very few instructions to its "pillar-assessed entities" as to how they should support and fund CSOs. To this end, CONCORD repeats its previous recommendation¹⁶ of putting in place an obligation for pillar-assessed entities to include CSO partners in consortia when conceptualising their programmes under indirect management, to partner with CSOs throughout the project/programme cycle and to be transparent about where the money goes.
- Hold the bilateral and multilateral development finance institutions with whom they collaborate accountable for their obligations to ensure secure consultation spaces and processes, provide effective grievance mechanisms and access to remedy when violations or damage occur.

Footnotes:

1. Including the relevant corporate Global Europe Results Framework (GERF) indicators.
2. Information which is already indicated in EU Action Documents
3. "How to make the Global Gateway fit for Sustainable Development?", Solidar, 2024.
4. This should encompass a broad cross section of civil society active in international cooperation and ensure participation of local and regional civil society organisations in partner countries.
5. Global Gateway Civil Society and Local Authorities Advisory Platform: Terms of Reference, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ac84daaa-2725-4a81-9221-48cb829678c7_en?filename=global-gateway-cso-la-advisory-platform-terms-of-reference_en.pdf
6. Global Gateway: Where now and where to next?, ECDPM Discussion paper no. 368 <https://ecdpm.org/application/files/1617/1776/7785/Global-Gateway-Where-now-and-where-to-next-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-2024.pdf>
7. Article 26(6) Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing Global Europe 2025/0227(COD)
8. 2024 Report on EU Delegations' Engagement with Civil Society, p.6
9. https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/library/civil-society-consultations-partner-countries-2023-report-eu-delegations-engagement-civil-society_en?listing=group_library&refgid=675
10. https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/library/civil-society-consultations-partner-countries-2023-report-eu-delegations-engagement-civil-society_en?listing=group_library&refgid=675
11. as recommended in the [evaluation of the European Union's external financing instruments \(2014-2020 and 2021-2027\)](#).
12. <https://europeandemocracyhub.epd.eu/global-gateways-moment-of-truth/>
13. CONCORD's [7 practices for civil society participation in EU decision-making](#) (2022) lays out good practices and concrete actions that improve participation opportunities and build strong partnerships through meaningful consultation and co-creation.
14. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/team-europe-standing-stronger-together_en
15. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-001680-ASW_EN.html
16. <https://concordeurope.org/resource/who-holds-the-lions-share-a-closer-look-at-global-europe-funds-for-csos/>



This publication was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CONCORD and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.