

Explainer: European Investment Bank & Global Gateway

These summaries distil insights from sector reports, focusing on funding trends, EU financing mechanisms, and the core challenges affecting NGOs. They are designed to help EU-CORD members navigate the EU funding landscape more effectively and adapt their practices accordingly. We encourage members to consult the original reports for comprehensive context and detail.

Purpose

The purpose of the explainer for fundraisers is to clarify the role of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and EIB Global in EU external action and development financing, especially under the Global Gateway initiative, and to help fundraisers understand how they can engage with and leverage EIB-supported projects to maximise funding opportunities and impact.

Information is based on a webinar held in the frame of the CONCORD spring meeting of the funding and fundraising for sustainable development workstream (FFSD).

Learning Exchange with the EIB | FFSD Spring Meeting

On the final day of the Spring FFSD meeting, members participated in a learning session focused on the role of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and its development branch, EIB Global, in implementing EU external action—particularly through the Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives. The session provided insights into how civil society can engage with the Bank and ensure that development finance works towards inclusive and sustainable goals.

Introduction and Objectives

The session aimed to deepen members' understanding of:

- The EIB's role in implementing the Global Gateway strategy
- Opportunities and constraints related to civil society engagement
- EIB Global's operations outside the EU and links to Team Europe initiatives
- Financial instruments, including loans, guarantees, and blending options
- Policy and project-level accountability mechanisms.

The EIB was represented by staff based both in-person and online, covering strategy, civil society engagement, and operational perspectives from across different regions.

Part 1: Understanding the EIB and Civil Society Engagement

The EIB is the policy-driven bank of the EU, owned by the 27 Member States. While most of its operations are within the EU, about 10% of its portfolio is implemented externally through EIB Global.

Key clarifications provided:

- The EIB raises its own capital through international markets; it does not rely on the EU budget.
- While primarily a loan provider, the EIB works in conjunction with EU grants, especially when supporting development priorities.

On civil society engagement:

- The EIB hosts annual dialogues between its board and civil society organisations (CSOs), with the next likely taking place in Luxembourg in October.
- Public consultations are held on key EIB policies (e.g. energy lending, transparency).
- At project level, CSOs may engage during stakeholder consultations, file complaints through formal mechanisms, and request information via the transparency policy.

Part 2: EIB Global and the Global Gateway

EIB Global manages all the Bank's operations outside the EU, with a significant focus on Africa, the Neighbourhood, and Enlargement countries. A new EIB Global strategy is under development and is expected to align closely with evolving EU external policy priorities. The Global Gateway (launched in 2021) is a key framework guiding the EU's external investments. It focuses on:

1. Transport
2. Digital connectivity
3. Climate and energy
4. Health
5. Education and research
6. Enabling environment for the private sector

EIB Global aligns closely with these pillars and acts as an implementing partner, not a designer, of Global Gateway. Projects typically originate from partner countries and reflect their priorities, not top-down EU interests.

Examples shared included:

- Renewable energy development in Latin America
- Digital infrastructure projects such as the Medusa cable
- Cross-border energy initiatives linking North Africa and Europe

The EIB applies a "Team Europe" approach, working alongside EU institutions, Member State development banks, and international financial institutions. Notably, through "Mutual Reliance Agreements", development finance institutions coordinate investment in joint projects, streamlining due diligence and approvals.

Part 3: Civil Society Engagement and Accountability

Several participants raised questions around:

- Early-stage civil society involvement in project design

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- The balance between EU interests and local development priorities
 - Accountability for human rights and environmental standards.

The EIB reiterated that:

- All operations must comply with EU treaties, the NDICI regulation, and international agreements
- Social and environmental due diligence, including human rights and disability rights, is embedded in its standards
- Projects require formal requests from local promoters and must reflect national ownership
- Civil society can submit complaints and access evaluation results through the EIB's complaint mechanism and public databases.

An example was given of a recent pilot initiative in North Africa involving a local CSO, demonstrating how small-scale partnerships can contribute to feasibility studies and innovation in water management.

Key Takeaways

- The EIB sees civil society as a valuable partner, both in shaping policies and at project level.
- Engagement opportunities exist, but stronger mechanisms are needed to fund CSO participation directly.
- EIB projects are subject to a robust, albeit lengthy, approval process including stakeholder consultation, Commission review, and Board-level approval.
- While operating within an EU policy framework, the EIB remains committed to aligning with partner countries' priorities and development goals.

Members who wish to follow up with the EIB's Civil Society Division, request documents, or explore collaboration on specific initiatives (such as in water, energy, digital, or inclusive finance) are encouraged to do so. The EIB team expressed openness to further dialogue, including participation in future consultations and working sessions.

Recommendations to Members

Here is an analysis of the EIB and EIB Global session from a fundraising and partnership perspective, particularly relevant for EU-CORD members.

Key Insights and Implications for Fundraising and Engagement

1. Understanding EIB's Role and Relevance
 - The European Investment Bank (EIB) plays a major role in implementing the EU's external action through loans and blended finance, not direct grants.
 - EIB Global focuses on countries outside the EU, aligning with EU priorities (especially DG INTPA), with €7.9 billion in operations in 2024.

Implication: Fundraisers could adapt strategies to align with loan-based development finance, positioning organisations as implementation partners or co-financers with access to grant funds elsewhere (e.g., EU, Member States).

2. Civil Society Participation

- Civil society involvement is encouraged in project identification, design, monitoring, and consultation, especially at the country level.
- Successful pilots, such as the environmental project in Tunisia, show that collaboration is possible and valuable.

Opportunity: Highlight CSO value in project accountability, social impact, and community engagement when engaging with EIB-supported initiatives. Faith-based organisations can showcase community trust and reach.

3. Strategic Positioning in Global Gateway and Team Europe

- The Global Gateway initiative includes key sectors: transport, digital, energy/climate, health, and education. EIB's work in these areas includes large infrastructure and energy projects.

Strategy: Position project proposals within these priority sectors. Explore roles as community implementers or monitors in large EIB infrastructure projects, especially those with social and environmental impacts.

4. Accessing Funding through Partnerships

- EIB loans are often blended with EU or Member State grants and co-financing from other DFIs (Development Finance Institutions) via Team Europe Initiatives.

Recommendation: Develop consortia or partnerships with DFIs, local authorities, or private sector actors to access funding. Use EU-CORD's network to identify joint venture opportunities.

5. Accountability and Impact Monitoring

- EIB requires strong monitoring, results frameworks, and human rights compliance.

Action: Showcase robust M&E systems and rights-based approaches in proposals. Offer services in compliance monitoring and stakeholder engagement, which are often outsourced.

6. Opportunities and Challenges

- **Opportunities:** Leverage EIB's interest in environmental and social sustainability to propose pilot projects. Engage early in the project cycle to influence design.

- Challenges: Absence of direct grants makes it harder for small CSOs to engage unless as partners. Complex co-financing and compliance standards may deter smaller organisations.

Response: Advocate (through EU-CORD and CONCORD) for EIB to increase support for CSO capacity development and expand pilot grant mechanisms.

Conclusion

The EIB and EIB Global are key players in EU development finance, mainly offering loans and blended finance. While they do not provide traditional grants, civil society can play a role in delivering and shaping EIB-funded projects—especially by engaging early, aligning with priority sectors, and forming strong partnerships.

For fundraisers, this means thinking beyond grants and exploring new funding models. With the right approach, faith-based and humanitarian organisations can find valuable opportunities to contribute to impactful, large-scale development initiatives.