

# **Dóchas Members' Access to EU Funding**



A Research Consultancy Report for Dóchas  
Peter Barnard, Development Consultant  
December 2015

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EU Funding Overview .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Results of Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Trends in Dóchas members' EU funding .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Summary and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>References and Further Reading .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Survey Questions .....</b>	<b>13</b>

## Introduction

The European Union is the world's largest international development donor. Although many organisations receive EU funding the process can be complex. This report summarises a research consultancy commissioned by Dóchas, the Irish Association of Non Governmental Development Organisations, to better understand trends in members' access to EU funding since 2005 as well as challenges and barriers encountered in accessing EU funds. Dóchas also seeks to provide members with an overview of potential opportunities and upcoming grant rounds as well as recommendations on how the Association can further support members in accessing EU funding. Key findings from this report will also be presented to Dóchas members early in 2016.

## EU Funding Overview

Allocation of resources for the EU programming cycle involves a seven-year Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), currently covering 2014 to 2020. Budget lines potentially available to NGOs for development cooperation are allocated from the MFF to different geographic and programmatic funding instruments.

This EU programming cycle is explained by CONCORD, the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, in their excellent 'Guide to EuropeAid Funding Instruments 2014-2020':

## ***Guide to EuropeAid funding instruments 2014–2020, CONCORD<sup>1</sup>***

To guide the implementation of each country programme, or regional or thematic or other programme, the European Commission (EC), jointly with the European External Action Service (EEAS), drafts a Strategy for the period of the MFF and a Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP). This is a multi-year plan for each programme, setting out priorities, objectives, expected results and indicators, as well as indicative financial allocations for different objectives. In the geographical programmes, the multi-year plans are referred to as NIPs (National Indicative Programmes) and RIPs (Regional Indicative Programmes).

Following the approval of the strategies/MIPs, the EC presents its draft Annual Action Programme (AAP) for each programme. The AAPs are based on decisions the committees for each instrument. In an AAP, the actions to be funded under that annual budget are described in annexes. There are also Annual Work Programmes, which give further details of the grants it is planned to award during the year.

Most of the EU development cooperation budget is implemented by partner countries. The role of CSOs, in policy dialogue and in implementing aid programmes, varies across the instruments and programmes.

The funding instruments are summarised below and are detailed on the EU website at [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/funding-instruments-programming/funding-instruments\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/funding-instruments-programming/funding-instruments_en) and the Dóchas website at <http://www.Dóchas.ie/knowledge-hub/eu-funding>

### **Thematic Instruments**

Thematic instruments focus on protecting human rights, promoting democracy, eradicating poverty, fostering self-sufficiency in food production, improving education and protecting health and the environment.

1. *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)*: Aims to help establish democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights and basic freedoms.
2. *Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)*: Aims to prevent and respond to crises and create a safe and stable environment in partner countries.
3. *Partnership Instrument (PI)*: Aims to support the external dimension of EU internal policies by addressing major global challenges.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/368-guide-to-europeaid-funding-instruments-2014-2020>

## Geographical Instruments

Geographical programmes focus on development priorities defined for a specific country or region.

1. *Instrument for Development Cooperation (DCI)*: Covers cooperation with partner countries and regions, such as: Latin America, Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and South Africa. The DCI is also the legal basis of two thematic programmes which aim to address different global challenges:
  - i. Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC): supports actions in areas including environment and climate change, sustainable energy, human development, social justice and culture, food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, migration and asylum.
  - ii. Civil society organisations and local authorities: this programme provides support to civil society and local authorities to encourage them to play a bigger role in development strategies.

The Pan-African programme is part of the DCI, covering the whole of Africa.

2. *European Development Fund (EDF)*: provides aid to 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) partner countries. It aims to stimulate economic development, social and human development, regional cooperation and integration.
3. *Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance II (IPA)*: provides assistance to countries directly in line to becoming members of the European Union.
4. *European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)*: covers cooperation with South Mediterranean and East neighbourhood countries. It aims to encourage democracy and human rights, sustainable development and the transition towards a market economy in neighbouring countries.

The EC has been through a two-year 'Structured Dialogue' in an endeavour to develop a more strategic partnership with civil society organisations and local authorities. As a result, funding mechanisms are diversifying. Two key implications are: that providing support to local civil society organisations is a priority and that EU delegations are increasingly becoming the focal point.

Calls for proposals and procurement notices are published on the EuropeAid website where users can subscribe to notifications and alerts and also find a Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions at [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-grants/grants\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-grants/grants_en)

Each EU delegation also publishes calls for proposals. EU delegation websites can be found at [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm). Local relations with EU delegations are important for keeping abreast of funding opportunities and EU country-level policies.

Humanitarian aid and emergency operations are managed through the European

Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) and funding is generally provided through framework partnership agreements: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en>

Users can also search for calls for proposals and apply online using [PROSPECT](#), an electronic system developed by EuropeAid to facilitate the submission of applications for call for proposals.

## Research Methodology

This research is comprised of: a survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) sent through SurveyMonkey to all full members and strategic partners, a desk review of members published annual reports 2011 – 2014, and a review of material on EU platforms and elsewhere.

## Results of Questionnaire

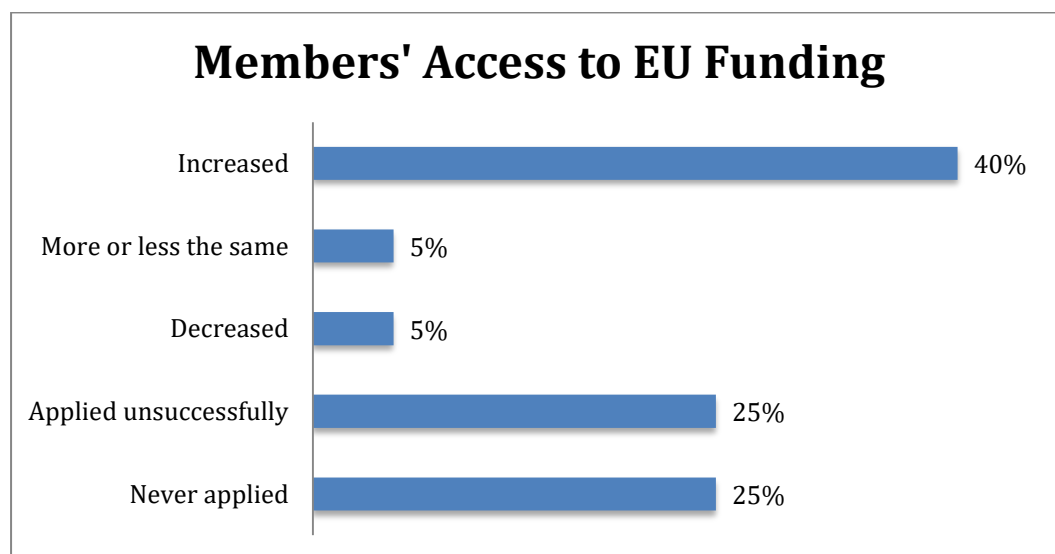
### Members Participating

Dóchas has 47 full members or strategic partners. Of these, 20 responses were received (42%).

### Access to EU funding

When asked to describe access to EU funding since 2005, eight members reported that funding had increased, while one reported it had remained the same and one reported a decrease. Five of the 20 responders had applied unsuccessfully, whilst five had never applied for EU funding. (Fig 1)

Fig 1: Members' Access to EU Funding



Brussels Office

Only two responding organisations have an office in Brussels for the purposes of fundraising, and both indicated that it improves access to EU funding.

### **Funding Instruments**

Of the ten organisations who have responded to this question, three reported funding from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), four from the Instrument for Development Cooperation (DCI) and three from the European Development Fund (EDF). Two members mentioned Development Education and Awareness Raising, which falls under the DCI instrument.

The EDF provides the EU's largest amount of funding to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region and is a separate fund managed outside the EU's general budget and funded by the member states on negotiated voluntary basis.

### **Trends in ability to access EU funding**

When asked about trends in the organisation's ability to attract EU funding, 85% (6) of those respondents indicated they felt that funding is raised more at a country level now than in the past, with one feeling that more EU funding is going to local organisations or national government.

### **Feedback on funding applications**

Most organisations feel that feedback from the EU following funding applications was inadequate (9 of 14 responses) though one organisation noted that further feedback is often available on upon request. Of those who did receive feedback, one noted that feedback varies between different EU delegations whilst another said that their application was rejected because of a lack of collaboration with local partners.

### **Challenges**

When asked about challenges faced with the investment required to effectively respond to EU calls, most responses related to the demand of resources.

Resources, including time, finance and human resources (including staff expertise), were cited as a challenge by eight respondents. One felt that the scale of EU funding excludes small to medium NGOs because of these factors:

*One NGO noted, 'The way to work around this is to share the burden and work in partnership with other organisations and be part of a EU-based network' with a further responding, 'we have made investments in training and in having specific personnel with skills on EC calls and grant management and this continues to be necessary in order to meet the demands of EC calls'.*

The necessity to carry out a comprehensive needs and environmental assessment was noted by two respondents as a prohibitively expensive challenge in terms of time and resources.

One NGO felt the EU's application process was too complicated and two respondents noted the high administrative burden of EU grant management as a challenge.

Two respondents noted a lack of unrestricted funding to co-fund EU grants, which is a general requirement.

Finally, one partner noted that, *'Funding for development education work is completely inaccessible to small to medium sized NGOS because of the financial management involved and the number of partners. It completely gravitates to large funders and seems part of a strategy to reduce the number of funding partners.'*

### **Dóchas Services**

Members were asked what they would like to see in terms of Dóchas services. Half of those responding suggested that Dóchas offer training on Accessing EU Funding and six requested training on Proposal Development. One member reported utilising BOND training services in the UK and one member suggested: *'Dóchas training is likely to duplicate support we already receive through our network and membership in Brussels based network...?'*

### **Members' Comments**

Members were asked for any further comments or suggestions. One member noted that EU funding represents a small proportion of their organisation's overall funding and therefore feels it is underexploited and a source of funding they wish to further develop. They welcomed Dóchas' initiative to focus on improving Irish NGOs' access to EU funding.

One respondent requested training through Dóchas on the EU project cycle: proposal development, implementation, compliance, evaluation and audit.

One member criticised the EU's bureaucratic approach and reluctance to change, feeling this is a particular challenge for NGOs based in the global South.

One member requested Dóchas to consider a role in connecting with Irish-based corporates and multinationals, mainly because of the emphasis in the Sustainable Development Goals on linking with the private sector.

## Trends in Dóchas members' EU funding

Dóchas members publish annual reports and accounts on their websites, including a breakdown of funding sources. Of Dóchas' 48 members and strategic partners, five organisations received EU funding of over €1m in 2014, with two reported funding over €3m. The median amount was less than €200k. This is reflective of the relatively small size of most Dóchas members.

Fig 2 shows members' reports of EU funding during the past 4 years. This data is from published annual accounts, or in cases where these have not yet been finalised, data provided by the organisations.

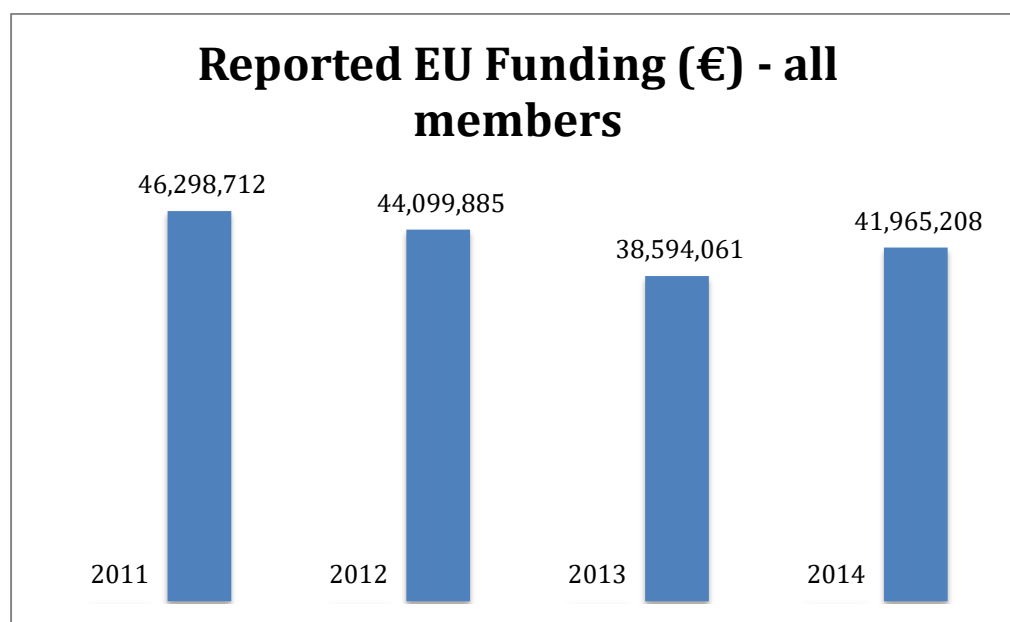


Fig 2: Members' EU Funding 2011-2014

Concern receives the bulk of this funding; around 70% in 2011-2013 (52% in 2014), with Goal receiving around 17% (34% in 2014). Concern's reported EU income has decreased since 2011. For the remaining members, there was an increase in EU funding (Fig 3). However, much of this was received by Goal (€14m), half of which was from ECHO for humanitarian funding.



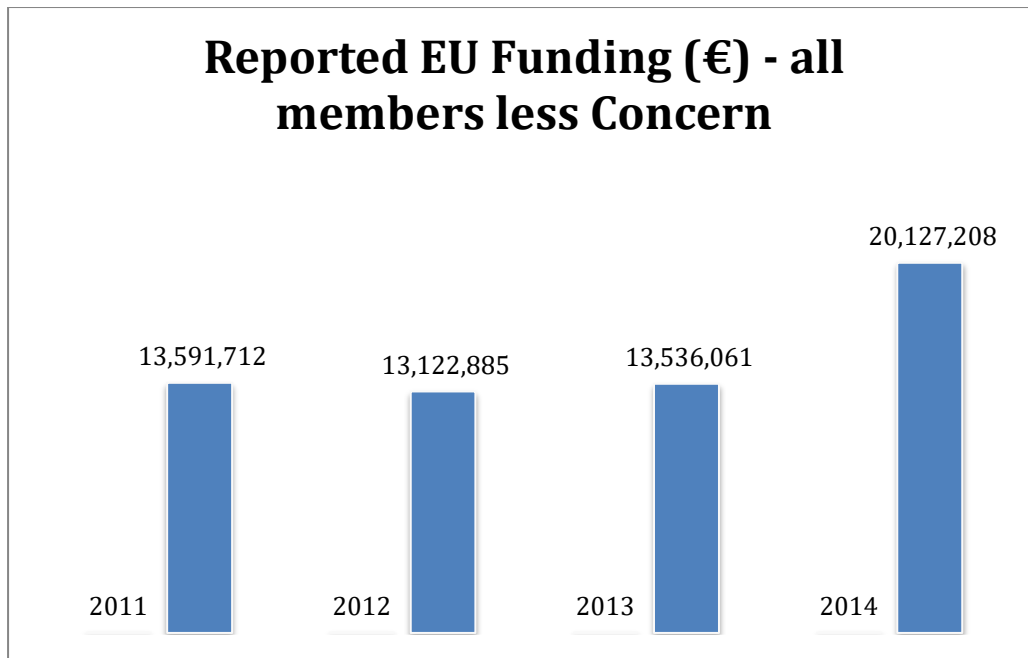


Fig 3: Members' EU Funding (less Concern) 2011-2014

This data masks a range of experiences with EU funding: some members increased their EU funding year on year whilst a couple of members received funding in 2014 or 2015 for the first time.

## Summary and Recommendations

Most Dóchas members receive relatively low levels of EU funding. Generally, however, this has increased in recent years as reported by members in response to this survey and in their annual reports. But given the funding available, there is huge potential for members to improve their access to EU funding.

In June 2015 Dóchas members visited Brussels as part of the European Year of Development: <http://www.Dóchas.ie/blog/irish-ngos-visit-eu-institutions> reporting that "...the MEPs and officials we met also stressed that, if NGOs invest in the necessary expertise, Irish NGOs should be able to access more EU funding."

### Members

- According to the EU, 80% of the total EU budget is managed at country level<sup>2</sup>. Members therefore should keep abreast of developments in their local EU delegation. Locally published calls for proposals are usually accompanied by information sessions for civil society organisations, which can be invaluable in terms of getting to understand requirements as well as networking and developing consortia. Local relations with EU delegations are important.

<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/10-top-tips-applying-eu-funding>, accessed 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015

- Local EU delegations are often able to provide specific feedback to applicants on proposals beyond what is initially returned to applicants. Members can take advantage of this to adapt future applications.
- EU grants have strictly enforced requirements. Those in receipt of EU funding should ensure they have sufficient knowledge to ensure compliance with EU requirements. An indicator of the likelihood of success in applying for EU funding is past performance.
- EU funding applications often do not succeed because of lack of adherence to minor details, such as missing the submission deadline, or by failing to include required details. Staff with experience of securing and managing EU funding can be an asset to member organisations in this respect.
- Although many Dóchas members have relatively small annual budgets, this should not prevent them from accessing EU funds, provided they pursue strategic calls in areas where they have a strong track record and can demonstrate evidence of prior achievements. NGOs could look beyond typical NGO grants and consider opportunities in areas such as research and technology where this is linked to their core strengths and experiences.
- Members who feel they are too small to access EU funding can explore the potential for collaborative strategic relationships with other organisations in their efforts to secure EU funding. Members looking to expand into new geographic or thematic areas may not wish to expend resources on a funding application with a low chance of success. Again, one route involves working in consortia where members' strengths can add value to a team approach. As generally outlined in calls for proposals, NGOs can form consortia and develop joint proposals, with a lead organisation (coordinator) and a number of co-applicants, considered as co-beneficiaries in a successful proposal. When planning consortia it should be clear why different partners are being brought together and how each adds value.

## **Dóchas**

- From responses to the survey, some members would welcome training on Accessing EU Funding and Proposal Development. This could involve delivering training specifically to Dóchas members, or may include supporting members to be aware of and accessing training that is already available through other organisations, such as BOND, the UK membership body for NGOs working in international development.
- Members' suggestions to support engagement with corporates and multinationals are relevant in that organisations need match funding to implement EU grants. EU funding can provide significant leverage in attracting the private sector. Dóchas may have a role in raising awareness in the private sector.

There are a few limitations to this research data to note:

1. Of the 13 members reporting EU funding in their annual reports, only seven responded to the survey.
2. Whilst the survey asked for experiences in EU funding since 2005, the data presented above reflects funding only over the past 4 years.
3. Some data for 2014 is missing, as one or two organisations have yet to publish their reports.
4. Some organisations operate under different calendars: data for 2014 reports may be timed slightly differently.
5. In some cases members responded that their EU funding increased or stayed the same, even though their reports indicate a decline. This may be because the survey asked for their experience since 2005, or changes in EU funding in 2015 that are yet to be reported, or perhaps because of the need for eternal optimism in the business of international development.

## References and Further Reading

The European Commission has published a beginner's guide to EU funding, including guidance on application procedures for the financial period 2014-20: [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/funding/information/getting-started\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/funding/information/getting-started_en)

There are also online training courses available, for example:

<http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/the-learning-space/minisite/financial-and-contractual-procedures/e-learning-prag>

There are a number of useful links on the Dóchas website:

<http://www.Dóchas.ie/knowledge-hub/eu-and-development-cooperation>

CONCORD, the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, published a report on the mutual engagement between EU delegations and civil society organisations across the world:

<http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/406-the-eu-delegations-watch-report-2015>. There is also other useful information on their website, including a section on funding for NGOs: <http://www.concordeurope.org/civil-society/funding-for-ngo-s>

CONCORD is also currently finalising a study through their Funding for Development and Relief working group on "EU funding delivery mechanisms - new trends in EuropeAid funding and what they mean for CSOs". This is expected to be launched in January 2016 and will be on their website. The study includes interviews with EU officials in Brussels and in delegations, CSO staff and other relevant stakeholders.

In January 2015, The Wheel, the representative body for community and voluntary organisations and charities across Ireland, commissioned a report on European Union funding opportunities relevant to Irish non-profits:

<http://www.wheel.ie/funding/fundraising-guide/accessing-eu-funds-2015-2020>. The report highlights a number of issues common to international organisations: that EU programmes could be a source of increased funding, that smaller organisations would need to invest time and resources in becoming familiar with funding opportunities, that a thorough understanding is needed of what is involved in applying for and managing EU projects and the challenge of providing match funding. See pages 10/11 and appendix 4.

## Appendix 1 – Survey Questions

1. What is the name of your organisation?	
2. How would you describe your access to EU funding since 2005?  Note: we will be able to access any published information in your most recent annual report.	<input type="radio"/> Funding has increased <input type="radio"/> Funding has stayed more or less the same <input type="radio"/> Funding has decreased <input type="radio"/> Applied for funding but unsuccessful <input type="radio"/> Never applied for EU funding
3. Do you have an office in Brussels for the purposes of fundraising?	<input type="radio"/> Yes, and improves access <input type="radio"/> Yes, but doesn't improve access <input type="radio"/> No
4. If you have received EU funding, which funding instruments have you accessed since 2005?	<input type="radio"/> European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) <input type="radio"/> Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) <input type="radio"/> Instrument for Development Cooperation (DCI) (includes Non-State Actors) <input type="radio"/> European Development Fund (EDF) <input type="radio"/> Other (asked to specify)
5. Have you noticed any of these trends in your ability to access EU funding:	<input type="radio"/> Funding is raised more at the country level. <input type="radio"/> Funding is increasingly being accessed by local NGOs rather than international NGOs. <input type="radio"/> Have you identified any other trends with respect to access to EU funds?
6. If you have applied unsuccessfully for EU funding, did you receive adequate feedback?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> If yes, what were the key factors identified?
7. EU calls for proposals are usually competitive and require significant investment. Have you faced any challenges with respect to this investment?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (Outline) <input type="radio"/> No
8. Would you like Dóchas to provide training for members in any of the following?	<input type="radio"/> Accessing EU funding <input type="radio"/> Proposal development <input type="radio"/> Other
9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?	
10. Are you willing to be contacted if we need to ask you any further questions about your responses?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> If yes, contact name, email, phone