



Brussels, April 7th 2020

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To: Commissioner Hahn

EU Commissioner for Budget and Administration

Subject: European Equality Networks COVID 19 and EU Funding – request for flexibility in budgetary regulations for 2020 and 2021

Dear Commissioner

At the present time, Civil Society at the EU level is working hard to ensure that the COVID 19 response in Europe is inclusive and adequate to ensure, and to maintain equality and non-discrimination in Europe during this crisis. Our networks are working to advocate at the EU level, and support our members work at the National level to ensure no-one is left behind in the EU's COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

Our networks are funded by the EU through a range of EU programmes, including the Rights Equality and Citizenship programme. The EU core funding enables us to ensure ongoing engagement in EU issues and continuous support to grassroots citizens engaged in national and local civil society organisations throughout Europe. Our networks have quickly adapted to the new reality which COVID 19 has created. We are aiming to continue to ensure our core work through this period and to

build important responses to the COVID 19 crisis, including through supporting our Member organisations in their work at national level.

Given your responsibility for the EU budget, we address you to ask for measures to be taken to ensure the budget implementation is adapted to enable civil society at the EU and national level to continue to fulfill their essential mission and support the millions of citizens gathered in their networks. With this unprecedented crisis, the obstacles we foresee may significantly affect our work. These obstacles include the cancellation or postponement of important European events and activities, the economic downturn which will impact the financial sustainability of civil society organisations at all levels. In order to offset these obstacles we would like to recommend you to consider introducing the following measures for the 2020 and 2021 budgets.

1. Enable flexibility, when justified by the current exceptional circumstances, in the reallocation of resources, and in particular on the ratio between staff costs and activity costs which will be subject to higher changes than in normal circumstances ;
2. Allow redirection of planned activities and types of deliverables, until working life has returned to normal for European and international institutions. It is not possible for EU civil society organisation to foresee at this time when major events will be possible to hold. Also, given the current fast changing situation, the organisations may need a longer timeframe to adapt their plans and present their requests.
3. Given the exceptional circumstances, waive or significantly reduce the 20% co-financing requirement for the operating grants for 2020 and 2021. This is not a request for any additional resources, but a request to exceptionally waive or reduce the co-financing beneficiaries have to provide. Many EU civil society organisations will struggle to meet the co-financing requirements because foreseen co-financing income is being decreased by their co-funders that are heavily impacted by the crisis and confinement measures. Yet the work of EU civil society networks is more needed than ever to ensure citizens across the EU continue to be objectively informed about EU action in these difficult times and their concerns are adequately

relayed to EU institutions through EU NGOs.

We are aware that programme officers responsible for the management of our operating grants are responding flexibly to our requests for small changes at this time. However, they are not in a position to amend the overall co-funding requirements included in the budget regulations and our operating grant agreements, which is why we are calling on you to take action to enable us to pursue our core mission of connecting the EU with its citizens.

We are available to discuss this further at any time, and to provide you with any additional information as needed.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Sophie Parent, Secretary General, AGE Platform Europe



Euan Platt, Executive Director, IGLYO



Evelyn Paradis, Executive Director, ILGA Europe



Joanna Maycock, Secretary General, European Women's Lobby



Masen Davis, Interim Executive Director, Transgender Europe



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Yannis Vardakastanis, President European Disability Forum