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Statement

Statement on the Upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework

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SGI EUROPE GENERAL SECRETARIAT Rue des Deux Eglises, 26 bt 5, BE – 1000 Brussels
T: + 32 (0) 2 219 27 98 | F: + 32 (0) 2 218 12 13 | E: SGIeurope@SGIeurope.org | www.SGIeurope.org

Registered stakeholder
ID Nr 59513031434-92

A new framework for a changing Europe

As the European Union prepares to unveil its proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), SGI Europe welcomes the European Commission's intention to depart from the status quo.

The challenges the Union faces today, ranging from geopolitical instability to climate adaptation, digital transformation, and demographic change, require a budget that is more agile, more strategic, and more aligned with the public interest. The future MFF must reflect this new reality, placing people, SGIs, and territorial cohesion at its core.

SGI Europe outlines five key priorities to inform a budget that benefits both citizens and SGIs.

Simplifying access to EU funding

Too many organisations, especially those operating at the local level, struggle to access EU funds due to complex procedures, fragmented rules, and excessive administrative requirements.

Public authorities, service operators and civil society actors should not be at a disadvantage simply because they lack the capacity to navigate bureaucratic hurdles. SGI Europe calls for more user-friendly application systems, proportional reporting requirements, and a clearer structure across EU programmes. Funding rules should support implementation and not obstruct it.

Respecting the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities

The EU budget is most effective when it works with local and regional actors. Decentralised funds, such as the Cohesion Policy and the ESF+, have demonstrated their value by being embedded in regional realities and shaped by those closest to citizens. It is important that the principles of partnership and shared management are part of the single plans the Commission has announced.

As the European Commission considers a new governance model through national reform and investment plans (similar to the Recovery and Resilience Facility), it is essential that the principle of subsidiarity is not weakened. Local and regional authorities, as well as providers of SGIs, must remain directly involved in the planning and delivery of EU-funded projects.

Their proximity to the challenges on the ground makes them essential partners in achieving the EU's objectives. Overlooking this experience risks undercutting the democratic legitimacy of the MFF.

Investing where the EU adds value

The debate over the size of the EU budget should not be divorced from its purpose. SGI Europe supports an ambitious EU budget that targets areas where the EU can make a unique contribution.

In line with the recommendations of both the Letta and Draghi reports, the MFF must target long-term investments in critical infrastructure, universal access to high-quality services of general interest, and strengthening the EU's resilience. It also means ensuring that EU funds are used in ways that benefit citizens across all regions, not just those with stronger administrative capacity.

The MFF must also support the competitiveness of the EU and its capacity to deliver sustainable growth, quality employment, and innovation. EU investments should strengthen Europe's productive base, as well as its SGIs, skills ecosystems, and territorial cohesion.

The MFF must deliver EU added value, avoid replicating what can be done at the national level, and invest where collective action makes a difference.

Maximising the use of every euro

With increasing pressure on public finances, the upcoming MFF must make more strategic use of available resources. This includes supporting investments that serve multiple purposes.

Dual-use infrastructure (such as transport, energy or digital systems that strengthen both civilian resilience and security) should be part of the EU's priorities. It also means designing programmes that break down silos between sectors, such as supporting projects that combine innovation, training and service delivery in the same territory.

Funds should reflect the interconnected nature of today's challenges and better encourage cooperation between public, private and civic actors, as well as the leverage of both public and private funding through de-risking operations.

Promoting EU public goods

The concept of European public goods – services and infrastructures that provide cross-border benefits and reinforce cohesion – should be a guiding principle for the new MFF.

These include shared energy grids, digital connectivity, sustainable transport, and joint efforts to protect natural resources. They can also extend to skills development, public education, media literacy and innovation, and inclusive social systems. Support in these areas will also contribute to protecting Europe's democracies and its resilience.

The promotion of such EU public goods must not lead to a redefinition of competences. SGI Europe strongly underlines that respect for national prerogatives and subsidiarity must remain a cornerstone of EU budgetary policy. Supporting public goods at European level should aim to complement and enhance national and regional responsibilities.

Clear criteria and transparent governance mechanisms are necessary to ensure that EU support for public goods delivers added value while safeguarding the autonomy of Member States, and represents a powerful tool for addressing common challenges through joint investment, without undermining national systems.

Conclusion

The next MFF must reflect the political maturity of the EU. Citizens expect the EU to provide security, opportunity, and support during transitions. SGIs are central to meeting these expectations, and SGI Europe stands ready to work with the institutions to ensure that the EU budget supports them effectively.

A simplified, territorially respectful, value-driven and forward-looking MFF will not only serve the Union's strategic interests. It will strengthen trust, build resilience, and show what Europe can achieve when it invests in the common good.