TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Mid Term Evaluation of the European Union System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society (EU SEE)

1. The intervention to be evaluated

Title of the intervention	**The EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society (EU SEE)**
Dates of the intervention to be evaluated	1/01/2024 - 31/12/2026
Consortium partners	Hivos, DRI, EPD, TI, FORUS, CIVICUS

The EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society (EU SEE) is a five-year program that is implemented by a global consortium composed of organizations and Network Members across 86 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, the Americas and the Caribbean. The Consortium Partners include CIVICUS, Democracy Reporting International (DRI), the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), Forus, Hivos (lead consortium partner) and Transparency International.

The partnership implements and maintains an Early Warning Mechanism and offers Monitoring Methodology to document changes and sheds light on critical trends in the enabling environment (EE) for civil society. EU SEE equips civil society, governments, and stakeholders with actionable insights to address challenges and leverage opportunities effectively. It focuses on addressing deterioration in the enabling environment and supporting opportunities for improving the enabling environment for civil society.

The Early Warning Mechanism and Monitoring Methodology is complemented by an independently operated program called the Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM), which is coordinated by CIVICUS, Oxfam Novib (lead consortium partner), Protection International and Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean. The FSM responds to the need for more flexible and timely financial support for civil society in situations of urgency.

Definition of the enabling environment for civil society
The combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

The **overarching goal** of EU SEE is to contribute to enabling environments for civil society worldwide.

The program **aims** to strengthen CSOs' practices and systems (*EU SEE Early Warning Mechanism and Monitoring Methodology*) to uphold Enabling Environments and respond to deteriorating contexts at the global, regional and national levels**.**

To achieve this, EU SEE is structured around **three outcome areas**:

- **Outcome area 1:** To encourage coherent and comprehensive gender-sensitive, CSO-based network and community learning
- **Outcome area 2:** To monitor the enabling environment of civil society (through Country Focus Reports (CFRs), Enabling Environment Snapshots (EES), and the Early Warning Mechanism)
- **Outcome area 3:** To engage in efficient advocacy to promote and respond to enabling environment changes.

The program has identified **three specific intermediate outcomes**:

- **Intermediate outcome 1:** To coordinate and lead a coherent and comprehensive EU funded, gender-sensitive CSO-based system for upholding enabling environment
- **Intermediate outcome 2**: To strengthen CSOs' capacities to detect, monitor, analyze and address changes to the Enabling Environment, ensuring a gender and intersectional lens
- **Intermediate outcome 3:** To strengthen CSOs' abilities to exchange evidence-based knowledge and to efficiently advocate on EE with EU actors (DG INTPA, NEAR, FPI, EEAS and EUDs, and EU MS—through the TED platform) and international partners.

2. Objectives of the Evaluation and evaluation criteria

2.1 Purpose and Objectives

The program started in 2024 and reached the halfway point of its implementation period of five years, running up to 2029. The evaluation takes place now to inform strategic decisions towards the final implementation period. Therefore, Hivos is seeking to recruit a Global Evaluator(s) to conduct the mid-term evaluation of the program. The evaluation will be participatory and will incorporate input from all relevant stakeholders, including consortium partners, network members, flexible support mechanisms stakeholders, and other key actors such as representatives of the EU.

The mid-term evaluation will provide an independent assessment based on two integrated objectives:

- **Accountability**: Assess the performance of EU SEE in line with its commitments to the EU.
- **Learning and Strategy adjustment**: Generate evidence and insights on effectiveness, coherence, relevance and sustainability that will inform the remaining period of the project and enable EU SEE to adapt towards achieving enhanced outcomes.

2.2 The evaluation criteria:

To fulfil this purpose, the evaluation wishes to explore the following DAC evaluation criteria:

- **Relevance**: Is the program doing the right things? Focusing on the Theory of Change (ToC) and its relevance by exploring the alignment of the program with network members' needs, priorities, and contexts. Analyze the extent to which the program strategies, governance arrangements, and implementation approaches enable or constrain progress.
- **Coherence and quality of the program's partnership approach**: Is the program promoting coherence across and beyond the program? Focusing on collaboration within the partnership with different stakeholders, including FSM.
- **Effectiveness**: Is the program doing things right? Assessing the program's contribution to outcomes (intended and unintended), successes, challenges, cross-cutting issues by studying the programmatic interventions, including strengthening of CSOs (NMs), efficiency of advocacy activities and any other relevant program component. Identify good practices and learning that deepen understanding of what works, for whom and under what conditions.
- **Efficiency:** Is the program using its resources well? Assessing how efficiently financial, human, and organizational resources are translated into outputs and early outcomes, including timeliness of implementation, management and coordination arrangements, and cost-effectiveness of key program interventions where feasible. Identify operational good practices, bottlenecks, and lessons to improve value for money during the remaining implementation period.
- **Sustainability**: Will the benefits last over time? Focusing on capacities and systems in place to maintain gains and the aspects of the program that could be replicated, amended or replaced. Provide forward-looking, actionable recommendations on what to adjust, scale, replicate, discontinue or reinforce during the final implementation period.

2.2 The main users of this evaluation

#	Users of the evaluation	Key uses (how they will use the evaluation)
1	EU	EU services future programming, improve current implementation of the intervention
2	Consortium partners	Hivos, TI, EPD, CIVICUS, DRI and Forus to improve current implementation of the intervention
3	Civil society	Network members in partner countries: to improve the current implementation
4	Others	FSM and like-minded actors to understand how EU SEE findings, data, and approaches can better inform and complement their own work and strengthen coordination

3. The evaluation questions

The table below details the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria linked to the evaluation objectives, evaluation questions and sub-questions. During the inception phase, the evaluation questions and sub-questions will be finalized in collaboration between the evaluation team and the consortium partners.

OECD Criteria	Evaluation Objective	Evaluation Question
Relevance	To assess the extent to which the program's design and objectives are aligned with the needs, priorities, and context of stakeholders (e.g. consortium partners, network members, FSM).	To what extent does the program respond to the current needs and priorities of the Network Members and stakeholders? How well does the program align with relevant national, regional, and EU policies and strategies related to the EE? To what extent is the program's design and theory of change still appropriate given any contextual changes since the start of implementation? To what extent can trends be distinguished in types of contexts or conditions that are conducive or constraining to applying Early Warning Mechanisms and/or Monitoring Methodologies?
Coherence, partnership and collaboration	To assess the extent to which the program is coherent and complementary with relevant initiatives, policies, and actors, and to evaluate the quality, effectiveness, and added value of partnerships and collaboration mechanisms across all levels—including CSOs (NMs), FSM, donors, and like-minded actors.	To what extent has collaboration between the different consortium partners and with FSM created added value in the program? How could the collaborations be improved? Did the program collaborate with other partners outside the EU SEE? If yes, to what extent did they collaborate and what was the added value of those collaborations? To what extent have adaptive management principles influenced programming within the EU SEE program? To what extent has there been an added value in the collaboration with EUDs? What opportunities can be identified for improvement in the collaboration EUDs? How could the collaboration be improved?
Effectiveness	To assess the extent to which the program is achieving, or is likely to achieve, its intended outputs and outcomes by examining the effectiveness of programmatic interventions in relation to the ToC logic—including CSO (NM) strengthening, advocacy activities, and other components—and the program's contribution to intended and unintended results, as well as key successes, challenges, and cross-cutting issues.	To what extent have the planned outputs and outcomes been achieved as outlined in the program's results framework? What factors have facilitated or hindered progress toward achieving the intended outcomes? To what extent are the program's strategies, approaches, and activities contributing effectively to the desired change? What unanticipated changes—whether beneficial or adverse—have emerged during

OECD Criteria	Evaluation Objective	Evaluation Question
		implementation, and what factors have contributed to these outcomes?
Efficiency	To assess the extent to which program resources are being used economically and in a timely manner to deliver planned outputs and early outcomes, by examining the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of programmatic interventions	To what extent have the planned outputs and outcomes been achieved as outlined in the program's results framework? What factors have facilitated or hindered progress toward achieving the intended outcomes? To what extent are the program's strategies, approaches, and activities contributing effectively to the desired change?
Sustainability	To assess the likelihood that the results and benefits of the program will be maintained over time, including the durability of outcomes, the capacity of CSOs (NMs) and other partners, and the integration of lessons and practices into ongoing structures or policies of stakeholders (e.g. consortium partners and network members).	To what extent are the program's outcomes likely to be sustained beyond the program period? To what extent and in what way have the capacities of network members been strengthened to continue activities independently? What mechanisms or strategies have been put in place to ensure the durability of results, including financial, institutional, and policy support?
Lessons learnt and good practices.	To identify and document key lessons learned, successful approaches, and good practices from the program that can inform and improve implementation and guide policy and strategy decisions.	What approaches or strategies used in the program have proven most effective, and why? (building on findings under 'effectiveness' questions) What challenges or obstacles were encountered, and what lessons can be applied to improve implementation in the coming period? Which practices and experiences from the program could be strengthened or adapted for better results in the next phase of implementation?

4. Evaluation approach and methods

Consultants are expected to propose an evaluation approach and methodology suitable for a complex, multi-country, broad scope program such as EU SEE. The contribution-oriented approach should meet the evaluation criteria and provide utilization-focused insights in relation to the evaluation questions. It should allow for a reflection on the program's Theory of Change

(ToC), CSO/NM strengthening, advocacy activities, and other program components, including cross-cutting issues such as gender, inclusion, and governance.

Consultants should ensure their proposed approach:

- Assesses both effectiveness of interventions and contribution to intended and unintended outcomes.
- Captures insights into lessons learned and good practices for the coming period of implementation.
- Is theory-based, mixed-methods, and complexity-sensitive, suitable for a multi-component program with diverse stakeholders.
- Include a case-study based approach (based on sampling) while ensuring program-wide relevant insights are obtained
- Explains how data will be triangulated across sources and methods to ensure credible and robust findings.
- Includes a clear strategy for meaningful, safe and low-burden participation of stakeholders in restrictive or fragile contexts.
- Demonstrates how multilingual engagement will be ensured throughout the evaluation, across the programme's implementation languages.

In the proposal, the consultant(s) is requested to reflect on the following questions when developing their proposed approach and methods:

- Why is your approach appropriate to address the expected objectives of this mid-term evaluation?
- What principles guide the evaluation?
- How will you incorporate a participatory approach to the evaluation?
- What design will be used (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) and why?
- How will you capture the breadth and depth of the program considering 86 contexts are involved?
- How will data be analyzed and how will you apply triangulation?
- What are the assumptions and limitations underlining your approach?

Suggested methodologies that consultants may consider including (but are not limited to): Process tracing, Contribution Analysis, and Realist Evaluation. The consultant(s) must provide detailed plans on how the methodologies will be implemented within available resources.

Furthermore, we invite consultant(s) to suggest which evaluation methods they will most likely apply (to be further determined in the inception phase). Consultants are encouraged to select the most appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods fitting to the proposed evaluation approach. The consultant(s) is requested to reflect:

- How exactly will data be collected?
- What instruments will be used?

Suggested methods for data collection that consultants may consider including (but are not limited to): Theory of Change reflection workshops, (self-)capacity assessment method such as Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA), Most Significant Change (MSC), case studies, SWOT analysis, survey among 86+ network members, key informant interviews, etc. It is suggested that data collection will at least involve key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and, where applicable, surveys to gather insights from stakeholders across multiple levels of program implementation. Field visits may be conducted to contextualize findings and capture localized perspectives, and all field study costs should be covered by the budget provided for this MTR.

The evaluation is expected to begin with a structured desk review of key program documents, including design frameworks, strategic plans, progress reports, budget allocations, and relevant policy documents.

Case studies

The consultant(s) is expected to include case-study approach to narrow the scope of the evaluation exercise. A sampling process will be conducted by the consultant(s), which will propose the selection of sampled countries based on predefined criteria. This proposal will then be reviewed and finalized in consultation with Hivos and the reference group to ensure alignment with evaluation objectives, data availability, and logistical feasibility. To maintain transparency and independence, the sampling criteria and procedures will be clearly documented, and a reflection on potential biases will be explicitly addressed in the evaluation process. This collaborative approach aims to balance the independence of the evaluation with the need for contextual relevance and stakeholder input.

Participatory approach and contextualization

A participatory approach will prioritize the voices and insights of all target groups, ensuring meaningful engagement with actors affected by the program. Data collection tools will be adapted to local contexts, translated into relevant languages where necessary, and made accessible to persons with disabilities, including provisions for sign language interpretation. Costs associated to translation or interpretation are included in the budget and should be explicitly mentioned in the proposal.

5. Evaluation key deliverables and indicative timeline

The evaluation deliverables will include:

1. **Inception Report:** Outlining program design quality assessment, a reconstructed Theory of Change (if applicable), stakeholder analysis, adapted evaluation framework including the analysis approach, data collection tools and detailed schedule.
2. **Table of Content**: proposed table of content for the mid-term report indicating how findings will be organized and presented.
3. **Preliminary Findings Note:** Providing an opportunity for engagement with program teams and the reference group to validate emerging insights.
4. **Draft and Final Evaluation Reports:** Including an executive summary, detailed analysis of findings aligned with evaluation criteria, lessons learned, and evidence-based recommendations.
5. **Evaluation Brief:** A concise overview of the program and key findings for broader dissemination.

The draft report will undergo an iterative review process, allowing for feedback and verification of findings. It is expected that at least 2 feedback rounds will be required.

The Mid-term Evaluation will be conducted over a period of **6-8 months**, following a phased approach to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the program.

5.1. Evaluation phases:

1. **Inception Phase** – This will cover inception meetings, including consultant commissioning, desk review of key program documents, and the finalization of the methodology and evaluation design based on feedback from the EU SEE evaluation team.

The consultant(s) will submit an inception report, including proposed Table of Content, for review and approval.

2. **Data Collection Phase** –This phase will involve the implementation of mixed participatory approaches at different program levels, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and, where applicable, field visits at different implementation levels. Careful planning and timing of field visits is requested to align with availability of partners and network members (especially during peak holiday seasons).
3. **Data Analysis and Reporting Phase** – Collected data will be analyzed and synthesized, leading to the development of preliminary findings. A draft evaluation report will be presented for validation. Conclusions and recommendations will be drawn based on the evidence collected.
4. **Finalization and Validation Phase** – Validation meetings will be conducted to review and finalize the evaluation findings. The final report will incorporate feedback from stakeholders and the EU SEE evaluation team before submission.
5. **Final report phase-**The final report will provide a comprehensive assessment of the program's relevance, coherence, effectiveness/performance, and sustainability.

5.2. Timeline

The evaluation will be conducted over a structured timeline to ensure timely delivery of key milestones, with a focus on participatory engagement, iterative feedback, and validation at both country and global levels.

Deliverable/Milestone	Timeline
Inception report	31 May
Data collection	June – August
Preliminary analysis and report	30 September
Validation workshops	Early October
1st draft evaluation report	20 October
2nd draft evaluation report	10 November
Final report	30 November

6. Consultant(s) Profile

The lead consultant should meet the following requirements. Complementary expertise among other team members will be considered an added advantage.

(1) Minimum 10 years of experience in program evaluation in enabling environment for civil society, social justice, human rights, gender, democracy and development within the specific geographic focus areas (Africa, MENA, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean).

(2) Must demonstrate proven accomplishment in leading evaluations of Complex, multi-stakeholder and multi-country programs.

(3) A relevant postgraduate degree in human rights, international relations, project management development studies, sociology, or monitoring and evaluation.

(4) Demonstrated experience as an evaluator or commissioner of evaluations for global programs with consortium structure spanning multiple regions or countries.

(5) Expertise in evaluating programs with a learning trajectory, particularly in relation to program adaptation and sustainability.
(6) Experience in working with Theories of Change in project similar to the EUSEE.
(7) Extensive experience in evaluating gender equality, diversity, and inclusion programs.
(8) Strong written and verbal communication skills in English. It is also expected that the team plans for an engagement strategy in all EU SEE implementation languages including French, Spanish and Portuguese.

7. Proposal Submission

Interested consultants are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) that includes both a Technical Offer and a Financial Offer. The submission should not exceed fifteen pages in total and must clearly outline the proposed methodology and budget.

Technical offer

- A detailed proposal outlining the evaluation approach and methodologies, including an evaluation planning matrix or work plan.
- Updated CVs of core evaluation team members, clearly demonstrating relevant experience and background.
- Shortlisted candidates will be required to submit previous work samples in English.

Financial offer

- A detailed cost breakdown, including consultant fees, travel expenses, translation costs, and any other direct or indirect costs necessary for the execution of the evaluation.

Submit proposals by 20 April 2026

The submission should be sent to eusee-info@hivos.org with the subject “EU SEE Mid Term Evaluation Proposal” in the subject line by April 20, 2026. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

The total proposed budget must not exceed EUR **100,000 Euro** in total (Including VAT).