

To: Heads of State and Government

Brussels, November 2012

RE: Time for a real debate on EU spending to meet citizens needs and EU's responsibilities

Dear Prime Minister,
Dear President,

The clock is ticking for Heads of State and Government to show the sound leadership required to ensure the next EU budget (2014-2020) can face the massive common challenges we all are enduring. The EU process of medium-term financial planning and annual budgeting has led to horse-trading between national interests (which have been more focused on questions like net contributions, just returns, and net gains). This has detracted attention away from debating added value, EU responsibilities and the quality of spending. In 2005 the European Council committed itself to undertake a thorough review of the budget, including a "no taboo" debate on the EU Budget with the objective to reflect the needs of tomorrow's world. The CSCG sees these commitments under threat. Political courage and determination are essential to break from special interests and re-orientate the EU budget to meeting the long-term needs of people living in Europe and beyond in a sustainable way. Time is ripe for the debate on quality of EU spending to move beyond historic positions and national interests, and to concentrate on the needs and concerns of people living in Europe and beyond.

Ever since 2005, the Civil Society Contact Group (CSCG) has been calling for a EU spending that reflects the people-centred values and objectives of the EU: such as human rights and equality for all; freedom; democracy and active citizenship; the rule of law; social cohesion and inclusion; lifelong learning; civil dialogue; cultural diversity; sustainable development and gender equality. The EU Budget must serve the policies the EU has developed, responsibilities outside the EU borders, political commitments the EU has engaged in, and contribute to achieving the Treaty aims and objectives.

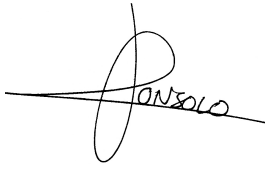
From the viewpoint of the Civil Society Contact Group the EU budgeting process has been largely disappointing so far. The process, after an enthusiastic and inclusive start, suffered delays. In addition, the discussions about the next EU Budget lack meaningful debate between the EU and civil society about the shape and purpose of the budget rather than budget lines, size and length of the next framework. Decisions need to be taken in a transparent way, and not behind closed doors. It is concerning to the years of negotiations will culminate in a final decision being taken under duress of a single summit.

We are at a critical juncture - a moment of truth, where EU Member States' political commitments to achieving EU responsibilities within and outside its borders will be judged against decisions taken right now. EU spending urgently needs to be refocused where it makes the greatest impact for people and the planet.

Sincerely yours,

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The CSCG brings together eight large European NGO platforms in the following fields:
social affairs (Social Platform), development (CONCORD), human rights (HRDN), environment (Green 10), gender equality (EWL), culture (CAE), public health (EPHA), and Life-Long Learning (EUCIS-LLL).



Olivier Consolo, Director
European NGO confederation
for relief and development

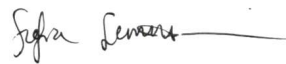



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