



Joint Civil Society & Social Economy Coalition contribution

Civil Society Europe (CSE), the European Council for non-profit organisations (CEDAG), Philanthropy Europe Association (Philea), Social Economy Europe (SEE) and Social Services Europe (SSE), are joining into a civil society and social economy coalition. This wide coalition carries the voice of European non-profit organisations (NPOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), including foundations, associations, social services, non-governmental organisations, and the diversity of other social economy enterprises and organisations throughout the European Union (EU) and beyond.

The Coalition welcomed the adoption of the European Parliament (EP) Resolution with recommendations to the Commission on a statute for European cross-border associations and NPOs, and its two legislative proposals. The ambition of this Resolution relies in its will to strengthen EU civil society and to recognise the essential economic role of associations, foundations and other NPOs, as major actors of civil societies and providers of services of general interest. In response to this ambition, the Coalition welcomes the promising commitment of the European Commission (EC) to propose a legislative initiative; as well as its commitment to launch studies to underpin this initiative with evidence.

However, the ambition of the EP Resolution and the needs of NPOs and CSOs has yet to be reached. The Coalition calls the EC to cover all NPOs, including associations and foundations, in its legislative initiative. Narrowing down this legislative initiative to only associations would otherwise exclude organisations facing similar cross border barriers, potentially weaken the vitality and innovation of all NPOs in civil societies and democratic spaces and lack to recognise essential non-profit economic social economy actors.

We consider that the EC has a timely opportunity to develop a legislative proposal that includes a clear and positive definition of the non-profit sector and the civil society, its citizenship dimension and distinctive features of, its enterprises and organisations and distinctive features; in their role of advocacy, watchdog and providers of services of general interest. This legislative initiative should ambition to protect and recognise NPOs and CSOs acting for the common good, and to overcome the shared cross-border barriers.

Contributions of the Coalition members highlight the need to facilitate cross-border activities of associations, foundations and other NPOs. The creation of a European legal framework remains the best and most effective legal instrument to create truly European general interest organisations; and to provide them with the right enabling environment. In line with the call of Germany and Spain, this legislative option would be complementary to the Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions, and other key actions of the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP).

A new legal form should provide a level playing field for NPOs and aim to be an attractive, simple, accessible and comprehensible tool to be picked up by the sector and citizens and to operate more easily across borders. It would also contribute to the recognition of this important player in the single market.



We also believe that the proposal should include the definition of common minimum standards. The latter should be wide in scope and define key principles on which national law should be developed in full respect of fundamental rights, while maintaining the diversity of national traditions. These benchmarks should rather create general, but legally binding guidance that avoids defining overly specific rules and includes a non-regression clause.

CSOs, NPOs, and all social economy actors should and are willing to be actively involved in shaping this Commission legislative initiative and we will continue to build a constructive approach with the EC to the Council and MS.