



Civil Society Europe Newsletter

Summer 2026

Welcome to our summer 2026 newsletter! In this edition, find out about what we've been up to over the summer, including an update on our 'Voices of Millions' campaign, and what we have prepared as we gear up for another busy period.

What has CSE been up to?

Democracy Shield - Civil Society Priorities for Its Implementation

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Civil Society Europe (CSE) is the coordination of European networks of civil society organisations: the variety of sectors in its membership is proof of the vital role civil society plays to support the democratic fabric of European societies, from the local to the EU level.

Democracy has always been at the core of CSE's work: from ensuring civil society participation in the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), to contributing to the subsequent democracy initiatives of the Commission, from the European Democracy Action Plan, to the [Defence of Democracy Package](#), to the latest [Democracy Shield](#). While the narrative of the Commission's proposals have gradually tilted towards a more 'defensive' posture against external interference, civil society's position on the topic has remained consistent: democracy is an ecosystem made of functioning institutions, protected fundamental freedoms, respected civil society in the variety of its manifestations, and engaged citizenry, in a system of checks and balances that builds institutional trust in a system where a due policy making process delivers on the needs of the people. Democracy is an ecosystem whose parts need to be nurtured every day, and is exposed to risks that transcend national and EU-borders from FIMI to transnational repression, to national oligarchies and authoritarian practices. An integrated approach is therefore needed.

This paper aims at proposing pathways of implementation for the different initiatives under the Democracy Shield, in order to embrace the multifaceted nature of democracy protection and promotion and the role civil society can play in it.

The Democracy Shield is an opportunity for the EU to safeguard its democratic foundations. Our new paper provides ways to implement the different initiatives under the Shield.

Our message is clear - **democracy cannot be safeguarded without civil society.**

Among our recommendations are:

- The European Centre for Democratic Resilience must live up to its name. We support the goal of a Centre that is a focal coordination point for different aspects of the Shield;
- Civil society must be acknowledged in all the dimensions of the Shield for boosting societal resilience;
- The EU's long-term budget must have a strong AgoraEU programme that allows civil society, culture, and media to thrive.

[Read the full paper here.](#)

CSE Continues 'Voices of Millions' Campaign



We've continued to develop and implement our 'Voices of Millions' campaign, **raising awareness of the positive impact of civil society in the EU**. Since [launching on May 5th](#), we've been busy highlighting positive stories in our 'Power of Many' social media series, and spreading the word about the importance of funding for civil society organisations [through a series of infographics](#).

What's next? We'll continue our efforts by connecting civil society and MEPs to put a spotlight on how civil society contributes to stronger policies by representing citizens' perspectives. Watch this space! Stay up to date with the campaign [on our website](#) and social media ([LinkedIn](#) / [X](#) / [BlueSky](#)).

The European Centre for Democratic Resilience Stakeholder Platform: A Blueprint From Civil Society

CSE has contributed to the European Partnership for Democracy's blueprint on the European Centre for Democratic Resilience, a key part of the European Democracy Shield. The format and content of this platform should be ambitious and aim to fully implement the aims of the Democracy Shield.

[Read the full blueprint here!](#)

Events you don't want to miss

Civil Society Co-designing Quality: Building Resilience in a Challenging Environment

Can quality build resilience in civil society organisations? As civic space keeps shrinking across Europe, many organisations are searching for more **adaptive approaches to quality management** that support learning, participation and collaboration.



On 14 October 2026, Civil Society Europe will host the event **“Civil Society Co-designing Quality: Building Resilience in a Challenging Environment”**, under the **CoQuality network**. The event will build on the findings of a CoQuality European study on quality management, and will bring together relevant stakeholders to assess how quality can promote resilience, partnership and change.

When? 14 October 2026, 9:30 - 16:30

Where? Royal Library of Belgium, Mont des Arts 28, Brussels

[Register here](#) until September 14, 2026, and [read the draft agenda here](#).

Call for Participants: Drafting of the Civil Society State of the Union 2027



Are you an EU-level civil society organisation? We are kicking off the preparation of our **Civil Society State of the Union 2027**. As the European Commission President presents their assessment on the state of affairs in the European Union each year, it is crucial that civil society complements this picture with our own perspective.

We are now ready to draft our 2027 Civil Society State of the Union, with the goal of taking stock of the state of affairs in the EU, and gathering ideas and demands identified by civil society for change. Participation involves **taking part in one of the thematic sub-working groups**.

Register for participation [here](#). Deadline to apply: **13th September 2026**

Other news

Support Global Campaign for the New EU Budget to Invest in What Matters to People

Several civil society organisations engaged in gender and women's rights have launched a global campaign calling for gender equality, women's rights, care, and social priorities to be at the heart of the forthcoming EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034.

They have launched a petition calling on the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council to make gender equality a core priority in the next EU budget. You can already [read and sign the petition here](#).



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contact@civilsocietyeurope.eu
Tel. +32 (0)2 721 40 69

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