

To elected MEPs, to the Future President of the European Commission, to candidate Commissioners and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to the President of the European Council, to the Trio EU Presidencies

## Roadmap to Civil Dialogue in the EU

*At a moment when basic civic rights are challenged across the European Union, the European institutions need to lead by example in ensuring that democracy is strengthened and that organised civil society can flourish and be empowered.*

Civil society plays a key role in the defense and promotion of the values enshrined in Article 2 of the EU Treaty, which include respect for human dignity, human rights, equality, democracy and the rule of law. In addition, the work of civil society organisations is to empower people within their diversity to speak up on key issues making their “right to participate in the democratic life of the Union” a reality, as enshrined in Article 10, as well as to seize the opportunity to “make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action” and participate in an open, transparent and regular dialogue with the institutions (Article 11).

In order to guarantee this, and work towards the implementation of existing Treaty provisions on civil dialogue, the EU institutions need to introduce measures to support and develop civic space in Europe<sup>1</sup>.

We call on you who will be leading the EU institutions to take the following decisions:

### *All EU institutions:*

- recognise in their work and statements, the specific role of civil society organisations: NGOs, associations and foundations in the development of a European democratic society

### *European Commission:*

- Include in the mandate of the President of the new European Commission, and within the future Commission political guidelines/agenda: the promotion of an open, regular, transparent and inclusive dialogue with civil society
- Include protection and promotion of civil society in the mandate of the Vice-President in charge of the rule of law and fundamental rights

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<sup>1</sup> See also Civil Society on the Frontline - 5 points for EU action 2019-2024 (add link)

- The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should include in his/her mandate the support, promotion and development of a thriving and independent civil society
- Develop guidelines on structured dialogue with civil society and propose an EU framework agreement on civil dialogue
- Ensure a Focal point/Unit on civil society within each Directorate General that will be responsible for organising regular exchanges with civil society organisations and for information sharing
- Review the Better Regulation agenda, so as to ensure that online consultations are adapted to civil society organisations and not just to business or public authorities or individual citizens
- Include in all EU impact assessments the impact of the new legislation on the freedom of Association, Assembly and Expression
- Ensure transparent trilogue negotiations by publishing negotiation documents and amendments

*European Parliament:*

- The President should, in line with the European Parliament rules of procedure, hold at least once a year a structured dialogue with civil society organisations at EU level.
- A Vice President should be in charge of structured dialogue with civil society organisations and as a first step to achieving this, should establish an open working group or task force to review current practices for engagement and consultation of civil society of all its structures and decision-making procedures
- Political groups should meet regularly with representatives of civil society organisations
- Ensure open access to citizens and their representative associations to EP meetings and documents, including the publication of voting lists and compromise amendments before the vote, as well as trilogue negotiations documents

*Council of the EU:*

- Each EU Presidency should make a priority of civic space and engage in dialogue with civil society organisations
- Make all steps of decision-making transparent including in the preparatory working groups by making draft documents available before and after the meeting, showing the position of the different national delegations, and as a general rule make meetings public

- Organise a Council session on sharing Members States' good practices on the inclusion of civil society and citizens in EU decision-making

*European Council:*

- Every two years, organise a session of the European Council with cross-sectoral European and national platforms of civil society organisations, so as to facilitate a meaningful and in-depth exchange of EU leaders with the broader citizens' concerns
- EU heads of State and Governments should consult the representatives of national civil society organisations on a regular basis