

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

cc: Ms Vera Jourova

Vice-President of the European Commission

Mr Didier Reynders

Commissioner for Justice

Brussels, 21 June 2022

Object: European Commission work programme 2023: the need to include the development of a European Civil Society Strategy

Honourable President,

We, civil society organisations acting at local, national and European level, call on the European Commission to include in the work programme of 2023 a proposal for a European Civil Society Strategy¹.

Civil society organisations, such as citizens' associations, NGOs and public benefits foundations, and human rights defenders are instrumental to make effective the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the rights proclaimed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, on a daily basis, both at European and national level.

Our action strives to leave no one behind and is crucial in the area of culture, social care, education, health, anti-corruption, environment, anti-discrimination and much more.

¹ European Civic Forum, [TOWARDS VIBRANT EUROPEAN CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE, The case for a European civil society strategy and preliminary reflections on the gaps, challenges and opportunities to be addressed](#) (2022).

We intervene as democratic antibodies when rights, democracy and the rule of law are under attack.

Our role is key to build public spaces, upscale participatory democracy and channel citizens' participation.

Our rapid mobilisations and recommendations have been and are essential in the context of the multifaceted crises affecting our societies which each time exacerbate the many vulnerabilities people are confronted with, such as the financial crisis in the early 2010s, the COVID-19 pandemic, the humanitarian crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the environmental catastrophes resulting from the climate emergency.

Unfortunately, evidence from the field² shows growing obstacles and attacks affecting civil society's ability to act in full capacities and independence, as research³ and the findings of the European Commission rule of law report⁴ confirm. As a result of these attacks, **our collective European future is jeopardised.**

The ongoing measures and actions taken at the European level in support of civic actors' activities have mostly been limited in scope and impact. It is now urgent to provide an overarching solution to fill the gaps of existing policies and mainstream positive practices.

The call for a civil society strategy has been a long-term demand of CSOs at European and national level⁵. This demand is now supported by a **European Parliament resolution on the shrinking space for civil society in Europe (2021/2103(INI))** voted with a large majority on 8 March 2022, and recommendation 36.8 of **final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe**⁶.

² European Civic Forum, Civic Space Watch report 2021 - ACTIVIZENSHIP #6 (2022); Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Bringing human rights and Article 2 values to life: the roles, challenges and solutions for civil society (2022); Civil Society Europe, Contribution to 2022 Rule of Law Report (2022); CIVICUS, People Power under attack 2021 (2022); European Youth Forum, Safeguarding civic space for young people in Europe (2022).

³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Protecting civic space in the EU (2021); Civic space – experiences of organisations in 2019 (2020); Civil society space: views of organisations (2018); Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU (2018).

⁴ European Commission, 2020 Rule of law report - Communication and country chapters (2020); 2021 Rule of law report | European Commission (2021).

⁵ Including though CSOs joint statement Civil Society on the Frontline - 5 points for EU action 2019-2024 (2019), Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Recommendations for a Comprehensive European Policy and Strategy on Civil Society (2022), final output of the Civil society convention for the future of Europe (2022), Recharging Advocacy for Rights in Europe (RARE)'s Advocacy brief on an European strategy for civil society: recognition, inclusion, protection (2022), HRDN Submission to the European Commission in the framework of the 2nd Annual Rule of Law Review Cycle (2021).

⁶ Conference on the Future of Europe, Report on the final outcome (2022), p.79.

We urge the European Commission to consider all this, and in consequence to give substance to the mandate of the Vice President of the European Commission for values and transparency and resources for carrying out a regular, open and transparent civil dialogue - along the provision of Article 11 of the Treaty - and safeguard civil society space by developing, in cooperation with CSOs and human rights defenders, a comprehensive European civil society strategy before the end of the current five-years term.

We remain at your disposal to discuss the overall content of such a strategy, and the steps to be started immediately.

For further communication, you can contact the initiators of the letter: Civil Society Europe (Carlotta Besozzi, carlotta.besozzi@civilsocietyeurope.eu) and European Civic Forum (Alexandrina Najmowicz, anajmowicz@civic-forum.eu).

Initial signatories:

European organisations and networks

1. Alzheimer Europe
2. Amnesty International
3. Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE)
4. Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)
5. Civil Liberties Union for Europe
6. CIVICUS
7. Compassion in World Farming EU
8. CONCORD Europe
9. Culture Action Europe
10. Eurochild
11. Eurodiaconia
12. Eurogroup for Animals
13. European Alliance for Responsible R&D and Affordable Medicines
14. European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
15. European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD)
16. European Citizen Action Network (ECAS)
17. European Civic Forum
18. European Council of Associations of General Interest (Comité européen des associations d'intérêt général - CEDAG)
19. European Disability Forum
20. European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
21. European Federation of Elderly and Retired People
22. European Federation for Intercultural Learning
23. European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW)
24. European Humanist Federation
25. European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
26. European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP)
27. European Network on Religion & Belief
28. European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)
29. European Patients' Forum
30. European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

31. European Rivers Network (ERN)
32. European Students' Union (ESU)
33. European Union of Mountaineering Associations (EUMA)
34. European Women's Lobby
35. European Youth Forum
36. EURORDIS - Rare Diseases Europe
37. EU4Health Civil Society Alliance
38. Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)
39. Green 10
40. Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), EU Internal Human Rights Policy Working Group
41. Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
42. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
43. International Federation of ACAT (FIACAT)
44. JEUNE - Young Entrepreneurs Organization of European Union
45. Lifelong Learning Platform
46. New Europeans
47. Oxfam
48. Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association
49. RECLAIM (reclaiming.eu)
50. Revibra Europa
51. SMES - Europa (Santé Mentale Exclusion Sociale)
52. Social Platform
53. SOLIDAR Foundation
54. Transparency International EU
55. Volonteuropa
56. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
57. YES Forum
58. Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)

Austria

59. Documentation and Counseling Center Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism (Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus)
60. Global Responsibility - Austrian Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid
61. Interest Group of Public Benefit Organisations (IGO - Die Stimme der Gemeinnützigen)
62. RED NOSES - Clowndoctors International
63. South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)

Belgium

64. Association for Ethics in Fundraising (VEF-AERF)
65. Belgian Federation of Philanthropic Foundations (lesfondations.be - stichtingen.be)
66. De Verenigde Verenigingen
67. Kif Kif
68. Pour la Solidarité (PLS)

Bulgaria

69. Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL)
70. Bulgarian Institute for Legal Initiatives (BILI)
71. Citizen Participation Forum (CPF)
72. European Institute Foundation

Croatia

73. Association for Civil Society Development - SMART
74. Association Terra
75. Center for Cultural Activities

76. Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights - Osijek
77. Centre for Peace Studies - Croatia (CMS)
78. Civil Rights Project - Sisak
79. Community Foundation Slagolica
80. Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL)
81. Croatian Union of Associations for Autism (SUZAH)
82. Croatian Volunteer Development Centre
83. Croatian Youth Network (Mreža mladih Hrvatske)
84. DKolektiv - organizacija za društveni razvoj (Organisation for Social Development)
85. Dragodid
86. Društvo za istraživanje i potporu (Society for Research and Support)
87. Europska civilna inicijativa Zagreb
88. Gong
89. Human Rights House Zagreb
90. Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (ISRZ)
91. ISKORAK
92. Kurziv - Platforma za pitanja kulture, medija i društva (Platform for Matters of Culture, Media and Society)
93. ODRAZ - Održivi razvoj zajednice
94. Parents in Action (RODA)
95. Politiscope
96. Rehabilitation Center for Stress and Trauma (RCT Zagreb)
97. SOLIDARNA Foundation

Cyprus

98. Civil Society Advocates
99. KISA - Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism
100. NGO Support Centre

Czech Republic

101. Asociace NNO Libereckého kraje, ZO ČSOP Armillaria
102. Association for International Affairs (AMO)
103. Aufori, o.p.s.
104. Centrum Kašpar, z.s.
105. ClimaCare, z. s., Mendel University in Brno
106. Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation
107. Czech Forest Kindergartens Association
108. Czech Helsinki Committee
109. Czech High School Students' Union (CSU)
110. DEMAS - Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights
111. Evropský Institut Renaissance
112. Glopolis
113. Independent Social Ecological Movement (NESEHNUTI)
114. Nadace na ochranu zvířat
115. Nadační fond proti korupci
116. Nova sit z.s.
117. Okrašlovací spolek čelákovický
118. Open Society Fund Prague
119. Platform for Citizen's Assemblies
120. RADKA z.s.
121. Reconstruction of the State
122. Spiralis - Platform for NGO's Development
123. Systemický institut, s.r.o.
124. Zakroužkuj ženu, z.s.
125. EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

Denmark

- 126. ENAR - Denmark & Ethnic Debate Forum
- 127. Fairplay
- 128. Nyt Europa

Estonia

- 129. Estonian Human Rights Centre
- 130. Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations (NENO)

Finland

- 131. Anti-Racist Forum (ARF)
- 132. Central Union for Child Welfare (Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto - LSKL)
- 133. Migrant Tales

France

- 134. Action Droits des Musulmans (ADM)
- 135. Animafac
- 136. Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS)
- 137. Cap Magellan
- 138. Collectif des Associations Citoyennes (CAC)
- 139. CRID (Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement)
- 140. Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe (FFME)
- 141. France Nature Environnement (FNE)
- 142. La Coalition pour les Libertés Associatives (L.A. Coalition)
- 143. La Ligue de l'Enseignement
- 144. Le Mouvement associatif
- 145. Les Francas
- 146. Ligue des Droits de l'Homme
- 147. Maison de l'Europe de Paris
- 148. Parlement Européen des Jeunes - France

- 149. Pas Sans Nous
- 150. Tous Migrants
- 151. VoxPublic

Germany

- 152. #mybrainmychoice Initiative
- 153. Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt e.V.
- 154. Allianz Kulturstiftung
- 155. Allianz "Rechtssicherheit für politische Willensbildung"
- 156. Amadeu Antonio Stiftung
- 157. Association of German Foundations (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen)
- 158. Bewegungsstiftung in Verden
- 159. Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (National Network for Civil Society - BBE)
- 160. Bundesverband Mobile Beratung e.V. (BMB)
- 161. Campact e.V.
- 162. Collective Leadership Institute
- 163. Democracy International e.V.
- 164. Deutsch-Bulgarische Elterninitiative "Jan Bibijan" e.V.
- 165. EuropaNova Germany
- 166. Forschungs- und Dokumentationszentrum Chile-Lateinamerika e.V. (FDCL)
- 167. Forum Menschenrechte
- 168. Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V. (forumZFD)
- 169. German Fundraising Association
- 170. Grundrechte Komitee
- 171. Guatemalagruppe Nürnberg e. V.
- 172. Guerrilla Foundation
- 173. innn.it e.V.
- 174. Interessenvertretung Selbstbestimmt Leben in Deutschland e.V. (ISL)

- 175. issa e.V.
- 176. Maecenata Foundation
- 177. MENSCHENRECHTE 3000 e.V.
- 178. Society for Threatened Peoples
(Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker)
- 179. TERRE DES FEMMES e.V.
- 180. Verband der Beratungsstellen für
Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und
antisemitischer Gewalt (VBRG)
- 181. Wartesaal - Kultur in Besigheim e.V.
- 182. We are Europe! e.V.
- 183. World, Economy, Ecology &
Development - WEED e.V.
- 184. Whistleblower-Netzwerk (WBN)

Greece

- 185. ANTIGONE - Information and
Documentation Centre on Racism,
Ecology, Peace and Non Violence
- 186. Consumers' Association "The Quality
of Life" - EKPIZO
- 187. ECOCITY
- 188. Greek Forum of Migrants
- 189. Greek Forum of Refugees
- 190. Ivorian Community Of Greece (La
Communauté Ivoirienne de la Grèce -
CIG)
- 191. SolidarityNow

Hungary

- 192. Danubiana Network
- 193. European House (EH)
- 194. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
(HCLU)
- 195. Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC)
- 196. Nyomtass te is!
- 197. Ökotárs Alapítvány (Hungarian
Environmental Partnership Foundation)

Ireland

- 198. Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland
- 199. CityWide Drugs Crisis Campaign
- 200. Intersex Ireland
- 201. Ireland-Palestine Solidarity
Campaign (IPSC)
- 202. Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
- 203. One Family
- 204. Outhouse - LGBT+ Community Centre
- 205. The Wheel
- 206. Voluntary Service International (VSI)
- 207. Waterford Integration Services

Italy

- 208. A Buon Diritto
- 209. Àltera
- 210. ARCI
- 211. Associazione Antigone
- 212. Babylon Couleur
- 213. Cittadini per l'aria ETS
- 214. Coordinamento di Iniziative Popolari
di Solidarietà Internazionale (CIPSI)
- 215. European Movement Italy (EMI -
Movimento Europeo)
- 216. Libera contro le mafie
- 217. Observatory on Repression
(Osservatorio Repressione)

Latvia

- 218. Association "Papardes zieds"
- 219. Civic Alliance Latvia (CAL)
- 220. Foundation of Public Participation/
Organisation MyVoice
- 221. Latvian Platform for Development
Cooperation (LAPAS)
- 222. Latvijas Vacu savieniba (LVS)
- 223. Riga German Culture Society (RDKV),
Kandava branch

Lithuania

- 224. Center for Equality Advancement
- 225. National NGO Coalition
- 226. Non-Governmental Organisation Information and Support Centre (NISC)

Malta

- 227. Migrant Women Association Malta
- 228. SOS Malta

Netherlands

- 229. Association of Charitable Funds in The Netherlands (FIN)
- 230. Citizens' Climate Europe
- 231. Dutch Association of Volunteer Organizations (Vereniging Nederlandse Organisaties Vrijwilligerswerk - NOV)
- 232. European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity
- 233. Goede Doelen Nederland
- 234. Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)
- 235. Netwerk Democratie
- 236. Partin

Poland

- 237. Association for Legal Intervention (SIP)
- 238. "Blue Line" - Institute of Health Psychology Polish Psychological Association
- 239. Citizens Network Watchdog Poland
- 240. Civic Movement Citizens for Education
- 241. Comenius Foundation for Child Development
- 242. Committee for the Defence of Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji - KOD)

- 243. Foundation for Polish Science (FNP)
- 244. Fundacja Centrum im. prof. Bronisława Geremka
- 245. Fundacja Collegium Polonicum
- 246. Fundacja Dokładam Się
- 247. Fundacja Edukacji Parlamentarnej
- 248. Fundacja Idealna Gmina
- 249. Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana
- 250. Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA
- 251. Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej im. Jerzego Regulskiego
- 252. Greenways Poland Association
- 253. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)
- 254. In.Europa Institute
- 255. Information Society Development Foundation
- 256. Inicjatywa 30. Rok Wolności
- 257. Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD) Foundation
- 258. Institute of Public Affairs (Instytut Spraw Publicznych)
- 259. Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej w Warszawie
- 260. Liberal Culture (Kultura Liberalna)
- 261. National Federation of Polish NGOs (OFOP)
- 262. Open Republic - Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia
- 263. Panoptykon Foundation
- 264. Parents in Education Association (Stowarzyszenie Rodzice w Edukacji)
- 265. Partnership Fund
- 266. Polish Donors Forum
- 267. Polish Women's Strike (Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet)
- 268. Polska Fundacja im. Roberta Schumana

- 269. Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno -
Krajoznawcze Oddział Żyrardów
- 270. Polish Janusz Korczak Associaton
(Polskie Stowarzyszenie im. Janusza
Korczaka)
- 271. School with Class Foundation
(Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą)
- 272. Shipyard Foundation (Fundacja
Stocznia)
- 273. Stefan Batory Foundation (Batorego
Fundacja)
- 274. The Field of Dialogue Foundation
(Fundacja Pole Dialogu)

Portugal

- 275. Academia Cidadã - Citizenship
Academy
- 276. Djass- Association of
Afrodescendants
- 277. Plataforma PAJE
- 278. Portuguese NGDO Platform
(Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD)
- 279. Transparency International Portugal

Romania

- 280. 2Celsius
- 281. ACIA - Asociatia de Constientizare a
Industriei Agricole
- 282. ActiveWatch
- 283. APADOR-CH
- 284. ASFANU - Asociatia Familiilor
Numeroase
- 285. Civil Society Development
Foundation (Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea
Societatii Civile - FDSC)
- 286. Environmental Partnership
Foundation
- 287. Expert Forum Association

Slovakia

- 288. Association for Culture, Education
and Communication (ACEC)
- 289. Association of social services
providers in the Slovak Republic
- 290. Carpathian Foundation Slovakia
(Karpatská nadácia)
- 291. Center for Community Organizing
- 292. Center for Environmental Activities
(Centrum environmentálnych aktivít)
- 293. Centre for Philanthropy (Centrum pre
filantropiu n.o.)
- 294. Cvernovka Foundation
- 295. Donio n.f.
- 296. Ekopolis Foundation
- 297. Friends of the Earth-CEPA
- 298. Iniciatíva Inakosť
- 299. Institute for Public Affairs Slovakia
- 300. Open Society Foundation (Nadácia
otvorenej spoločnosti Bratislava
NOS-OSF)
- 301. Nadacia Rafael
- 302. PDCS
- 303. People in Need Slovakia
- 304. Post Bellum Slovakia
- 305. Slovak humanitarian council
- 306. Slovak Mountain Rescue Team Mala
Fatra Region
- 307. SOSNA
- 308. Platform of Volunteer Centers and
Organizations

Slovenia

- 309. Association for culture and education
PiNA
- 310. Association SOS Helpline for Women
and Children Victims of Violence

- 311. Centre for Information Service,
Co-operation and Development of NGOs
(CNVOS)
- 312. Društvo Ekologi brez meja
- 313. Focus Association for Sustainable
Development
- 314. Humanitas - Centre for Global
Learning and Cooperation
- 315. Institute Circle
- 316. LRF za Pomurje
- 317. Peace Institute
- 318. Legal Center for the Protection of
Human Rights and the Environment (PIC)
- 319. REgionalno sticisce Novus
- 320. Slovenian NGO platform for
development, global education and
humanitarian aid (SLOGA)
- 321. Umanotera, The Slovenian
Foundation for Sustainable Development
- 322. Zavod Dobra družba
- 323. Zavod PIP
- 324. Zavod TRI
- 325. ZLHT
- 336. Community Development Center
ToPeeR Dobož, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 337. Community Development Institute
(CDI), North Macedonia
- 338. ENORB, United Kingdom
- 339. Initiative for Development and
cooperation (IDC), Serbia
- 340. Ministarstvo Prostora, Serbia
- 341. Trend of Evolution for Ukraine,
Switzerland

Spain

- 326. Asociación Baizara
- 327. Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana
- 328. Calala Women's Fund
- 329. Fundacion CIVES
- 330. Irídia, Centre per la Defensa dels
Drets Humans
- 331. Liga Española de la Educación
- 332. NOVACT - International Institute for
Nonviolent Action
- 333. Òmnium Cultural

Non-EU countries

- 334. Agora Association, Turkey
- 335. ALFA Centre Niksic, Montenegro