CIVIL SOCIETY STATE OF THE UNION 2023

Table of contents

4. Fighting against climate change's impacts and addressing (global) environmental challenges

5. A digital transformation that leaves no one behind in the EU

Graphic design: Lila Sylviti - sayiteasy.eu

Introduction

In recent years, we have seen a **surge in restrictions on democracy, civic space and the rule of law across the European Union (EU)**. Those most affected are marginalised groups whose access to rights is most difficult or even denied, including racialised people, women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced people (especially if undocumented), ethnic and religious minorities and people with low socio-economic status. Moreover, **interconnected social, economic and environmental inequalities and challenges** have been exacerbated by climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. All of this **necessitates transformative and coordinated policies based on trust, legitimacy, transparency and a stronger involvement by citizens and their representative associations**, including civil society organisations (CSOs).

With this context in mind, Civil Society Europe (CSE) launched a Working Group (WG) in February 2023 dedicated to **supporting civil society and citizens' participation in EU democracy**, and to **following up on the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)** and its final proposals. In doing so, the WG continues the collaborative and ambitious work accomplished within the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe (CSOCoFoE) in 2021 and 2022, including the Civil Society Convention's report titled "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society" and containing 200+ recommendations.

This WG—composed of independent European networks of CSOs specialised in different sectors—has written this **Civil Society State of the Union report** addressed to EU institutions and EU Member States. This document comprises **our vision and key recommendations as civil society for a more democratic and socially and environmentally just EU**.

Strengthening democracy, fundamental rights and civic space in the EU and the world

Declining trust in democracy is a well-documented and worrying trend all over the world and the EU is no exception. Today, democracy is challenged both in its functioning and its

policymaking structures (inputs) and in its outputs, as social, economic and environmental insecurities fuel distrust in **institutions' ability to deliver policies that will protect people and the planet**. Many people are disillusioned with—and even averse to—current policies that often put people in competition for rights and services, while many countries race to the bottom regarding social welfare for the sake of competitiveness.

For us, as independent European CSOs, defending and strengthening democracy and the rule of law requires first and foremost tackling internal challenges and building resilience. **Democratic resilience** requires both good **inputs** for decision-making and good policy **outputs** that answer people's needs, in line with the EU values and objectives set in the Treaties. Proper **civil and social dialogue processes** must accompany every step of EU decision-making, from impact assessment to policy design and implementation. Organised and independent civil society in the EU continues to play a leading role in listening to and strengthening citizens' pluralistic voices. Decisions for the benefit of all can only exist in structures of good governance that put these voices in focus and meaningfully include organised civil society and citizens' points of views in EU policies and initiatives. This can be done through **participatory democracy mechanisms** like citizens' panels and assemblies organised in cooperation with civil society. Adopting a **European Civil Society Strategy** and concluding an **EU inter-institutional civil dialogue agreement** would ensure that EU legislation's social and environmental impacts are better balanced with economic aims, and that fundamental rights are taken into account more adequately when designing legislation and policies. **Better and fairer policies would create more fertile ground for people's trust in democratic institutions**.

The European project is at a point in its development where **thorough reforms to the EU's structures are necessary and urgent**, especially since several recommendations of the CoFoE cannot be fully implemented without institutional reforms. **We need an EU that is willing to evolve into a more comprehensible, transparent, accountable, and democratic community of people**. Therefore, we call for: a Convention to revise the Treaties and a number of reforms; more representative and decisive elections; a more effective European Parliament; a more accountable European Commission; a more transparent Council; and stronger ethical norms and rules to ensure fairness and protect civic spaces.

Furthermore, ensuring **coherence between internal and external EU policies and actions supporting civic space** is crucial, as space for civil society is shrinking globally. The EU plays an important role in supporting civil society around the world. In spite of increasing security and geopolitical challenges, **we call on the EU to take concrete action to promote peace, democracy, and human rights globally, and to play a positive role to address climate change and inequalities**.

Enhancing freedom of movement and solidarity for a more inclusive European society

Migration has been a common feature throughout the history of humankind. Yet, migration to the EU is one of the main ongoing political battlefields, and one that is dominated by the narratives of hate-based politics aiming at building walls and restricting rights. Since the end of the CoFoE, EU institutions and Member States have not been idle, but have failed to promote welcoming policies and narratives on migration. Small steps have been taken to **foster good, safe and quality migration routes** but the status quo largely remains. On developing a **common governance of migration and asylum based on rights and solidarity**, while Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered a solidarity wave to support Ukrainian refugees through the activation and extension of the Temporary Protection Directive, a fortress-like Europe is still the reality for too many people trying to enter the EU. This, along with the **cooperation with unsafe third countries**, the **criminalisation of solidarity with migrants**, and **barriers to newcomers' participation in European society**, poses a dangerous threat to people's human rights and their right to asylum.

As independent European CSOs, **we call on EU institutions and Member States to build and agree on a rights- and solidarity-based EU approach to migration, asylum and the protection of people on the move**. This includes: facilitating structural and quality routes for all people on the move; developing migration and inclusion policies that are based on autonomy, equity and participation; empowering CSOs to freely support people on the move; and adopting and promoting narratives that de-polarise migration and diversity.

On a similar note, **freedom of movement** represents one of the core features of the EU and the need to further enhance this right was included in the CoFoE recommendations. Regrettably, we still witness different barriers to true freedom of movement in the Union. For instance, when it comes to **learning and working mobility**, the freedom of movement to learn is still not guaranteed for students from outside the European Economic Area who continue to experience several disparities compared to EU students. Also, evolutions to facilitate the recognition of third-country nationals' qualification are still limited. Moreover, **urgent measures need to be taken to make freedom of movement attainable for all**, especially persons with disabilities who still face enormous challenges when moving from one Member State to another.

The concept of freedom of movement itself needs to encompass a broader vision of movements, encompassing multiple displacements in different EU countries and paying sufficient attention to every generation of movers. We urge EU institutions and Member States to **protect mobile individuals**, especially those that fall within vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, in order to ensure the portability of social and individual rights across EU countries. Moreover, they need to **strengthen mobile citizens' political participation, and make physical learning mobility a reality for all**.

A socially just EU

The converging crises that the EU is facing have highlighted the **vital role that social policies and essential services play in promoting and strengthening the resilience of our societies and ensuring we protect the most marginalised groups**. In contrast, during the last financial crisis, we saw the harmful and counterproductive impact of the imposition of austerity. We must learn the important lessons from the past and implement timely, ambitious and long-term action to ensure that we achieve green and digital transitions that leave no one behind and tackle the root causes of social injustices.

We need to see an ambitious implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan** by both EU institutions and Member States to build a **stronger Social Europe**. It is crucial to follow through on the commitments first made at the **Porto Social Summit** in 2021, and on the recent reaffirmation, at the Social Forum in Porto in May 2023, of the Social Pillar and the update of its Action Plan coming up in 2024. In this report, CSOs offer concrete recommendations on how to achieve all this, specifically focusing on: **a new European macroeconomic governance** that fosters green and social investment; **education, training and lifelong learning** as essential for people to thrive; **fair working conditions**, including adequate minimum wages, quality jobs and transparency of working conditions; and a **welfare state** that is fit for the future and provides social protection and inclusion.

Fighting against climate change's impacts and addressing (global) environmental challenges

We, human beings, are part of the wider living nature on Earth and we depend on it to survive. Global warming, loss of biodiversity and pollution are causing great harm to all societies around the globe, often hitting those who contribute little to the ecological crisis first and hardest. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing injustices and inequalities. The current pace of change towards sustainability is far too slow to avoid severe damage to nature and societies, and does not **adequately address systemic changes**.

We call on the EU and Member States to **go beyond the European Green Deal in order to drive transformative change for a sustainable future**. This includes taking back control from corporate capture and empowering people, protecting environmental rights and guaranteeing environmental justice, developing strong regulatory frameworks and holding the EU and Member States accountable. We also need a **beyond growth deal that leaves no one behind**; this involves a post-growth future to address the triple planetary crisis, i.e. climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, and shaping the future of work. Moreover, **increasing resilience and sustainability** is essential, including in terms of ensuring a resilient and sustainable life for all and the planet, and delivering quality climate change education through all types of learning.

A digital transformation that leaves no one behind in the EU

As technology continues to create turning points in modern history, affecting the way we live, work and evolve, the main and most important challenge is to achieve a digital transformation that works for all, without further deepening the existing digital divide or creating new inequalities. **Digitalisation will only advance European societies if we can safeguard and strengthen our democracies in the process**. There is great potential for the EU to be an ambitious, rights-driven leader when it comes to digital policies but this will only be possible if it puts human rights and democratic principles at the centre of these legislative processes.

Since the end of the CoFoE, a number of digital policies have been adopted and have answered several of CSOs' key demands. However, there is still a **long way to go in order to ensure a digital transformation in the EU that leaves no one behind**. Our recommendations focus on five main topics: **digital democracy**, including e-participation, e-government, and e-transparency; **digital education**, including digital skills and competencies, media literacy and digital learning, raising awareness; **digital safeguards**, including cyber security, artificial intelligence, online disinformation, integrity of elections, terrorist content, online hate speech, illegal content online, the EU's Data Act, algorithms and Digital for Development; **digital rights and freedoms**, including online privacy and data (protection and retention), Net neutrality and digital services, protecting fundamental rights, secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, digital citizenship, online safety of journalists and ensuring plurality of voices in digital media, and copyright; and the digital economy, including **digital economy**, digital finance and data, social welfare in the digital age, supporting green digital solutions, and Digital Industry 5.0 and digital business/companies.

Shielding the future of European society through human-centred security policies

Multiple crises in recent years, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, the consequences of climate change, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have underlined the **need for EU institutions and Member States to broaden their vision of security policies** to better shield European citizens from a variety of threats. As independent European CSOs, we strongly advocate for the concept of **human security that ensures what is required for people's wellbeing and protects and respects individual and collective freedoms in line with fundamental rights**. This idea was partially present in the CoFoE conclusions. However, since the end of the CoFoE, few actions have been taken by EU institutions and Member States to deliver comprehensive human-centred security policies and involve CSOs' in such policies' development and implementation, even though CSOs play a core role in this field.

We call on EU institutions and Member States to **tackle the current and upcoming security challenges using a human security approach**. This includes: **strengthening the engagement of CSOs** in the European Civil Protection Mechanism and in prevention and response operations; building a **safe, inclusive and resilient European society;** protecting European citizens in **the digital space;** increasing **energy security** through a greener energy production; combatting **internal and external threats** while reinforcing civic space in the EU; and enshrining peace, democracy and fundamental freedoms in **the EU's global strategy**.

Methodology

Civil Society Europe (CSE)'s WG on the Civil Society State of the Union is co-chaired by Judit Lantai (Young European Federalists - JEF Europe) and Gabriella Civico (Centre for European Volunteering - CEV). This report was coordinated and edited by Nastassia Maes (CSE), with the support of other members of CSE's Secretariat.

In order to develop the key recommendations, five thematic subgroups were created within the WG, each responsible for specific topics:

1. EU democracy, civic space and the EU in the world, co-chaired by Alexandrina Najmowicz from European Civic Forum (ECF) and Antonella Valmorbida from European Association of Local Democracy (ALDA);

2. Migration, freedom of movement and security, co-chaired by Gabriella Civico from CEV and Piotr Sadowski from Volonteurope;

3. Social EU, chaired by Martina Corti from SOLIDAR;

4. Climate change and environmental challenges, chaired by Manuela Gervasi from the European Environmental Bureau (EEB);

5. EU's digital transformation, chaired by Elisa Lironi from the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS).

The five subgroups wrote the recommendations between March and mid-July 2023, using a bottom-up and collaborative approach. Additional independent European networks of CSOs also contributed to the report by providing feedback throughout June and July.

Altogether, **43 independent European networks of CSOs contributed to this report**, either in a writing or feedback capacity (or both). Six additional organisations were consulted. A list can be found at the end of this report.

1. Strengthening democracy, fundamental rights and civic space in the EU and the world

WHERE WE STAND

Defending and strengthening democracy and the rule of law in the European Union (EU) have taken centre stage in EU institutions' narratives and agendas in recent years. The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)[1] was meant to contribute to this objective, alongside other policy processes such as the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP)[2], the European Commission (EC)'s annual Rule of Law Reports[3] and the recent Defence of Democracy (DoD) Package[4].

For us, as civil society organisations (CSOs), strengthening democracy requires first and foremost tackling internal challenges and building resilience. **Democratic resilience** requires both good **inputs** for decision-making and good policy **outputs** that answer people's needs, in line with the values and objectives set out in the EU Treaties. **Participatory mechanisms** enabling informed and evidence-based decision-making are key tools to design effective policies. However, beyond these necessary inputs, it is crucial to understand that people evaluate the relevance of democracy based on the latter's outputs—the capacity of **designed policies** to address people's needs, putting the common good of people and the planet before economic and financial interests[5].

Declining trust in democracy is a well-documented and worrying trend all over the world and the EU is no exception[6]. Today, democracy is challenged both in its functioning and its policymaking structures (inputs) and in its outputs, as social, economic and environmental insecurities fuel distrust in **institutions' ability to deliver policies that will protect people and the planet**. Many people are disillusioned with—and even averse to—current policies that often put people in competition for rights and services, while many countries race to the bottom regarding social welfare for the sake of competitiveness. According to a recent Eurobarometer, only 32% of Europeans trust their national government; respectively, 47% of Europeans trust the EU[7].

The backsliding of democracy and the rule of law—observed as systemic in some EU Member States, and on the rise in many others—falls within this context. This development provides fertile ground for the expansion of political illiberalism, the weakening of democratic standards and the **increase in restrictions on rights and freedoms**. Those **most affected** are marginalised groups whose access to rights is most difficult or even denied, including **racialised people, women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced people (especially if undocumented), ethnic and religious minorities** and people with **low socio-economic status**.

Alongside a growing strain on civic freedoms—extensively documented both by civil society and institutions[8]—**structures for civic participation in policymaking are weak** both at national and EU levels. Moreover, institutions tend to engage in "less challenging forms of dialogue, opposing direct participation of citizens, addressed as individuals, with collective

forms of mobilisation**" such as intermediary bodies or social movements**, which are perceived as more able to challenge political decisions[9].

The **CoFoE** is a case in point. Among its final recommendations[10], several of which require changes to the EU Treaties, the need to strengthen deliberative and participatory democracy at EU, national and local levels is of the utmost importance. True participation means that citizens' and civil society's concerns are listened to and addressed through policymaking. This involves several levels of engagement, from access to information and consultation—which is rather top-down in nature—to structured civil dialogue and partnership—both of which involve shared responsibilities in the negotiations, are results-oriented and lead to shared outcomes in terms of policies and strategies. The participatory approach also brings about a co-creation of policies that generates more opportunities and solutions for communities.

In its follow-up Communication on the CoFoE[11], the EC expressed its intention to table proposals on "Organising smaller targeted deliberative or co-creation/co-design processes, run on a smaller scale, to address specific policy issues more cost-effectively and in a timelier way." So far, the launch of European citizens' panels on food waste, learning mobility and virtual worlds is a welcome first step but it addresses a very limited part of the CoFoE conclusions[12].

The CoFoE demonstrated that citizens care about the values enshrined in the EU Treaties while also appealing for changes that entail Treaty reforms in service of democratic legitimacy and efficiency. With regard to voting systems, the CoFoE's European citizens' panel 2 on European democracy stressed in its recommendations that the "European [T]reaties should change to address the issue of unanimity"[13]. The European Parliament (EP) has shown its responsiveness to these calls, for instance by finding an agreement on a European Electoral Act[14]—which includes transnational lists— and on the activation of Article 48 TEU to call for a Convention to reform the EU Treaties[15]. These initiatives have also received the EC's support. However, we regret the unresponsive and opaque approach of the Council. Therefore, we have prepared a series of recommendations on EU institutional democracy and reforms. In this time of uncertainty and crises, when citizens are calling for EU reforms and the case for enlargement is being reinvigorated, only Treaty change can truly enable the EU to change into the more transparent, accountable, democratic and rule of law-abiding community that citizens are asking for, and into a Union that can fully support civic spaces in the EU.

The CoFoE conclusions call for stronger **involvement of organised civil society** (as well as social partners) in the EU decision-making process, so as to "utilise the link between decision-makers and citizens which [CSOs] constitute"[16]. They also call for "proper civil and social dialogue mechanisms and processes at every step of EU decision-making, from impact assessment to policy design and implementation"[17].

Beyond consultations and citizens' panels, **civil dialogue**, i.e. dialogue between CSOs and EU and national institutions, **must be recognised, organised and resourced on an equal footing with social dialogue in the EU's policymaking cycle** on all areas of EU action. This would ensure that EU legislation's social and environmental impacts are better balanced with economic aims, and that fundamental rights are taken into account more adequately when designing legislation and policies. **Better and fairer policies would create more fertile ground for trust in democratic institutions**[18].

Regrettably, the EC's recent proposal towards a **DoD package**, and more specifically, the Directive on foreign covert interference[19] that is part of the proposed package threatens to undermine existing and future democratic efforts, as it risks being weaponised by governments to further restrict the space for civil society, particularly critical voices[20].

We acknowledge the EC's decision to postpone the process and undertake an impact assessment after strong opposition and concerns[21] were expressed by civil society, as the initial proposal appeared to mirror so-called 'foreign agents legislation' while also emboldening repressive leaders and **undercutting the EU's credibility to speak out about restrictive laws in non-EU countries**[22]. Indeed, these 'foreign agents' laws have significantly **curtailed the space for independent civil society and been deployed as a tool to silence critical voices**. This approach is very risky as it can lead to significant restrictions on civic space in the EU and globally[23].

This shows the importance of ensuring **coherence between internal and external EU policies and actions supporting civic space, as space** for civil society is shrinking globally. The EU plays an important role in supporting civil society around the world. In the context of EU external action, a number of frameworks and policies recognise the value of civil society as an essential part of democratic societies, and state the EU's commitment to contributing to an enabling environment for civil society and the promotion of human rights. In spite of increasing security and geopolitical challenges, **the EU must take concrete action to promote peace, democracy, and human rights globally, and to play a positive role in addressing climate change and inequalities**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1. A vibrant civic space that makes democracy alive and resilient

Strong democracies with a functioning rule of law depend on a vibrant civic space. It is crucial that civil society actors are supported, protected and empowered and that their inputs are considered to be fundamental for policymaking. A vibrant civil society that can act independently and at its full capacity is an integral part and cornerstone of a resilient democracy. Civil society is a crucial ally in developing and implementing people-centred and human rights-based policies. Civil society actors also hold policymakers accountable when public policies have a negative impact on people and the planet. Civil dialogue should be organised on an equal footing with social dialogue along the entire EU policymaking cycle and treated as distinct and complementary to forms of citizens' engagement.

Unfortunately, evidence from the field shows growing obstacles and attacks affecting civil society's ability to exercise its full capacities and act independently; research and the findings of the EC's Rule of Law Reports[24] confirm this. As a result of these attacks, European democracy is endangered.

1.1.1. Adopting a European Civil Society Strategy

We call on the EU to defend a safe and enabling environment for civil society by:

1. Formally recognising the **role, value, and specificity of civil society**.

2. **Protecting and supporting CSOs and human rights defenders (HRDs)** through different regulatory and policy measures, including by adopting the EC's original proposal for an anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) law and making it even more effective, ambitious and comprehensive using the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe's recommendations[25].

3. Ensuring that all EU institutions and Member States' policies and practices impacting the civil society sector are in line with the **fundamental rights guaranteed by international and EU law**, including freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, expression, the right to privacy and participation in decision-making.

4. Adding a **standalone pillar on an enabling environment for civil society and HRDs** in the EC's annual Rule of Law Reports. The methodology for assessing civic space should be co-created with civil society and build on benchmarking mechanisms already used by the EC (e.g. in the accession or Eastern Partnership countries) and the work of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

We call on the EU to adopt a protection mechanism for civil society and rights defenders so that:

5. CSOs' staff and volunteers, human rights and environmental activists and defenders, as well as the communities they represent, are **protected from all forms of discrimination** on any ground, and **from judicial or other forms of harassment, violence or ill-treatment**.

6. **Special attention** is placed, using an intersectional approach, on **racialised people, women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced people (especially if undocumented), ethnic and religious minorities**, people with **low socio-economic status**, and those who defend them, since they are more frequently under attack.

7. CSOs, activists and defenders can **report on an ongoing basis** all forms of attacks, threats, smear campaigns and limitations of civic space, and for these reports to be **addressed in a timely manner**. This protection mechanism should include an **early warning system** to help prevent such threats from arising.

We call on the EU to strengthen the civil society sector's resilience through empowering funding policies, and more specifically, by:

8. **Involving civil society from the beginning in the design of funding policies and programmes**, including in the definition of thematic priorities and accessibility criteria. A structured mechanism should be put in place to ensure adequate and regular dialogue and information flow between civil society and public donors on the implementation of funding programmes.

9. **Increasing the overall accessibility to funding**, especially for small-size, grassroots and volunteer-run organisations, by simplifying administrative

procedures and reducing the overall bureaucratic burden. CSOs should also be guaranteed increased access to core funding in the form of grants to carry out their policy and advocacy work on behalf of the groups and communities they represent.

1.1.2. Fostering real dialogue and meaningful participation

We call on EU institutions to conclude an inter-institutional civil dialogue agreement recognising civil dialogue as an essential element of European participatory democracy, in accordance with Article 11 TEU[26], and including the following measures:

1. **Strengthen the role of the Vice-President in charge of dialogue with CSOs**, both in the EP and the EC. This should be done to ensure a more structured civil dialogue, as well as to assess the overall coherence of EU policies impacting civil society, with the aim of supporting a thriving civic space. The Vice-Presidents' mandates should also include proactive support for civil society actors that are under pressure.

2. **Maintain a "Democracy" portfolio in the future EC** as a sign of recognition of the challenges posed to democracy today.

3. Harmonise **standards for civil dialogue**[27], i.e. dialogue between CSOs and EU and national institutions, **across EU institutions and Member States**, so that every opportunity for civil dialogue leads to quality engagement. Space should also be provided for cross-sectoral dialogue on transversal developments and strategic priorities.

4. Involve **CSOs as key strategic partners in the co-creation of policies, programme development, policy debates and agenda-setting exercises**. EU institutions should also adopt guidelines on how to ensure inclusive participation and make sure to reach out to underrepresented groups and organisations that stand for these groups' rights.

5. Create **permanent civil dialogue structures at the appropriate level in each relevant Member State and EU institution**—including the European Council—ensuring overall consistency and coordination within and among institutions. CSOs taking part in such structures should receive adequate support in terms of funding and resources to ensure their operational capacity to meaningfully participate in such dialogues.

6. **Organise citizens' panels and assemblies in cooperation with civil society**, ensuring the inclusion of underrepresented groups, co-creation of the agenda and process, and open and transparent selection of experts with diverse background and viewpoints. All of this should be done to ensure a pluralistic expression of voices and for these to be reflected in EU policies and initiatives.

7. **Invest in cultural heritage** to strengthen the values-based common European narrative which can combat rising extremism and democratic backsliding, help restore people's confidence in the European project, and further help foster civic spaces for dialogue between citizens.

8. **Promote and support all levels of citizens' engagement**, at the European, national and local levels.

1.2. EU institutional democracy and reforms

European civil society continues to play a leading role in listening to and strengthening the voices of citizens. Decisions for the benefit of all can only exist in structures of good governance that put these voices in focus. The type of decision-making we exercise and the institutions we create and uphold play a significant role in the level of success in making democracy and the well-being of citizens thrive.

The European project is at a point in its development where thorough reforms to its structures are necessary and urgent. Civil society has been contributing to the development of our democratic structures with constructive feedback and calling for change for a long time. It is also evident that the CoFoE recommendations cannot be fully implemented without reforming our institutions. We need an EU that is willing to evolve into a more comprehensible, more transparent, more accountable and more democratic community of people.

1.2.1. Reforms for a better Union

We call on EU institutions to follow up on citizens' recommendations with greater dedication, especially where those proposals require changes to the EU Treaties.

1. The calls from citizens, civil society, and elected representatives for a **Convention to revise the EU Treaties** must be respected. Moreover, civil society and social partners should be closely involved in such a Convention.

2. The recommended **reforms to voting procedures in the Council**[28] to enhance the EU's capacity to act, including switching from unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV), must be implemented for the EU to better act on citizens' democratic decisions.

3. The **competences conferred on the Union** must be expanded, for instance in the areas of health and health threats.

4. The **Article 7 TEU**[29] **procedure** must be strengthened to better protect the EU's common values. This should include enhancing measures to determine and respond to breaches to the rule of law with QMV and co-decision between the EP and the Council.

5. The EC's annual Rule of Law Report should become the basis to strengthen and enforce the **Rule of Law conditionality** for the access to EU funds.

6. The reform of the EU is even more necessary to simultaneously move forward with the Union's **enlargement** towards Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the Western Balkans, as currently envisaged by EU institutions. This is the way to ensure peace and democracy on the European continent and to stay true to the goals of European integration itself.

1.2.2. More representative and decisive elections

We call for the EU elections to give all citizens and permanent residents an equal opportunity to vote, without any barriers, and for citizens and permanent residents to be given more weight in EU elections.

1. European citizens and permanent residents must have more information about and a greater role in the **election of the President of the EC**. This should be achieved through an enhanced lead candidate system ("Spitzenkandidaten") or through a direct election.

2. There should be an **EU electoral authority and transnational lists**; the latter would enable citizens and permanent residents to vote for representatives from electoral lists that include candidates from all EU countries[30].

3. Every citizen and permanent resident should, without exception, have the **right**

and ability to participate in elections as a voter and candidate. The EU should commit to further breaking down barriers and taking measures to make democratic participation more accessible.

4. The EU should **ensure parity, diversity and representation of all categories of the EU's population** among candidates to and voters in the elections.

5. European citizens and permanent residents should have the **right to vote in the Member State where they reside and pay taxes** beyond local and European elections.

1.2.3. A more effective European Parliament

We call for a European Parliament that both upholds and advances the democratic calls of citizens in EU decisions.

1. The EP must have the full and direct right of **legislative initiative**. The ordinary legislative procedure should be applied in all legislative procedures to allow citizens' oversight.

2. The EP should **reform its Rules of Procedure**[31] to be more effective and to enable stronger accountability.

3. The EP must have full **co-decision rights on the EU budget**. The EP should be involved from the beginning in the negotiations to shape the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)[32], the annual budget and specific programs.

1.2.4. A more accountable European Commission

We call for a European Commission that remains connected to European citizens, accountable to elected representatives, and responsive to civil society throughout its mandate.

1. In accordance with the Spitzenkandidaten process[33], the President of the EC must be chosen by and have the **support of a majority in the EP** to hold office; the EP should no longer have to decide on a candidate for the post that is first nominated by Member States through the European Council.

2. The EP must have the **right to dismiss individual Commissioners** to enable greater accountability to elected representatives.

3. **Civic space impact assessments** should be part of all impact assessments for EU legislative proposals, and part of the EC's continued monitoring of existing EU and national legislation[34].

1.2.5. A more transparent Council

We call on the Council to respond to the steps taken by the EP and EC to open the EU Treaties to reform, for the benefit of citizens, who deserve to know how the decisions made in their name are taken.

1. The Council must **extend QMV to new fields**, including democracy, human rights and the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)[35].

2. Member States' governments must **inform and consult the public** about their positions and aims, with deliberations and votes in the open[36].

3. **Transparency should be included in all phases of the co-decision procedure**, including in the trilogues. The Council should proactively introduce citizen-friendly websites that would grant citizens access to legislative documents, web stream Council meetings, and also entail open data and proactive publications.

1.2.6. Building norms that ensure fairness and protect civic spaces

We call on EU institutions to take steps to strengthen the ethical norms and rules for decision-makers and therefore strengthen public integrity. Civil society's role in engaging citizens and monitoring breaches of citizens' rights should be supported with standards that ensure fairness between sectors and protection from attempts to weaponise laws.

1. All EU institutions should **strengthen their ethical frameworks**. Stronger rules on conflicts of interest, side activities, revolving doors and lobbying should be adopted to ensure ethical rules and accountability. These rules should be monitored, and deterrent sanctions should be foreseen.

2. The **EU Transparency Register** should have equal reporting requirements for all " 'interest representatives' (organisations, associations, groups and self-employed individuals) who carry out activities to influence the EU policy and decision-making process"[37].

3. Successful **European Citizens' Initiatives**[38] that are in line with EU values and the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**[39] should be given proper follow-up, through legislation and public debates in the EP.

1.3. Standing up for democracy and fundamental rights in the world

The world we live in is characterised by increasingly frequent crises, disruption and uncertainty. In the past few years, we experienced a global health crisis, several wars and conflicts, and attacks on civic space and democracy. Our vision for the EU's role in this challenging context is of the EU responding to these trends by redoubling efforts to act for peace, democracy and human rights in the world, and to address climate change and inequalities.

1.3.1. Playing a positive role in a geopolitical world

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Commit to **building equal partnerships**. This starts by acknowledging historical imbalances, as well as the social responsibilities of the countries and corporations that benefit, or have benefited, from exploiting ecosystems and communities. Furthermore, the EU should **take active steps to encourage emancipation from colonial legacies and to encourage processes of recognition, reparation and restitution**. This emancipation process should be a humble approach recognising the expertise and models of governance within other democratic traditions.

2. Enhance **policy coherence for sustainable development**, and properly assess and address the impact of EU policies across sectors on partner countries[40].

3. Apply a **human-right based approach** to foreign, development and trade policies.

4. Prioritise a process of **regional integration** based on the principles of common security, human rights and the rule of law[41].

5. Favour policies aimed at the **democratic, human and ecological development of neighbouring regions**[42].

6. Invest in **human development sectors**, which play a key role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals[43].

7. Advocate for **better and more effective policies to reduce climate change, conflicts and poverty within international agreements**, backed with funding. Trade agreements and international treaties should not limit ambitious multilateral and national policies for transitioning to sustainable societies (including by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants) and economies. Moreover, they should not aggravate current global challenges, including climate change.

8. Ensure that **democracy support and citizens' engagement accompany all international policies**. Participative democracy and citizens' engagement at the local level—building inclusive and strong communities—could be a driving force for democracy support in the world.

9. Champion **cultural heritage as an engagement strategy** within and outside the EU to encourage mutual appreciation and understanding of different communities, nations and peoples.

10. Commit to including and recognising **the value of cultural heritage in EU geopolitical policies**, both in neighbourhood policies where it can help unite people and bring added value to existing traditions in the EU, as well as in the external relations of the EU where it can help further foster dialogue.

1.3.2. Promoting democracy, civic space and human rights globally

We urge EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Robustly support civil society outside of the EU in all its diversity**, including through long-term, core funding and structured and systematic dialogue at EU institutions and EU delegations levels[44].

2. **Promote an [enabling environment for civil society and civic space](#) in the EU´s partner countries**, both online and offline, through political dialogue and the promotion and protection of fundamental rights[45].

3. **Protect human rights and HRDs globally**, including by implementing the [EU Guidelines on HRDs](#)[46] to the fullest extent and in all places; supporting the creation of local and regional networks of HRDs (with political and technical funding); enabling HRDs to travel—particularly to escape difficult situations and to attend international conferences—by facilitating their access to visas; involving HRDs in consultations, including HRDs in rural areas and women HRDs; and always prioritising consent from HRDs for any support[47].

4. To further protect human rights and HRDs, **EU Member States should adopt and swiftly implement the [EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)](#)**[48] that would require "[EU-based companies and investors to effectively address reprisals risks against HRDs, as well as the socio-environmental impact of their activities](#)"[49], and name HRDs as key stakeholders in the CSDDD's final text and require safe and meaningful engagement with HRDs as key stakeholders during the due diligence process[50].

5. **Ensure coherence between internal and external EU policies** on human rights, democracy and civic space.

1.3.3. Fostering and preserving peace, democracy and freedom

We call on the EU to do the following:

1. EU Member States should **give competence to the EU on foreign affairs**, specifically the EU CFSP, by extending QMV to this field, instead of maintaining the current unanimity rule. This would enable the EU to act more quickly on matters related to foreign affairs, including sanctions. All actions in the area of foreign affairs and security should be co-decided by the EP and the Council, based on QMV, with no possibility of a single Member State blocking an action[51].

2. **Make greater use of the [EU global human rights sanctions regime](#)**[52] in order to ensure accountability and prevent impunity.

3. **Commit to conflict prevention and active diplomacy to end armed conflicts**, including by redirecting funding allocated to militarisation, in order to better support stronger political, diplomatic and developmental action dedicated to driving human security, the climate transition and social and climate justice across the globe[53].

4. Provide the greatest support for the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons' implementation**[54], with the aim of making the EU a nuclear weapons-free zone[55].

5. **Establish common European rules on controlling the production and sale of conventional arms**, in order to prevent arms exports to countries at war, or which violate human rights, or in which dissenting voices (whether from political opposition or civil society) are not allowed to freely operate[56].

6. Recognising the European project's post-war roots, the EU should **enhance its activities in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage**, in cooperation with Member States, since this commonly shared attribute across the EU can help foster and safeguard peace, strengthen democracy and promote reconciliation in post-conflict situations.

2. Enhancing freedom of movement and solidarity for a more inclusive European society

WHERE WE STAND

Migration and asylum

Since the end of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), migration and asylum have been high on the agenda of the various CoFoE stakeholders. Far from promoting welcoming, rights-based policies and narratives, EU institutions and Member States have instead gone for restricted, selective approaches to respond to people's migration and displacement to the EU.

On **fostering good, safe and quality migration routes**, small steps have been taken but the status quo largely remains. The European Parliament (EP) has moved forward with the recasts of the Single-Permit[57] and Long-Term Resident[58] Directives. Though not directly representing new regular pathways for non-EU nationals to enter the EU, nor having an impact on the volume of admission which is still decided by Member States, the proposals go in the direction of expanding the two directives' scope, easing application procedures and enhancing the rights attached to the initiatives. Since implementation on the ground is key, it remains to be seen whether Member States will actively promote the EU Long-term residence and Single Permit after the recasts, or whether national statutes will continue to be the default when national immigration officials interact with non-EU nationals.

On **agreeing on a common governance of migration and asylum featuring meaningful solidarity**, the assessment is mixed. On the one hand, there is undeniable coordination taking place at the EU level in ensuring solidarity with people fleeing Ukraine due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Temporary Protection Directive[59] has been prolonged and further enshrined in the EU acquis, with its beneficiaries being increasingly eligible for other EU migration schemes. On the other hand, non-Ukrainians trying to enter the EU face a fortress-like Europe. Regular channels to seek protection in the EU are still too few and restricted, and there is still no EU-funded search-and-rescue programme. Dangerous attempts to allow derogations from EU asylum law—and especially derogations from human rights safeguards in situations of alleged "instrumentalisation of migrants"—have fortunately failed to pass, but did not generate enough opposition.

The new migration deal[60] agreed on 8 June 2023 by EU Member States trades off once more the respect for human rights and the obligation to provide asylum for State security and interests. To put it simply, this agreement reduces protection standards in the EU. Instead of a commitment to a mechanism based on fair allocation and respect for human dignity, the new deal trades off solidarity for €20,000 per migrant that Member States refuse to host. Additionally, the agreement on rapid asylum procedures allows Member States to expeditiously repatriate applicants whose asylum claims have been rejected to "safe" countries—countries that Member States choose and claim to be safe—with no oversight from the EU[61]. It is a decision which is particularly concerning for people on the move from countries with low recognition rates.

Meanwhile, the EU's cooperation with third countries is continuously marked by migration conditionality, with accession to EU funds and visa policies towards these countries being used as means to obtain these countries' cooperation on return and readmission and externalised border controls. Allegedly "safe" third countries—Türkiye, Libya or Tunisia to name a few—actually crack down on migrants, racialise people's rights and are not safe at all.

The **criminalisation of migration is surging** and recent progress on [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#)[62] files further normalises detention, including the detention of children. The deal reached by Member States on 8 June 2023 rejects a wider definition of family and makes it harder for families to reunite. Also, civil society organisations (CSOs) are concerned with the deployment of potentially harmful, completely deregulated high-tech and AI systems at the borders and on EU territory; this deployment's announced goal is to counter irregular migration but it has ramifications for racialised people within EU territory (e.g. furthering racial profiling).

As a facet of the broader trend of criminalising migration, the **restriction of civil actions to support people on the move** has been allowed to continue. Both individuals and CSOs showing solidarity have seen their work impeded or penalised. At the same time, funding and support for civil society's solidarity with migrants and refugees is becoming more and more scarce.

Many **barriers to newcomers' participation in European societies remain** even when they are on European soil. Asylum seekers remain unable to work at all in many Member States or face administrative restrictions, which is in marked contrast to Member States' approach towards Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. When migrants or refugees do access the labour market, they rarely do so on the same terms as EU nationals, unless they are highly-qualified "talents". Not only do migrants and refugees face discrimination in accessing employment, but they are also routinely pushed towards forms of employment, sectors or occupations that are not in line with their qualifications, and often have lower wages or social recognition. The [European Year of Skills](#)[63] brings an opportunity to bridge this gap and it is positive that an initiative for the recognition of qualifications of non-EU nationals is on the European Commission (EC)'s agenda. The progress on the Single-Permit and Long-Term Resident Directives also show promising steps towards granting more autonomy to non-EU nationals on these schemes, as well as enhanced sectoral and geographical job mobility.

Freedom of movement

The macro-topic of **freedom of movement** has been at the top of the European agenda since the establishment of the Single Market. Many of the European Citizens' Panels within the CoFoE unanimously acclaimed it as one of the most progressive, useful and life-

changing features of the EU. Although many EU citizens move for family reasons, freedom of movement in the EU's most impressive manifestation has undoubtedly been coupled with **learning and working mobility**, and often under the Erasmus+ Programme[64].

However, beyond the limitations of the current learning mobility framework and the Erasmus+ programme, the **freedom of movement to learn is still confronted with significant barriers**—for instance, the freedom of movement to learn is not guaranteed for students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). This is not only due to burdensome study visa procedures, but also to the disparity of treatment in terms of access to student support and in the **charging of** tuition fees[65]—students from outside the EEA are typically charged higher tuition fees than EU students. After the end of the CoFoE, and in the planned action for the European Year of Skills, the need to facilitate the recognition of third-country nationals' qualifications was set out—but only for selected fields where there is a labour and skill shortage in the EU—as an element of the EU Talent Pool[66] and the Talent Partnerships[67]. Further measures are needed in this regard to fully develop barrier-free learning mobility in the EU.

Moreover, freedom of movement, as implemented under the Citizenship Directive (Directive 2004/38)[68], remains predicated on an **outdated concept of mobility**, involving only the movement from one EU Member State to settle in another, rather than multiple movements between multiple Member States. Adding to that, little attention is paid to second-generation movers, i.e. the children of those who have used their free movement rights.

Lastly, **freedom of movement remains unattainable for many EU citizens**. This is the case for instance for **many persons with disabilities**, whose disability assessment is not automatically recognised when crossing internal EU borders. This means that persons with disabilities moving to another Member State must wait to be reassessed and have their disability status affirmed before accessing the support services they require. The EC has addressed this issue through a proposal for an EU Disability Card[69], as part of the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030[70], although the scope of this proposal is yet to be determined.

Altogether, EU institutions and Member States have not been idle regarding migration and asylum since the end of the CoFoE, though they have not heeded the recommendations in last year's Civil Society Convention for the CoFoE's report[71]. As for people's free movement across the EU, there are still some barriers to full and inclusive access. Thus, urgent developments are deemed necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. A rights- and solidarity-based European approach to migration and protection of people on the move

2.1.1. Agreeing on a common EU governance of migration and asylum centred on solidarity and on the respect of people on the move's fundamental rights

We urge EU institutions and Member States to implement the following steps:

1. Drop all aspects of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum that attempt to **erase the right to asylum and externalise borders**.

2. **Decriminalise immigration** and end harmful, punitive enforcement practices, including detentions, discriminatory profiling and policing, surveillance and monitoring, pushbacks and deportations.

3. Repeal the Dublin regulation[72] or a minima amend it by deleting the "country of first arrival" principle, and instead **promote a fair distribution of asylum seekers across EU Member States**, based on population and wealth, and leaving as much as possible the choice for people to apply for asylum in a Member State where they already have ties. Member States' position reached on 8 June 2023 on the Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management should be combatted because it introduces new concepts to deflect responsibilities to third countries, instead of promoting the aforementioned fair distribution.

4. **Adopt a comprehensive and intersectional protection framework** addressing the specific needs of different groups, including but not limited to women and girls, (unaccompanied) minors, LGBTQIA+ people, racialised people, and communities affected by climate change, either by interpreting the Geneva criteria liberally (e.g. recognising sexual and gender-based violence as self-standing reasons to grant asylum), granting protection based on prima facie evidence or by extending and expanding other instruments such as subsidiary protection, which is intended to cover the situations of people who are unable to prove individual persecution (e.g. communities affected by climate change).

5. **Establish and properly fund**, for as long as the EU remains closed to arrivals, **an EU search-and-rescue programme** with a mandate to save lives at the dangerous points of the EU's external borders, in particular in the Mediterranean Sea.

6. Strengthen and harmonise the Common European Asylum System[73], particularly by **improving the reception conditions for asylum seekers** across Member States, and **refusing derogations to standard procedures**, such as the use of the border procedure proposed in the EU Pact and further expanded by the June 2023 Council of the EU's deal.

7. Ensure the **meaningful participation and consultation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers** (MRAs), as well as their representative organisations, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies affecting them[74].

2.1.2. Facilitating structural, quality routes for all people on the move

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Provide **entry visas for job-seekers across all skills levels and sectors**.

2. Allow the **issuance of humanitarian visas for people from countries affected by serious human rights violations, armed conflicts or natural disasters**, taking into account specific situations. For example, establishing a form of student visa based on humanitarian grounds with eased conditions, thus granting students in risky situations eased access to the European Education Area[75] to continue and complete their learning pathway.

3. **Broaden the definition of family reunification** and allow applications in the country of destination.

2.1.3. Developing comprehensive migration and inclusion policies based on autonomy, equity and participation

We encourage EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Enable the **full labour-market participation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers**[76].

2. Ensure the **full exercise of the labour rights under the** European Pillar of Social Rights[77], including effective mechanisms for complaints and remedies, **for all workers**.

3. **Reform public services** so that people can meaningfully access health, education, housing, social protection systems and other essential services, without unnecessary restrictions based on migration or residence status or registration with a municipality. Policies on public services need to be grounded in social rights and equality.

4. Encourage Member States to consider **adopting firewall policies** to prevent state institutions that provide services to undocumented migrants from disclosing this information to immigration services.

5. Implement **labour migration and work-permit policies** that: have streamlined and efficient procedures; provide renewable permits of reasonable initial duration to work in any sector; and enable autonomy, mobility in the labour market and social inclusion, including family and social rights[78].

6. Take comprehensive action to **ensure the validation and recognition of migrants' prior learning, skills and qualifications**, including both non-formal and informal learning[79].

2.1.4. Empowering civil society organisations to freely support migrant, refugees or asylum seekers, regardless of their residence or migration status

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Fully decriminalise humanitarian assistance** and any form of **solidarity with migrants**.

2. **End the conflation of so-called 'smugglers'**, often migrants themselves, **and actual abusers and human traffickers**.

3. **Fully enable, recognise and fund CSOs' fundamental role** in search-and-rescue operations, border monitoring, and supporting MRAs in general.

2.1.5. Adopting and promoting attitudes and discourses that de-polarise migration and diversity

We encourage all relevant stakeholders in the migration process to:

1. **Focus on what unites us rather than what divides us:** we are all human beings seeking to live a secure, fulfilling life.

2. Actively **fight hate speech**.

3. **Make visible migrants' indispensable contribution** to the socio-economic and cultural prosperity in the EU.

4. **Promote a positive mindset in the long run and at a systemic level**, for instance by providing everyone with education on diversity and multiculturalism from a young age.

2.2. Breaking down the barriers to the free movement of people in the EU

In light of the importance of this topic and the flagship role and ideological value that the freedom of movement constitutes for the EU, we urge EU institutions and Member States to:

2.2.1. Protecting mobile individuals, especially those within vulnerable groups, and ensuring the portability of social and individual rights across EU Member States

1. Ensure the **harmonised, consistent and rigorous implementation of the** [Citizenship Directive](#)[80] **across Member States**, rather than the inadequate, uneven and inconsistent implementation that is currently in place[81]. To achieve this, the EC should demand that Member States provide better data on the Directive's implementation at the national level.

2. Member States should **clarify the role of local authorities** to enable a better implementation of the Citizenship Directive, as well as streamline registration processes (where applicable) upon arrival in the host Member State.

3. **Make freedom of movement in the EU resilient to future unforeseen shocks** by strengthening EU competences in relevant areas, such as cross-border health[82].

4. **Clarify the definition of family member and extended family member to ensure harmonised implementation**, so that rainbow families, as well as people in long-term relationships who are not married, can always benefit from the right to free movement.

5. Allow **access to social benefits and services** that are not only conditional on having the right to reside in the Member State.

6. **Implement and better define the scope of the proposed** [EU Disability Card](#)[83] at the end of the current legislature in order to grant access to benefits linked to public social policies and/or national social security systems on a temporary basis when a person with a disability moves to a different Member State to study or work.

2.2.2. Strengthening mobile citizens' political participation

1. Establish **effective mechanisms** to ensure that no individual is denied **direct national political representation** in their host country nor loses **political rights** in their country of origin when moving to another EU Member State, since this restricts freedom of movement.

2. **Make sure relevant information** (i.e. registration formalities) **is easily accessible and available in multiple languages** (e.g. English, French and German) within the European mobile citizens' community in the Member State concerned.

3. Widen the scope and expand the **structures of political participation for mobile citizens**, both in the host country and in the country of origin.

4. **Harmonise the process for registration on the electoral roll for mobile citizens** in the host Member State.

2.2.3. Ensuring that physical learning mobility is a reality for all

1. Encompass **learners' demands as a core part of the policymaking process** on learning mobility policies.

2. Promote **equal treatment and access to education for third-country nationals**, avoiding any discrimination compared to EU citizens (e.g. in tuition fees or student support) and simplifying the procedures to obtain a study visa.

3. Promote the **ratification of** UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education[84] by EU Member States.

4. Expand the work on the **recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals** to the majority of degrees and countries, and enact equivalence between professional qualifications.

5. Make **automatic mutual recognition of learning mobility experiences** a reality.

6. **Implement the** Research and Studies (REST) Directive[85] **in all EU Member States**, without exception, to allow a more inclusive participation of third-country nationals in mobility programs.

3. A socially just EU

WHERE WE STAND

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)[86] is the compass that guides the efforts of the European Union (EU) and its Member States towards a more Social Europe. This commitment was translated into comprehensive action through the adoption of the Action Plan of the EPSR[87] and its objectives, to which EU institutions and Member States committed with the Porto Declaration[88] in May 2021. However, in the State of the Union address[89] presented by European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen just a year and a few months later, in September 2022, the Social Pillar was not even mentioned, and few new initiatives were announced for 2023 in relation to social policies.

As the end of the initiatives foreseen under the Action Plan of the EPSR approaches, we are also getting closer to the new legislature of the EU. As civil society organisations (CSOs), we intend to make sure that the Social Pillar remains high on the EU agenda and that an ambitious follow-up of the Action Plan of the EPSR is put forward, as was recently reaffirmed at the Social Forum in Porto in May 2023. This means translating the recommendations developed by the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe (CSOCoFoE)[90] into transformative measures in multiple policy areas: **a sustainable economic model, the promotion of equal opportunities, the implementation of fair working conditions, and the provision of social protection for all**.

An economic governance framework that fosters social and green investment[91]

A window of opportunity is offered by the review of the EU's economic governance[92]. Growth at all costs has dragged the EU into a hole where essential services such as affordable healthcare and education are regarded as unworthy of investments if they are non-profitable. At the same time, the European Semester[93] and the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP)[94] frequently prioritise economic goals at the expense of social ones, and there is a risk that this will continue with the newly flexibilised approach to debt sustainability. Furthermore, adequate policies to protect people and the planet are limited by the pressure on Member States to be attractive for transnational companies and international markets deriving from the growth imperative. In some cases, this has resulted in low tax rates and substantial subsidies for companies, as well as insufficient social and environmental standards.

As CSOs, we share a vision for a **socially and environmentally just EU** as a precondition for achieving an inclusive, sustainable and just future for the Union. The EU is undergoing multiple and intertwined societal and environmental crises that must lead to **transformative policies** to tackle systemic inequalities, environmental emergencies, social and racial injustice and the intersection of discriminations that are currently preventing many from

enjoying their rights and opportunities for **individual and collective emancipation**. If we are to achieve even some of the goals outlined in last year's report from the CSOCoFoE, it is clear that we will need **structural reform** of the economic principles that govern the EU.

Education as a condition for thriving

Education, training and lifelong learning are essential tools to face this epoch's challenges and ensure the well-being of people through and beyond their participation in the labour market, emancipation and democratic participation in society. The EPSR establishes the right and the equality of access to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning; in light of the emerging European Education Area (EEA)[95], specific measures need to be taken to ensure the realisation of this principle.

Since the end of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), several proposals have been put forward by the EC and the Council, including: the Digital Education Package[96]; a series of Council recommendations to build the EEA; a Council Recommendation on microcredentials[97]; the monitoring of the automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad; and the start of the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme. In parallel, the European Parliament (EP) has started to become more interested in the active protection of academic freedom, and created a specific forum dedicated to this issue[98]. While these initiatives are welcome, the problem lies: in the lack of synergies with other initiatives; in their implementation; in the overlooking of education's multiple purposes beyond employability; and in the lack of systematic and systemic involvement of stakeholders in the governance of the EEA. These oversights are reminiscent of the European Year of Youth[99], and possibly the European Year of Skills[100], in that they could be regarded as missed opportunities.

Furthermore, since the formal end of the CoFoE, the EC has acknowledged the importance of the topic of education for European citizens and for all people living in the EU, and committed to: a) delivering a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Learning Mobility Framework, which is planned for Q3 in 2023; and b) keeping up the discussion in a bottom-up fashion with a dedicated European Citizens' Panel on learning mobility.

At the same time, citizens continue to experience setbacks and distress in mobile situations; this is particularly true for groups in vulnerable situations. The **inclusion of all citizens in mobility** is not a reality at all, while suggestions from the EC consider expanding inclusion through virtual exchanges[101]. This can certainly not be considered as a form of mobility; it can only complement actual learning mobility activities.

Additionally, there is no benchmark to measure the EU's progress in "making learning mobility a reality for all"—a key objective of the learning mobility framework and the EEA, as well as one of the main requests made by citizens through the CoFoE. This topic is

particularly critical since a key target of the previous strategy—20% of mobile higher education graduates[102]—was not met, while other types of learners beyond higher education lacked such a target.

Quality of working conditions at the heart of the labour market

Positive signals have come from EU institutions since the end of the CoFoE in terms of ensuring **fair working conditions** in the EU. The historic approval of the adequate minimum wages Directive[103] is the most prominent of such developments. The pay transparency Directive[104] has been another welcome step towards **closing the gender pay gap** and ensuring the application of principle 7 of the Social Pillar.

On the other hand, digital platforms are actively opposing the proposed Directive on improving working conditions in platform work[105] even though, on the contrary, they should aim to end bogus self-employment, **ensure the social rights of all workers** and prevent a negative spill-over effect on the entire labour market. The implementation report on the working time Directive[106] highlights shortcomings in ensuring workers' health and safety at work, which is even more concerning in light of the **spread of teleworking and the consequent challenges for mental health, gender equality, inclusion and social rights**. The EC's communication[107] following the announced comprehensive initiative on mental health recognises the risks carried by digitalisation for the world of work, but incisive and binding measures are needed to ensure and protect workers' right to disconnect.

Social Europe for all

Generally, the EU can and must do more to **consider the specific challenges experienced by marginalised groups in accessing their social rights**—including but not limited to racialised people, women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced people (especially if undocumented), ethnic and religious minorities and people with low socio-economic status—as well as to tackle the complex intersectional discriminations that these groups face. More should be done to grant the **recognition of civil dialogue** on an equal footing with social dialogue considering its invaluable function of amplifying the voices of the most uncatered for and protecting their rights. In parallel, **social dialogue should also be strengthened**, as highlighted in both the adequate minimum wages Directive and the proposal for a Council Recommendation on strengthening social dialogue in the European Union[108].

Social protection is a core component of the EU's social model and recent years have demonstrated its importance. The High-Level Group on the future of social protection and the welfare state's report[109] from February 2023 recommends investing to enhance the

coverage and adequacy of social protection systems, promoting labour market participation, and highlights that social and civil dialogue are crucial to achieve these policy goals.

The Council Recommendation on minimum income ensuring active inclusion[110] is a welcome step forward as it will hopefully prompt Member States to improve the accessibility and adequacy of their minimum income schemes. That said, a soft law measure is not enough to drive the progress we need. In March 2023, the EP called for a European Directive on adequate minimum income[111] as a way to meet the poverty reduction targets set in the EPSR's Action Plan. We stand by this call since a framework directive will be necessary to create enforceable minimum standards regarding adequacy, accessibility and coverage of the scheme.

Social service providers have played a pivotal role in providing essential services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine for the EU. In the Social Pillar Action Plan, the EC pledged to present an EU report on access to essential services[112], though as of June 2023 this report is still not forthcoming. On the other hand, the European Child Guarantee[113] is a very welcome step towards guaranteeing social services for children, including free early childhood education and care, free healthcare, free education, healthy nutrition and adequate housing. The European Platform on Combatting Homelessness[114], the European Care Strategy[115] and related initiatives are other recent positive developments proposed by EU institutions. We welcome the active role that the EU is taking but we encourage **a stronger rights- and solidarity-based approach that ensures real inclusion of the most marginalised groups, as well as more meaningful civil dialogue**.

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Put forward an **ambitious revision of the EPSR Action Plan** with additional initiatives beyond 2025 to ensure social justice during this epoch's transitions like the green and digital transitions.

2. Ensure a **proper impact assessment of the EPSR Action Plan** through the European Semester mechanism, paying particular attention to marginalised groups.

3. Ensure **synergy and monitoring between the EPSR Action Plan and a diversity of other action plans and strategies**, including the Anti-Racism

Action Plan[116], the Roma Strategy[117], and the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy[118].

4. Recognise the role of **civil dialogue** in improving social inclusion of the most marginalised people and ensure the structural and meaningful involvement of civil society in the whole policymaking cycle. Encourage the collaboration between social partners and civil society by establishing civil dialogue as a transparent and regular mechanism for consultation of organised civil society and aimed at reinforcing social dialogue.

5. Expand the final **Directive on combatting violence against women and domestic violence**[119] to make it highly ambitious.

6. **Monitor the implementation of the recently ratified Istanbul Convention**[120] and protect it against the worrying backtracking on LGBTQIA+ people and women's rights globally.

7. Unblock and conclude negotiations in the Council on the **EU Horizontal Non-Discrimination Directive**[121], modernising the text so that it adequately captures the realities of marginalised groups and protects people from all forms of discrimination.

8. **Implement comprehensively the** EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-25[122].

9. Elaborate a **European anti-poverty strategy**, with ambitious targets and concrete indicators to monitor progress by EU institutions, backed in synergy by thematic strategies for key vulnerable groups.

10. Implement the **EU Anti-Racism Action Plan and the EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation** and ensure strong synergies with the delivery of the EPSR Action Plan.

11. Establish an '**EU Youth Test**'[123], an impact assessment tool that would see all EU policies through a youth lens, including: a specific consultation with youth experts as part of the process; an assessment of the impact of all policies beyond traditional 'youth topics' by every EC's DG; and the introduction of mitigation measures if a negative impact is identified. This should be adopted at EU level through the amendment of Better Regulation[124].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Besides the above-mentioned cross-cutting recommendations, we call for action from EU institutions and Member States in each of the following subsections.

3.1. A new macroeconomic governance for the EU

1. Establish rules that provide **equal standing to social, environmental and economic concerns,** such as the Social Convergence Framework[125] with the same weight as the MIP.

2. Extend flexibility and the stronger national ownership foreseen in the review of the economic governance beyond climate-related sectors to **include all other social sectors**.

3. Promote and implement **golden rules** in the economic governance framework to be applied so that public investment in sectors like public healthcare, education and the environment are excluded from debt sustainability calculation. A thorough, harmonised taxonomy to define public investment shall also be initiated and carried out in all Member States to uphold said golden rules.

4. Strengthen the **participation of civil society stakeholders in the European Semester process**, including by consulting the European stakeholders on the European indicators and goals, boosting the awareness-raising of the process, setting up rules for adequate inclusion of stakeholders and evaluating Member States' processes for the inclusion of civil society stakeholders in the formulation of country-specific recommendations.

5. Adopt indicators fit to measure the **well-being of people beyond the limits of GDP**, considering planetary boundaries, and coherently adapting the country-specific recommendations to prioritise environmental, social, racial and gender justice goals[126].

6. Enhance the **role of education in the European Semester**, notably within the Social Scoreboard, encouraging greater public investment in education, in particular to improve inclusiveness and recognise education's multiple purposes[127].

7. Promote the social and economic rights set out in the [European Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)[128],[129].

8. Complement the review of the fiscal framework with the proposal of a **macroeconomic instrument similar to the** [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#)[130] beyond 2027 to invest in the sectors covered by the proposed golden rules.

9. **Involve social partners and civil society stakeholders in the design of such macroeconomic instruments' goals**, and include a conditionality clause on the stakeholders' involvement at Member States' level for the specific investments and reforms agreed within the framework of such instruments.

3.2. Education, training and lifelong learning

A sustainable future for the EU in these times of fast-paced societal changes can only be achieved by ensuring universal access to quality education. Access to quality education for all requires: strong investments; the recognition of non-formal and informal learning; understanding access to education through a lifelong learning perspective; creating more complementarity and continuity between learning opportunities; promoting EU fundamental values, equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; mitigating brain drain and promoting brain circulation; avoiding social dumping; and ensuring access to quality and innovative digital education[131].

1. Develop an ambitious **new learning mobility framework** that would focus on widening mobility opportunities, doubling the targets over a period of 10 years.

2. Place **extra funding for vulnerable groups**, beyond current measures.

3. Increase **public funding for individuals, as well as for learning providers**, under key EU programmes.

4. Ensure that the upcoming Council Recommendations provide Member States with **clear guidelines**, as well as **qualitative and quantitative indicators** to monitor mobility.

5. **Support all learning sectors**, including but not limited to school, vocational

education and training (VET), and non-formal learning, as well as all learners, including adults, teachers and educators in all education sectors.

6. The mid-term review of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+[132] programme should increase the grants for green travel, and start the conversation to **change the structure of the Erasmus grants** towards a formula that covers the real study and living costs of the host city.

7. Defend and promote fundamental EU values by including **academic freedom in the annual EU Rule of Law Report**[133].

8. Ensure that the right to quality and inclusive education includes the right for everyone to access **comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights education**, based on the values of equality, mutuality, respect, autonomy, critical thinking, non-dominance and non-violence, as well as personal and social responsibility[134].

9. Include **work-based learning** within the incoming legislation on banning unpaid internships.

10. Ensure that the **European Education Area involves the educational stakeholders** in its governance.

11. Ensure the **democratic governance of the European Universities** alliances and the upward convergence of student rights within the alliances, and conversely within the whole European Education Area.

12. Establish a **European Students at Risk scheme** to allow human rights defenders in third countries who are denied their right to education to receive a scholarship to study in the EU.

13. Integrate **Global Citizenship Education into the school curriculum** through granting the EU competence on citizenship education in the school curriculum.

14. Use the framework of the EPSR Action Plan and chapter on education, and the opportunity of the European Year of Skills 2023 and legacy to **promote the right to education and lifelong learning for all** and the recognition of non-formal, informal learning.

15. Use the opportunity offered by the European Year of Skills to support the **development and provision of transversal competences**, shifting away from a paradigm which prioritises exclusively a labour-market oriented approach to skills development.

16. Ensure the **automatic recognition of qualifications** and learning periods abroad.

17. The 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme[135] currently covers sports staff exchange; the Erasmus+ midterm review should ask for the **additional inclusion of amateur athlete exchanges**.

3.3. Fair working conditions

3.3.1. Adequate minimum wages

In October 2022, the European Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages was finally formally adopted. This long-awaited legislative act is undoubtedly a historical development towards a more Social EU, as well as an unprecedented instrument to ensure minimum wages' adequacy. Nevertheless, not all the recommendations developed by the Civil Society Convention for the CoFoE were integrated in the Directive's final text. Regrettably, the Directive does not establish a benchmark for adequacy of minimum wages, leaving a lot of leverage to Member States to define the adequacy and risking that the legislation proves ineffective in improving living and working conditions across the EU. On the bright side, the text requires Member States to devise national plans to ensure that the collective bargaining coverage reaches 80%.

Considering such recent developments, the EC should:

1. Monitor the implementation of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, paying particular attention to the **efficacy of benchmarks and methodologies** employed by Member States to define the adequacy. The EC should also ensure that the Directive's provisions also cover people in so-called "sheltered work settings", as is still common for many persons with disabilities.

2. Make sure that the assessment of the level of national collective bargaining coverage takes into account **all types of workers**, including atypical workers.

3. Ensure that **sub-minimum rates for youth minimum wages are ended** through the implementation of the Directive's stipulation that variations and deductions respect the principles of non-discrimination and proportionality.

3.3.2. Quality jobs

1. Ensure secure working conditions, equal pay, and access to social protection and adequate pensions, **regardless of a person's employment or residence status**[136].

2. Protect and promote **adequate work-life balance for all** workers, including through the monitoring of the implementation of the Directive on work-life balance. Combine it with further measures to ensure the take-up of paternity/parental leave.

3. Increase public **investment in Early Childhood Education and Care services** and the sector of care more broadly to underpin the promotion of the work-life balance for all. Recognise the value of (unpaid) care work[137].

4. Apply the **comprehensive approach to mental health** announced by the EC to all workers, including care workers, based on the Council's conclusions on telework[138] and the EP's report on the right to disconnect[139].

5. Ensure the promotion of **democracy at work**.

6. Introduce **anti-discrimination and anti-racism policies** in the workplace.

7. Implement effective **labour monitoring, complaints and redress mechanisms** that are accessible for all workers, regardless of their residency and employment status, including undocumented migrant workers.

8. Increase and improve **labour inspections**[140].

9. Invest in **quality green jobs** that guarantee people's and planet's well-being, fostering a real just transition that leaves no one behind.

10. Approve an [ambitious Directive on improving working conditions in platform work](#) based on a general application of the rebuttable presumption of employment relation to combat bogus self-employment[141].

11. **Ban unpaid internships**, including curricular traineeships, via an EU level legal instrument ensuring access to remuneration, limited duration of internship, and rights on the level of minimum wage.

12. Link the leveraging of funds under the Reinforced [Youth Guarantee](#)[142] to **quality standards** such as: no unpaid opportunities being offered under the Youth Guarantee; employers should only be eligible if they do not use this scheme for job replacing; involvement of youth organisations in the scheme's implementation, including the outreach phase; enough funding should be dedicated to this initiative.

3.3.3. Transparency of working conditions

1. Guarantee human oversight and accountability of algorithmic management, transparency on the use of workers' data, as well as their performance assessment at work for all workers, including self-employed workers. The **[Directive on improving working conditions of platform workers](#)**[143] should be the first step in this direction.

2. Effectively implement the **[pay transparency Directive](#)**[144]. The EC must monitor this process closely at the national level.

3.4. Social protection and inclusion

1. Ambitiously implement the **[Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income](#)**[145] ensuring active inclusion.

2. Adopt a **[framework directive on adequate minimum income](#)**[146] that also ensures no age-based discrimination.

3. **Invest in essential services** to ensure their quality, continued delivery and for increased free access at the point of use.

4. Ensure that there are **adequate funds to support the European Child Guarantee** and for Member States to implement their national action plans.

5. Ensure that combatting the causes of **homelessness remains a social policy priority** through the European Semester and EU funding.

6. Ambitiously implement the **European Care Strategy**[147] and ensure that the necessary funds are provided.

7. Promote in all EU Member States for **paid work to be fully compatible with income from other social support mechanisms**, such as disability allowance, to ensure that people do not experience a loss in income when taking up part-time employment.

4. Fighting against climate change's impacts and addressing (global) environmental challenges

WHERE WE STAND

We human beings are part of the wider living nature on earth and we depend on it to survive. Global warming, loss of biodiversity and pollution are causing great harm to all societies around the globe, often hitting those who contribute little to the ecological crisis first and hardest. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing injustices and inequalities. The current pace of change towards sustainability is far too slow to avoid severe damage to nature and societies, and does not adequately address **systemic changes**. We need a **pact for the sustainable future of the EU** and **a beyond growth deal that leaves no one behind**.

Since 1990, the EU's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have resulted in some domestic reductions but also in a shift towards emissions outside of the EU as we import more materials and products. Decision-makers are **not doing enough to reduce energy consumption and to rapidly phase out fossil fuels**. We need to accelerate emission cuts beyond currently planned levels, in line with science, to at least minus 65% by 2030 compared to 1990 and consistent with reaching climate neutrality by 2040[148]. The acceleration towards reduced resource use, more energy savings and a fully renewable energy system requires a massive mobilisation to protect consumers from price surges and achieve energy independence from unstable regions and autocratic regimes[149].

Across the EU and beyond, human activities are causing the **destruction of ecosystems and unprecedented levels of species loss**. Since the end of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) on 9 May 2022, the EU has progressed in devising some legislative proposals to protect and restore nature, such as the Nature Restoration Law[150], the Soil Monitoring Law[151] and the Critical Raw Materials Act[152]. While these represent opportunities to address pressing environmental challenges and restore our planet's health, they are persistently weakened[153] in terms of ambition of targets and critical obligations, especially the ones that would guarantee effectiveness, democratic participation and environmental justice, as well as the consideration of impacts beyond the EU.

Water is vital for our survival and livelihood. Sixty percent of the EU's rivers, lakes and wetlands are not in good ecological health[154]. **Air pollution** is the EU's invisible killer. Each year in the EU, approximately more than 300,000 people die prematurely because of their exposure to toxic air[155]. **Industrial pollution** still occurs on a massive scale. While EU laws seek to prevent pollution from factories and power plants, we must ensure the use of the best-available techniques and stop highly polluting processes in order to end pollution at the source[156].

Despite the introduction of EU legislation on chemicals[157], tens of thousands of **chemicals** go unchecked, **chemical exposure is alarmingly high** and progress is too slow and uneven across the EU. The revision of REACH[158], the EU chemical safety law, was delayed after pressure from the chemicals industry.

Waste from **plastic** is still on the rise and sent to poorer countries. The good news is that at the UN level, countries have committed to developing a [legally binding agreement to end plastics pollution](#)[159].

Our economic system is based on the increasing extraction of finite resources from the natural environment. The EU is heavily dependent on raw materials from other parts of the world. We need to set and achieve an **absolute reduction of resources and raw-material use**, comparable to reduction targets for GHG emissions, aiming at **sufficiency**, curbing overconsumption and ensuring **global resource justice**. We need to move to a full **circular economy** where waste is prevented and products are reused or recycled[160].

The EU's **food system** is still dependent on intensive agriculture which is a driver of biodiversity loss, water and air pollution and climate change, while enormous amounts of food are wasted. [Food waste reduction targets](#)[161] are underway but we need to support **local and virtuous farmers** to produce healthy and sustainable food for fair prices without the need to buy more and more chemicals to keep up with production rates.

All these challenges are linked to **social and environmental justice, both in the EU and globally**. In the EU, people with low incomes and those whose jobs are likely to be lost in the green transition risk paying a high price. From a global perspective, [the EU has contributed to more than 20% of historic emissions](#)[162], without counting imported goods' emissions, and it is one of the most resource-dependent regions in the world, [importing around 90% of its oil and gas](#)[163], large shares of its mineral and metal resources, and feedstock for farm animals. All of this causes severe environmental and social impacts in other parts of the world. Thus, we must ensure social, environmental and climate justice in and beyond the EU's borders[164].

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Beyond the European Green Deal: driving transformative change for a sustainable future

The [triple planetary crisis](#)[165] (i.e. climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss) that the European Green Deal aims to solve by reconciling the economy with our planet and the way we produce and consume is still far from being addressed and the window of opportunity to do so is shrinking. The future we want includes: environmental, climate and social justice; sustainable choices as easy choices; active and participatory democracy involving citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs); and a gender equality and anti-racist approach in all policies. Taking into account the future is vital and charting the path to 2040 and 2050 needs to include addressing existing gaps, overcoming barriers, and ramping up ambition.

4.1.1. Taking back control from corporate capture and empowering people

We urge EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Take back control from multinationals and international markets to ensure public and democratic control over the economy** and safeguard the common goods. Direct regulations should not be hampered by private interests and their influence on policymaking. This continues to slow down the green transition, with negative effects on the environment, increased socio-economic inequalities (e.g. in terms of labour conditions, wages, unemployment) and ultimately, negative effects on democracy itself.

2. **Do not give compensation for industries' stranded assets:** this would send the wrong signal for the future as companies and banks would continue to invest in fossil-based assets, with Member States' money for stranded assets slowing down the change[166].

3. **Localise the** European Green Deal[167] **with the active participation of citizens**. Politicians must acknowledge the need for radical lifestyle changes. As the IPCC notes: the reduction by 40-70% of GHG emissions is possible[168]; it is an untapped potential. Yet currently, people are not able to make these radical lifestyle changes as the system is not ready yet and the large diversity of possible sustainable lifestyle choices is thus constrained. Policies must **guarantee the right to live a good life within planetary boundaries to everyone, not just to an affluent elite**.

4. **Support and promote collective action led by citizens, since such action is needed to answer the triple planetary crisis**. This should be the focus of EU and Member States' funding programmes and regulatory frameworks. Structural support for community-led initiatives towards sustainability would harness the power of collective action by citizens and improve social cohesion.

5. Establish a **balance of power between different interests in our societies. Stakeholders acting for the common interest**, CSOs and grassroots movements dedicated to environmental protection and climate action, workers and trade unions, wider civil society and the scientific community must not only have a seat at the table but must also be able to shape the green and just transition.[169]

6. **Ensure transparency in decision-making and participation beyond consultations by a wide range of stakeholders and experts** to develop climate and environmental policies. For consultation and participation to be meaningful and effective, decision-makers must openly communicate around drafting processes, actively solicit and consider inputs from all stakeholders and be accountable towards them. EU institutions do not publish sufficient information during decision-making procedures. Civil society actors must be involved in all stages of EU decision-making processes—including design, implementation and monitoring—and in particular, opaque processes such as the 'comitology procedure' must be reformed and should be more inclusive of civil society.[170]

7. Make available **more public funds for independent research, think tanks and advocacy organisations** dedicated to protecting the climate and the environment, consumer safety, animal welfare, labour conditions, healthcare, education and culture to create the desperately needed level-playing field between different interests[171].

8. Empower people by implementing **citizens' assemblies**—among other participatory methods[172]—to co-decide agendas and identify shared priorities, thus contributing altogether to policymaking processes.

4.1.2. Protecting environmental rights and ensuring environmental justice

In the EU, we enjoy three key rights on environmental issues under the Aarhus Convention[173]: **access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters**. However, too often, environmental rights are not granted in full, for instance due to access to information requests being declined, and non-transparent decision-making structures limiting public participation in environmental decision-making[174].

Rather than empowering people, many governments, including some EU Member States, have imposed **unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions[175] on the freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression, association and access to information**. These are fundamental rights that enable all civil society actors to participate in decision-making on environmental matters and thus to defend our climate and biodiversity[176].

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Grant and safeguard environmental rights**, in order to ensure that individuals and CSOs can defend the environment effectively.

2. **Protect environmental rights and civic space**, including freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, access to information and the right to privacy[177]. In addition, they should **ensure wide participation of environmental defenders in critical climate-related meetings** globally, including during the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)[178].

3. Ensure that all EU environmental and climate policies are **based on a robust analysis of existing inequalities**, including gender and racial inequalities, to ensure that they deliver on their environmental objectives and contribute to more equitable societies[179]. Indeed, certain groups in society are **disproportionately affected by environmental burdens**. Racialised communities are hit the hardest by climate change[180]. Moreover, communities with lower levels of income and education, as well as the elderly and children, more often suffer[181] from negative health impacts caused by different types of pollution and by climate change. Roma communities in many Member States lack access to clean water, sanitation, waste collection and other basic environmental services[182]. Furthermore, many environmental and climate policies remain blind to gender equality considerations, such as those related to energy poverty, mobility needs or health impacts from chemicals[183].

4. Guarantee the **right to say no to extractive economy/activities** and progress with the ongoing efforts to recognise and **combat ecocide through criminal law**[184].

4.1.3. Strong regulatory frameworks and accountability of the EU and Member States

Strong regulatory frameworks for the climate and the environment and against pollution are needed both at EU and national levels to create a level-playing field for everyone when it comes to living sustainably and healthily within planetary boundaries. We need to **ensure everyone's right to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle**. Missing a strong regulatory framework only creates loopholes that can be exploited for extractive, industrial and economic interests which pursue profit-oriented goals to the detriment of people and the planet. Strong EU regulatory frameworks need to be implemented quickly on national, regional and local levels, with adequate funding and capacity-building measures. Dedicated funding and capacity-building for the European Green Deal's localisation is needed, harnessing the power of individual and collective action by citizens.

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Reform outdated laws, provide stronger regulatory frameworks and the means for their implementation, ranging from financial resources to capacity-building, and **accelerate the transition now**.

2. **Directly regulate harmful practices within and outside EU borders**. For instance, a moratorium on the exploration of new fossil fuel reserves; phasing out of the nuclear energy generation; phasing out of production processes emitting GHGs for electricity, fuels, steel, chemicals, and cement; limiting the use of arable land to grow crops for animal feed; phasing out of all unsustainable packaging and imposing full financial responsibility for waste management on producers; using a no-pollution fence to set the borders for the market economy; and banning or restricting the marketing of unhealthy and unsustainable food (in particular to children)[185].

4.2. Beyond growth for a healthy planet

Perpetuating the current economic system based on infinite growth, overexploitation and the consequent depletion of natural assets, and increasing inequalities—particularly among racialised communities and women—will not help us to achieve climate, environmental and social objectives. The pursuit of infinite economic growth and the faith in green technologies to fix problems would only slow down the velocity at which society heads towards inevitable ecological collapses. We cannot fix the system's breakdown with the same system that contributed to threats to our survival on the planet[186].

Thus, we urge EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Shift to a **new economic model that prioritises human well-being within the ecological limits of the planet**. Building such an economy requires us to address injustices and imbalances in geopolitical power and global trade patterns and how these shape current levels of wealth, in order to define a regenerative economy[187]. The EU should thus place **human and planetary well-being**[188] **at the heart of its decision-making processes** and structurally move away from an economic system driven by GDP growth.

2. **Address climate change through a** degrowth transition and scale up existing degrowth policies[189].

3. Repurpose the economy using an EU regulatory framework on company law and corporate governance that **obliges companies to focus on long-term sustainable value creation**, rather than short-term financial benefits. **The EU must introduce mandatory due diligence for companies** to address their adverse impacts on climate change, the environment—including animal welfare—and human rights throughout their operations and value chains. Directors must be under a duty of care to consider all stakeholders' interests relevant to long-term sustainability[190]. Therefore, EU Member States need to swiftly implement the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)[191].

4. **Put in place policies with impacts before cost parity of clean technologies**. Often, sustainable alternatives are only deployed at scale when they are not more costly than polluting technologies. The implicit assumption is that thereafter the market will oversee fast deployment. However, this argument has several critical flaws: it slows down the transition because we must wait until cost parity is achieved; there is no guarantee that the market will take up the clean technologies immediately after cost parity is achieved; accepting cost parity implies that we do not accept cost increases for polluting activities; the economics underpinning these cost comparisons mainly neglect externalised costs such as damages from climate change attributed to fossil fuels and therefore start from an unequal playing field. Member States must **prioritise effectiveness**, i.e. policy measures that deliver quickly and with great certainty the required reductions in emissions and pollution and protect our biodiversity[192].

5. Redistribute wealth and power by creating alternative **forms of ownership and operation** for companies, as well as types of exchange outside the market. EU institutions and Member States must support small and medium-sized and **locally-rooted organisations and cooperatives operating on just and sustainable business models**, such as sharing decision-making power with all stakeholders and serving a public purpose rather than maximising private profit. This would help, for instance, energy cooperatives, urban and community-supported agriculture, shared economy practices and neighbourhood facilities for the communities of the future[193,194].

6. **Support and scale up community- and citizens-led initiatives**, for instance on permaculture, stewardships of the earth, and regenerative agriculture, **which show that diverse post-growth lifestyles are possible and attractive**, offering rich solutions, methodologies and processes for social innovation and the governance of the commons.

7. Seize the opportunity of the green transition to **tackle the gender pay, employment, and long-term pension gaps, and to guarantee women's economic independence**[195].

8. Ambitiously revise **animal welfare legislations** and deliver true progress based on science and citizens' demands, as expressed in a European Citizens' Initiative[196], and not only for animals' welfare but also to address harmful practices (e.g. intensive farming is highly polluting for soil, water and air, and it fuels deforestation and GHGs emissions).

4.2.1. Shaping the future of work

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Support workers who lose their jobs due to the green transition**, for instance by using government programmes to assist them with relocation and reskilling, and to avoid shortages of employees in the renewable energy industries. Emergency mechanisms and social protection will be key to deal with current and future crises and increase the resilience of our societies[197].

2. **Broaden the understanding of the sustainable jobs of the future** beyond transport, energy and construction and include sectors such as care that contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of our societies[198], all of which should help address the highly gender-segregated EU labour market.

3. **Rethink work altogether**, since an alternative economic system focuses on ensuring meaningful and decent jobs that are necessary for the functioning and flourishing of our societies[199] and on a **purple economy**[200].

4.3. Increasing resilience and sustainability

4.3.1. A resilient and sustainable life for all and the planet

Climate change and the green transition necessary to achieve carbon neutrality are exacerbating existing inequalities and injustices. For instance, the higher prices for basic needs (homes, food and mobility) have made our lives unsustainable overall. Moreover, people and communities, especially those living in poverty, should not bear entirely the

costs for the transition and should be able to be economically resilient to be able to cope with disasters (e.g. floods) while going through the green transition. Wealthier people must pay a higher share of the costs borne by those who are disproportionately affected. The Social Climate Fund[201] proposed by the European Commission in its Fit for 55 Package[202] is recognition of the need to compensate people with low socio-economic status. However, it only aims at temporary support and does not tackle the root causes of inequalities[203].

A study published in 2019[204] found that female representation in national parliaments leads countries to adopt more stringent climate change policies. Hence, **women and girls** should be recognised as powerful agents of environmental change and their contribution to devising new solutions for **climate resilience** should be valued.

We urge EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Ensure that everyone is economically and socially resilient to be **able to cope with increasing climate-change related impacts** (e.g. floods, heatwaves), and in parallel, to contribute to the transition.

2. Guarantee the **right to a sustainable life** for all.

3. Guarantee the human right to a **clean, healthy and sustainable environment** for all.

4. Create **resilient and just democracies** by empowering women, youth, racialised people, people living in poverty and other marginalised groups, and include **participatory and deliberative processes** in the design, implementation and monitoring of energy and climate plans at all governance levels.

5. Financially **support low-income groups** through lower taxes on small incomes and better social security[205].

6. Implement binding measures guaranteeing the **equal representation of women in social, economic and political life**, including temporary mandatory quotas to achieve true parity democracies.

4.3.2. Education for sustainability

Education and lifelong learning are key enablers for the achievement of environmental and social justice goals. The education and environment sectors need to work together to deliver quality climate change education through formal, non-formal and informal learning[206].

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Double down on the efforts to mainstream education for sustainability across education systems in the EU**. The EU released Council Recommendations on learning for the green transition[207]. Similarly, a competence framework focusing on sustainability competences[208] was developed. A key characteristic of this competence framework is that it goes beyond information about climate change and towards building active citizenship competences both at individual and collective levels to think critically about our current systems and act to achieve the necessary changes.

2. **Ensure cross-sectoral cooperation** on mainstream education for sustainability, going beyond climate change and connecting with interconnected socio-economic issues. This cooperation among formal, non-formal and informal education providers is crucial since only by working across the whole education system can we ensure that no one is left behind.

3. **Focus on all types of education systems** to stop missing out on the expertise from sectors that are different from the formal education system and to reach out to the most disadvantaged groups.

4. **Strengthen the cross-sectoral nature of the** Education for Climate Coalition[209], ensuring that teachers and pupils from the formal sectors can seamlessly connect with stakeholders from outside the formal school system.

5. **Further mainstream education for sustainability and climate change education** through a lifelong learning approach which targets learners at all ages and in different learning environments, including at higher education and professional development level, and beyond. Adult-targeted programmes should not be restricted to developing technical green skills. Rather, they need to enable people to access lifelong learning opportunities to build competences allowing them to address the global challenges we are facing today, such as active citizenship, collective action, and critical and future thinking. It is imperative to work on these two dimensions in parallel to foster well-being and sustainability.

5. A digital transformation that leaves no one behind in the EU

WHERE WE STAND

The ambition of the European Commission (EC)'s priority of **'A Europe fit for the digital age'** has been to **strengthen the EU's digital sovereignty** and to set standards on data, technology, and infrastructure – with a clear focus on education, ethics, accessibility, fundamental rights and European values[210]. The proposals developed in this chapter aim to feed into this priority and the targets until 2030.

Since 9 May 2022, the last day of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), the EU has moved forward with the adoption of several key pieces of legislation which CSOs have been closely monitoring and striving for: the Digital Markets Act (DMA)[211], the Digital Services Act (DSA)[212], the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)[213] and even the regulation on Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA)[214]. These are fundamental steps to: prevent large online platforms from abusing their market power; address problematic aspects of online services, such as the lack of accountability, low transparency, and how online discourses are shaped; recognise the importance of media services of general interest and increase the accessibility to these services; and regulate and establish a harmonised set of rules for crypto-assets.

Also, CSOs and trade unions have been calling for working conditions for online platform workers to be better protected at the European level in order to address new forms of precariousness, bogus self-employment, insufficient social protection and the issue of algorithmic management through the new Platform Workers Directive[215]. One of the main objectives is to improve the conditions of people working through digital platforms, while preserving the opportunities and benefits associated with the platform economy. CSOs and trade unions will ensure that uniform operation rules, open competitiveness and fair working conditions will be at the heart of this new directive.

While the adoption of these **digital policies has answered several of CSOs' key demands, there is still a long way to go in order to ensure a digital transformation in the EU that leaves no one behind**. The digital transformation subgroup within the Working Group writing this report has continued to focus on five main topics to develop updated recommendations on: digital democracy, digital education, digital safeguards, digital rights and freedoms, and the digital economy.

Digitalisation is becoming ever more ubiquitous and indeed, it is now a necessity in everyday life. On the one hand, EU citizens are constantly part of **digital democracy** by using online public services, receiving important information through the internet and often having the opportunity to engage in democratic life through e-participation channels. Over the last decade, the EU has focused its e-government and e-transparency efforts on technological solutions for public administrations, businesses and people (e.g. electronic identity). For e-participation, a few channels currently play an important role in citizens'

engagement, such as the European Citizens' Initiative[216]. However, these channels are not sufficient for the meaningful involvement of EU citizens. **E-participation tools, including e-voting, need to be more inclusive, used in a structured way, accessible for everyone and, in particular, more impactful**[217].

On the other hand, citizens are also now part of a society focused more and more on the **digital economy**, which refers to the development of an economy that is based on digital computing technologies. The economy is changing, and digital business models are among the most profitable, having impacted the entire EU, bringing both opportunities and challenges. A successful digital strategy is one that **takes advantage of opportunities by creating benefits for the entire society** whilst appropriately addressing the challenges[218].

As technology continues to create turning points in modern history, affecting the way we live, work and evolve, the EU has important decisions to make in shaping its digital future and strengthening its capacities in new technologies. In 2021, the EC presented a vision and avenues for the EU's digital transformation by 2030 in its Digital Compass for the EU's digital decade[219] which revolves around four cardinal points: government, skills, infrastructures and businesses. Although the EU has set ambitious targets, frameworks and projects to ensure its digital development, civil society organisations (CSOs) have raised concerns about the impact of current and future European policies and measures on citizens and the environment[220].

The main and most important challenge is to achieve a digital transformation that works for all, without further deepening the existing digital divide or creating new inequalities. For the EU to be a front runner in the digital domain, EU institutions and Member States must ensure that all citizens have **access to basic digital technologies** and are **provided with the right skills** to navigate the digital world. A digital transformation that is **truly inclusive** means tackling the inequalities that exist across the Union by enabling and facilitating online access, especially to parts of our society at risk of marginalisation—racialised people, women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced people (especially if undocumented), ethnic and religious minorities, people with low socio-economic status and many more. For this reason, EU institutions and Member States should make access to **affordable, high-speed internet a fundamental right** for their citizens. If internet access is both guaranteed and accessible, the priority of providing **digital education will have the potential to be more evenly implemented across all Member States to equip people with the skills and competencies** to bring about greater citizens' involvement, especially in the EU's digital democracy and digital economy[221].

Digitalisation will only advance European societies if we **can safeguard and strengthen our democracies in the process**. To this end, several digital policies are still needed at the EU level to ensure that all digital technologies developed and used respect human rights and democratic principles. Especially in 2023, various EU legislative processes have already put in place safeguards for human rights while stimulating innovation and market

integration (e.g. the [Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act](#)[222], the DSA and the DMA). There is great potential for the EU to be an ambitious rights-driven leader in tech policy, but this will **only be possible if it places human rights and democratic principles at the centre of these legislative processes, alongside innovation and competition concerns**. For example, developing AI that respects fundamental rights should not be constrained in the EU or it will be developed in other parts of the world with far fewer safeguards[223].

In conclusion, European digital policies need to enhance the protection of citizens' rights and online freedom. Platform regulations are going in the right direction and are starting to limit the power that big tech platforms have over our democracies and societies. However, the EU's efforts are not enough. CSOs are raising concerns regarding: privacy issues; the surveillance of people such as asylum seekers; racism, ableism and sexism in AI and biometric mass surveillance technologies; as well as lack of access to new technologies. It is crucial **to put human rights first and enable a digital transformation in the EU that is shaped by the people for the people**[224].

Below we present our recommendations, addressed to EU institutions and Member States, on digital democracy, digital education and digital safeguards, defending rights and freedom online, and the digital economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Digital Democracy

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in political and governance processes should be increased in an efficient and accessible manner to allow more services and interaction between citizens and their governments.

5.1.1. E-participation

1. EU institutions and Member States should actively promote and clearly communicate e-participation in decision-making and **provide citizens with a realistic opportunity to impact policymaking and legislative processes**[225].

2. European citizens' capacity to engage in **e-participation** should be strengthened, as well as the impact their contributions make on policymaking. They should always receive feedback on the extent to which their inputs to decision-making were taken into account and why (or why not)[226].

3. E-participation mechanisms and channels should be extended by **testing and combining new methods of citizens' engagement** at the EU level, e.g. crowdsourcing legislation and participatory budgeting[227].

4. The EU should focus in the next legislative term on ensuring the **enforcement of existing digital horizontal policies**.

5. EU Member States and the European Parliament should proactively explore opportunities, as well as address the legal, technical and societal challenges of **e-voting/e-elections** by promoting voting pilots and test beds on the internet[228].

6. The EU should pilot **e-voting** at the next European elections, provided it is technically secure, efficient and guarantees the electoral principle of secret ballot while simultaneously guaranteeing the **verifiability** of the votes cast and guaranteeing the process' **transparency**.

7. EU institutions and Member States should **ensure the accessibility of digital means** (secure and quality internet connection) **to citizens everywhere**, in order to reduce the digital divide and allow for equal access to e-voting and online participation across the EU.

5.1.2. E-government

1. E-government solutions should be developed in **consultation with the end-users and CSOs** to ensure solutions are **accessible and inclusive** for everyone, efficient, trustworthy, safe, subject to privacy and controlled by humans[229].

2. EU institutions and Member States must **provide alternatives to e-government services** to ensure that those who do not have the possibility to use digital tools, and persons with disabilities or with low digital literacy can still be adequately engaged and served appropriately[230].

3. E-government public data and documents at national, regional and local levels should be accessible, according to the Web Accessibility Directive[231], and **usable in open formats**, and the content should be user-friendly, both in terms of the language used and its location[232].

4. Access to **free, equal and affordable internet as a fundamental right** of every EU citizen: given the importance today of having access to the internet for a significant number of vital tasks, access to the internet should be guaranteed for everyone. In this respect, specific EU- and nationally-funded programmes could be allocated for vulnerable groups and people at risk of poverty or social exclusion to ensure they can afford to use the internet[233].

5. The EU should **provide public services that are fully accessible** for hard-to-reach segments of the population, by: a) **funding and collaborating with CSOs** which currently support those excluded from the digital transition; b) expanding initiatives that support and guide citizens in the digital transition (such as France's 'conseillers numériques'), adapting them if needed and learning from both their failures and successes[234].

6. The EU should ensure that publicly financed software developed for public sector e-government solutions is made available under **a free and open-source software licence**[235].

7. EU institutions and Member States should ensure **safe, secure and privacy-respecting national electronic identification** schemes across borders in order to create an effective **European Digital Identity** (eID) that enables safe and easy access to digital public services and online tools[236].

8. EU institutions and Member States should encourage and leverage "the transformative, innovative and collaborative power of open source, its principles and development practices"[237] **in e-government**. They should also promote the sharing and reuse of software solutions, knowledge and expertise to deliver better e-government services that benefit society and lower society's costs.

5.1.3. E-transparency

1. To ensure **e-transparency that leaves no citizen behind**, EU institutions and Member States need to ensure that **information is easy to understand, easy to find, and accessible for everyone**. This includes providing information in national sign languages and an easy-to-read format. The platforms, tools and technologies required to access this information should also be accessible. Furthermore, citizens must always be given the option of non-digital access to information[238].

5.2. Digital Education

Resetting education and training for the digital age: the digital divide must be addressed not only through the accessibility and availability of infrastructures and technologies but also through the possibility of digital education for all.

5.2.1. Digital skills and competencies

1. EU institutions and Member States should support the **development of a learner-centred approach to digitalisation in education**, including EU-level policies to support education systems so that they have bargaining power in relation to Ed Tech, as well as legally binding rules on using AI and data privacy in education, including through a comprehensive implementation of the Digital Education Package.

2. **Resources for fostering digital skills** should be targeted at those who are more strongly affected by the digital transition—such as young people, persons with disabilities, people 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETs), refugees, low-skilled adults, ex-prisoners, single parents, people with low socio-economic status and people facing social exclusion—and should also address existing barriers (e.g. lack of accessibility). EU institutions and Member States must ensure that the digital transition does not exclude anyone and strive to further reduce the biases that go into the design of digital technologies by expanding perspectives[239].

3. Although **digital competencies and skills** can be a valuable route to employment (including for vulnerable groups), their scope **should not be limited to technical skills only**, but should also include: soft skills, netiquette, empathy, sustainability, ethics and integrity, media literacy, data literacy, dealing with false or biased information, targeted advertisement, pricing and campaigning, spotting of deceptive design patterns and skills related to content accessibility[240].

5.2.2. Media literacy and digital learning

1. **Media literacy should be for all parts of society** (e.g. it should foster social inclusion) and the public communication and discussion thereof[241].

2. The EU should **strengthen civic education and confidence-building** in the areas of active citizenship, democracy, EU and national competences, populism, online and offline disinformation, news, media and digital literacy, EU fundamental rights and values, and respect for marginalised groups.

3. **Privacy and data-protection knowledge, as well as data literacy**, should also be developed through dedicated programmes—tailor-made for specific target groups, including **young people and elderly people**[242].

4. Digital knowledge, skills and competency building should be **incorporated into formal education curricula** as well as part of the large-scale objective of bringing education into the 21st century (including **lifelong learning and informal education**)[243].

5. Although digital technologies may be instrumental in improving education, education through digital means should not be of lower quality than non-digital traditional education, and it is important to ensure that nobody is left behind when it is necessary to participate in online learning.

6. EU institutions and Member States should develop **training and EU programmes on a wide range of digital skills** (e.g. technical, ethics and soft skills) and these should be tailored to the needs of citizens in vulnerable positions, including persons with disabilities, elderly people, NEETs, refugees, low-skilled adults, single parents, low-income households and people facing social exclusion, and ensure adequate and continuous funding for such actions[244].

7. **Teachers and public administrations should also be trained** in the essentials of digital technologies, digital skills, software and algorithms to foster a greater understanding, better discussion and handling thereof, and the transmission of knowledge[245]. It is necessary to enable the proper circumstances for such training in order to not overburden them and to provide incentives to attend such training.

8. **Non-formal education trainers** should be consulted when developing digital education plans at both EU and national levels[246].

9. More **EU-funded programmes for CSOs** are needed to support the development of digital education strategies—especially with regard to digital skills and competencies beyond formal education—based on a lifelong learning approach[247].

5.2.3. Awareness raising

1. Public programmes concerning the development of digital skills and competencies should **rely on CSOs and local initiatives** as mediators and entry points[248].

2. The **cross-sectoral collaboration** between scientists, civil society, EU Member States, companies and media on issues concerning digitalisation **needs to be improved and supported financially**[249].

5.3. Digital Safeguards

EU decision-makers need to put in place certain safeguards, including EU policies and regulations, to ensure the respect of values, ethics and norms in the digital space.

5.3.1. Cyber security

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. Make publicly funded, easily accessible and free-of-charge **public education about cyber security** available to all European citizens to help protect them from harm[250].

2. Step up **investments into cyber security**, both for the purpose of elections and beyond elections.

5.3.2. Artificial intelligence

1. **AI**, i.e. automated decision-making, **should be transparent and subject to human review** when operating in the public sphere with a potential impact on society and subjected to public scrutiny. Proactive regulatory actions and funding opportunities should promote public AI that will bring tangible benefits to citizens; for example, promoting the development of AI-based assistive technologies for persons with disabilities or ensuring that diversity is part of the AI design. Communities affected by AI's impact should be involved in its development as part of their human rights due diligence[251].

2. **The EU's AI Act** should be adopted to ensure at least the following principles: 1) include sufficient safeguards to protect citizens from any negative impact of AI technologies on their fundamental rights, particularly ensuring privacy, accessibility, and non-discrimination; 2) uphold an effective right to redress for those affected by an AI application and raising awareness about and accessibility to redress mechanisms; 3) make human rights impact assessments mandatory for the design, development and deployment of AI[252].

3. The EU should **develop a framework that determines the extent, type, form and moment of human intervention in AI automated decision-making**. Within this framework, one of the determining criteria should be the impact of AI on rights, duties and liberties[253].

4. Furthermore, the EU should **regulate AI systems, including in those areas that fall under the remit of the Common Foreign and Security Policy** (e.g. for military purposes), and provide a harmonised horizontal legal framework with common rules and safeguards to ensure that all systems are accurate, robust, secure, and function according to their strict specifications[254].

5. The **European Data Protection Board** (EDPB) should **keep working in close cooperation with Member States' authorities** towards common, transparent and inclusive standards and policies on privacy rules and AI.

6. The EU should **support research and efforts to make AI more understandable for citizens** and align the strategies pursued by AI systems with good behaviour[255].

7. The EU should **raise awareness about the functioning and capabilities of AI systems** (and the limits thereof), and dissuade overly strong claims about the capabilities of an AI product[256].

8. In addition to the already-proposed regulatory measures, the EU should **aim towards the establishment of complementary initiatives**, "such as certification and codes of conduct in any AI-powered systems, with benefits for the companies acting, on a voluntary basis, in compliance with them"[257].

9. **Further investment and measures to mitigate the effects of automation in affected sectors** are needed—for example, retraining people that see their field of work displaced by rapid technological advancement[258].

5.3.3. Online disinformation, integrity of elections, terrorist content, online hate speech, illegal content online

1. **Online content moderation** should ultimately always require a form of human review and intervention. The appropriate type, form and moment of this human intervention should be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the impact of AI automated decision-making on individual rights, duties and liberties. To counter disinformation, illegal content and hate speech online, **EU institutions and Member States must combine their financial instruments in support of civil society and the media**, with legislative instruments holding online platforms accountable, while safeguarding **fundamental freedoms**. Social media platforms must be encouraged to take measures to prevent smear campaigns which spread disinformation, online harassment and abuse against civil society, journalists, women, non-binary people, racialised people, LGBTQIA+ people, persons with disabilities, children and all others at risk of cyberbullying. Yet such measures must always serve to defend people's freedom of expression and association, as well as media pluralism and editorial independence[259].

2. EU institutions and Member States should **provide support—technical, policy and financial—to CSOs** countering online hate speech, protecting survivors and conducting independent media and fact-checking, as well as CSOs providing digital literacy education for citizens, including education on cyber security and AI[260].

3. EU institutions and Member States need to **defend fundamental freedoms and deter illegal hate speech** by including an online content moderation regime that requires a form of human review and accessible and clear criteria—agreed among diverse stakeholders— for the removal of restrictions on content (in the DSA)[261].

5.3.4. EU's Data Act

1. The **EU's Data Act**[262] **should be further improved**, since it currently sets a controversial precedent by allowing public authorities to access private data during emergencies. Moreover, as public officials often move from the public to private sector, there is a risk of potential conflicts of interest, which needs to be adequately addressed by the legislator[263].

5.3.5. Algorithms

1. **Transparency of algorithms** – all public and private users of automated decision-making should be required to provide detailed information on when they use automated processes (whether algorithmic or otherwise) to moderate third-party content and how such mechanisms operate. This information should be made available in public registers. In addition, redress mechanisms for those affected by algorithm-based automated decision-making should be a requirement, while raising awareness of redress mechanisms is a must[264].

2. The EU should **consider transparency requirements** regarding dynamic pricing, targeted advertisements and campaigning.

5.3.6. Digital for Development

1. **Investments in digital infrastructure as part of the Global Gateway[265]** should be **based on equal partnerships and local ownership**, and should prioritise investments that will support digital inclusion and the reduction of digital divides. Strong standards should be established for the involvement of the private sector, in order to ensure that projects are aligned with development principles, environmental standards and human rights, rather than private sector interests.

2. The **Digital for Development (D4D) Hub should be continuously supported** by both the EC and Member States, in order to facilitate a global dialogue with stakeholders across the globe based on a human-centric approach to digital transformation[266].

3. Digital transformation of the civil society sector: **CSOs should leverage the opportunities of digital transformation for their work** through access to digital support and continuous digital capacity-building[267].

5.4. Defending Rights and Freedom Online

EU institutions and Member States must defend and protect digital fundamental rights since they are an extension of human rights for the Internet age.

5.4.1. Online privacy and data (protection and retention)

1. EU institutions should ensure enforcement of existing legal frameworks—such as the <u>General Data Protection Regulation</u> (GDPR)[268], **the DSA and the <u>EU Code of Conduct on Disinformation</u>[269]—and update the <u>ePrivacy Directive</u>[270] with a strong <u>ePrivacy Regulation</u>[271]**.

2. **Sound implementation and enforcement of legislation** in an inclusive, transparent manner that enhances the protection of fundamental rights, civic discourse and electoral processes.

3. The EU should **ensure the privacy of disability and health-related sensitive data**, since this is vital. Many websites can detect if a person is using assistive technology (e.g. screen reader) to access them. This means a person's disability can be revealed against their will, which can lead to algorithmic discrimination (e.g. targeted ads about vacancies, services, avoiding persons with disabilities) or discrimination and harassment by entities and individuals possessing that data[272].

5.4.2. Net neutrality and digital services

1. **Net neutrality** should be protected by law to guarantee the free and fair sharing of content online[273].

2. EU institutions and Member States should **address the rising internet centralisation** and focus on how to prevent a few giant global companies from running most of the services (end-user applications, application stores, device neutrality, infrastructure) and holding most of the data. It is important to restore competition through regulation (e.g. the EU DSA and DMA) and through open source, open standards and interoperability[274].

3. The EU should monitor any attempts to introduce practices such as <u>zero-rating</u>[275] that **undermine net neutrality**, and take regulatory action where needed[276].

4. Moreover, the EU should encourage innovation at EU level to support the **creation of EU platforms and service providers** that are appealing to users, competitive, and conform to EU standards and values.[277]

5. The EU should consider **eliminating geo-blocking and enabling multilingual/national broadcasting** with access to subtitles and different language audio tracks[278].

6. The EU should **ensure technology neutrality**, i.e. "the freedom of individuals and organisations to choose the most appropriate and suitable technology for their needs. Products, services or regulatory frameworks taking into account the principle of technology neutrality neither impose nor discriminate in favour of the use of a particular type of technology"[279].

5.4.3. Protecting fundamental rights, secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, digital citizenship, online safety of journalists and ensuring plurality of voices in digital media

1. The **EU's digital policy** should undergo an overarching reform in order to strengthen the EU's accountability and transparency in digital technology markets and to protect fundamental freedoms and human rights. Strong regulation should be implemented by well-resourced and independent enforcement agencies, while encouraging and supporting authentic, innovative EU alternative solutions[280].

2. Protecting **encryption** as a means of self-protection is a fundamental aspect of private communicators' rights (especially for human rights defenders and marginalised groups) and must not be unduly restricted[281]. This includes the right not to supply any authority with passwords or encryption keys, and current attempts to undermine encryption in the proposed Regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse[282].

3. The EU should **build public digital infrastructure** (such as internet connection) and **ensure its financial sustainability**, especially with regard to access to equipment for people facing material deprivation (e.g. homeless people and low-income households)[283].

4. The EU should **ban mass surveillance and facial recognition technologies** as they fundamentally undermine an enabling environment for democratic societies by threatening political pluralism and civil and political rights[284].

5.4.4. Copyright

1. The EU should reform the **Copyright Directive**[285] to allow exemptions for persons with disabilities to access e-books, films and music[286].

5.5. Digital Economy

The EU needs to develop an economy that is based on digital computing technologies, is fully respectful of the environment and benefits society as a whole.

5.5.1. Digital economy, digital finance and data

1. For a thriving digital economy, **digitalisation should be inclusive and participatory** so that nobody is left behind due to inaccessibility, unavailability, unaffordability of technologies for citizens, or due to a person's lack of connectivity or digital skills[287].

2. In this regard, **essential services provided by private actors**, like banking, **should be accessible offline** to ensure people who may be digitally excluded (including elderly people, people without the appropriate skills and people facing material deprivation) continue to enjoy access to these services.

3. Since more and more services are available online and data is stored and processed by private companies and public institutions, **strong safeguards for very sensitive data** (such as migration status, health records or receipts of welfare benefits) must be put in place for the European Single Digital Market for Data[288].

4. The EU should ensure **fair taxation of the digital economy across all Member States**[289].

5. The EU should also **introduce corporate tax rules** so that profits are registered and taxed based on the geographical location(s) where businesses significantly interact with users through digital channels[290].

5.5.2. Social welfare in the digital age

1. **Fair working conditions for online platform workers** must be ensured through an ambitious Directive on improving working conditions in platform work, as detailed in the "A socially just EU" chapter of this report.

2. EU institutions and Member States should **support digitally and socially excluded groups** with funds, resources and digital transition programmes. These should be specifically targeted at people left behind due to inaccessibility, unavailability, or unaffordability of technologies, or due to their lack of connectivity or digital skills[291].

3. **Welfare benefits** aimed at alleviating poverty or social exclusion, such as minimum income schemes, **should be accessible using online and offline channels**. Digital and social exclusion are often intertwined, therefore digital-by-default options to access welfare benefits may be an unjustified barrier.

5.5.3. Supporting green digital solutions

1. **Sustainability and energy efficiency have to be ensured at the level of the digital devices' production**, since the needed resources are still mined under socially and environmentally disastrous conditions. Furthermore, products should come with information on energy consumption in their production process. There must be a focus on durability and possibilities for repair and reuse[292].

2. Similar **sustainability considerations should accompany the provision of digital services and internet governance**, which is especially important given the popularity of streaming services and the considerable amount of energy going into the training and serving of AI systems.

3. The EU should ensure **comprehensive and transparent assessments** by conducting thorough studies that consider the end-to-end life cycles and supply chain emissions of ICT, with a focus on accurate estimates, interrogatability, and disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.

4. The EU should also **embrace digital sobriety principles**: prioritising sustainable practices within the ICT sector, such as promoting energy efficiency; minimising data storage (especially for what concerns videos); adopting responsible digital preservation techniques; encouraging best daily practices for reducing the use of energy; utilising renewable energy sources; and emphasising repair and reuse, especially concerning devices.

5. The EU should **set and implement science-based net-zero targets and constraints for the ICT sector**, enforced through incentives and compliance mechanisms. All this can be achieved by encouraging credible carbon pledges and ensuring that all companies within the ICT sector are held to similar standards.

5.5.4. Digital Industry 5.0[293] (e.g. Internet of Things and cloud computing) and digital business/companies

1. **Regulations in the EU have to be informative and precise** to provide a predictable and stable legal framework that enables innovation to take place[294].

2. **Regulations should aim at enabling European digital innovation** in order to be competitive on the global digital market, whilst also providing safeguards and enforcing penalties on companies which unlawfully distort competition or are in breach of the norms[295].

3. Dedicated funding opportunities for **open-source technology** and educational platforms must be ensured[296].

4. **Alliances** under the Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI)[297] and EU Digital Innovation Hubs[298] **for the sharing of knowledge and best practices should be diversified** to include more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from peripheral regions of the EU, and their outreach and communication need to be improved[299].

5. The EU should **establish a central pool of advisors** who can be requested by smaller companies to advise them on what can be improved (e.g. advocating open source, enabling knowledge sharing, sustainable practices)[300].

6. EU institutions and public bodies should avoid using taxpayers' money to unilaterally adopt and implement communication tools, early-stage technologies, and prototype platforms that do not **serve the general interest of European citizens**. Instead, they should facilitate a positive engagement with CSOs stakeholders and citizens in order to identify the positive effects that a particular digital product or service's adoption can have on society as a whole.

7. The EU should **recognise open source as a public good** and "maximise the benefit of open source supporting a competitive EU software and hardware industry, which in turn supports the twin environmental and digital transformation of the EU economy"[301].

6. Shielding the future of European society through human-centred security policies

WHERE WE STAND

As a consequence of the multiple crises that the EU has faced since 2008—the financial crisis, the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the consequences of climate change, and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since February 2022—the EU has been pushed to **enlarge its vision of security policies**. In particular, the European Commission (EC) has launched different policy and legislative initiatives tackling threats to security affecting European citizens in various aspects of their lives.

However, as outlined in the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe's report "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society"[302], security should not be reduced solely to militarisation and fighting external threats, leading to increased limitation of civil liberties. On the contrary, we advocate for the concept of **human security that ensures protection and respect for people's well-being, as well as individual and collective freedoms in line with fundamental rights**. This vision of security policies implies the need to engage in empowering European society at both EU institutions and Member States' levels to better face the upcoming challenges. This idea has partially emerged from the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), during which several proposals to build a secure and resilient societal environment were put forward.

Also, **external policies** have to be looked at through the prism of human security. Civil society organisations (CSOs) and scholars already stressed this in the context of the discussions on the EU Global Strategy[303]. Human security is about the security of individuals and communities and requires putting human rights at the centre. Other key principles are legitimate political authority, multilateralism and regional focus. In this context, we need to move from a "War on Terror" to **reinforcing, reshaping and connecting EU conflict prevention, crisis management, peacebuilding, and development policies**. This cannot be done without closely involving CSOs as the key link between individuals and communities. This includes the involvement of CSOs in EU, accession and partner countries and beyond in designing these policies and implementing tools. However, such an involvement is rarely undertaken in a comprehensive and systematic way.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has profoundly conditioned the EU's actions after February 2022, since shielding European citizens from the invasion's consequences has become a priority. One of the EU's main concerns is ensuring **energy security**, reducing dependence on Russian energy sources and promoting a shift towards renewable energy production and use. This has led to important steps forward in environmental policies as part of the "Fit for 55" package[304], which is set to deliver a less polluted European continent to future generations. However, the recognition of CSOs' role in the development and implementation of the above-mentioned policies has not improved, regrettably. Furthermore, CSOs' involvement in 'RebuildUkraine'[305] remains patchy.

Russian aggression against Ukraine also threatens the EU's digital space, which is now more exposed to foreign cyberthreats that may have a disruptive impact on European citizens. According to the CoFoE conclusions, **cyber security** must be reinforced by providing high levels of online protection and empowering European citizens so that they navigate safely on the internet. CSOs welcome the citizen-oriented approach to the digital space, but we also underline the need to develop **value-based cyber security policies** leading to an inclusive, peaceful and democratic European digital space. To achieve this ambitious goal, EU institutions and Member States should recognise the pivotal role that CSOs play in enhancing European society's digital skills and in developing an effective legal framework on cyber security.

The COVID-19 pandemic also entailed an important shift in priorities on the EU agenda, underlining the need to **build a more resilient, inclusive and safe European society** to better tackle future challenges. One of the key steps put forward in the CoFoE has been the delivery of **more comprehensive health policies**, in which stronger cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, including CSOs, is needed to achieve better **health security** for European citizens. In this key policy area, EU institutions and Member States are set to enforce the various proposals in the coming months, and CSOs should be actively involved in the policymaking process to deliver effective and inclusive policies.

In addition to health, there are other policies that were not addressed in the CoFoE proposals, despite being relevant for EU citizens' security. One of these is **disaster prevention and resilience**. Organised civil society is at the front line when it comes to facing "human-made" and natural disasters, playing a pivotal role in civil protection operations before, during and after disasters like floods and fires. EU institutions and Member States should incorporate a more structured involvement of CSOs in policymaking processes related to disaster prevention and resilience. CSOs and volunteers' inclusion in response and prevention strategies—from local level through to EU level—should be based on properly funded and organised cross-sector [collaborative measures](#)[306].

Applying the concept of human security also means addressing issues such as the **fight against terrorism** not in isolation, but rather linking it with education, social policies and employment, digitalisation, as well as international cooperation and humanitarian work. This approach would allow us to address the root causes of terrorism and also ensure that counterterrorism (CT) policies do not have unintended consequences on those—such as CSOs and their staff and volunteers—who are acting on the ground to promote democracy, social inclusion, the enjoyment of human rights or providing humanitarian relief. CT policies and legislation must enshrine the protection of human rights and the respect of the rule of law as key principles and **must not restrict civil society space**. To date, the transposition and implementation of [**Anti-Money Laundering** (AML) and Counter-Financing of Terrorism (CFT) legislation](#)[307] has led to operational and legal restrictions for CSOs. For instance, banks have blocked or closed accounts of CSOs; laws have been enacted to restrict foreign funding or to introduce burdensome governance and audit requirements; humanitarian

work has become more risky, human rights defenders have been prosecuted; and the right to protest has been limited. It is therefore critical to ensure risk-based, proportionate and fit for purpose AML/CFT policies that do not unduly restrict the millions of legitimate CSOs, associations, foundations and their beneficiaries[308].

The same holistic, human-centred approach should apply to discussions and actions on **threats to our democracy**. These threats should not only be seen as external and as the result of covert foreign interference; rather, measures to address threats to democracy from within the EU should be developed. Through a joint statement in May 2023, CSOs have expressed their concerns about the Directive on foreign covert interference[309] currently in preparation which is set to create a register of foreign-funded organisations. The upcoming proposal appears to mirror so-called 'foreign agents legislation' and has the potential to have the unintended consequence of emboldening repressive leaders and undercutting the EU's credibility to speak out about restrictive laws in non-EU countries[310]. The proposed legislation may also have **unintended consequences on CSOs' role as defenders of democracy and fundamental rights, fighting disinformation and corruption in the EU and beyond**, and it may lead to a restriction of the European civic space, thereby playing into authoritarian foreign powers' hands.

EU institutions and Member States should take further actions to deliver a **comprehensive human security**. These actions should enhance a more structured engagement of CSOs in order to achieve the necessary policy goals and to build a stronger, safer and more resilient European society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Security needs to be addressed as human security, encompassing a broad range of policy fields to fully protect and empower European society. To achieve this goal, EU institutions and Member States should fully recognise CSOs as relevant stakeholders in elaborating effective preventive strategies and enforcing human security policies due to CSOs' expertise, working methods and close links with citizens. Thus, the following steps are to be taken:

6.1. Strengthening the engagement of CSOs in the European Civil Protection Mechanism, and in prevention and response operations

Organised civil society, involving paid employees and volunteers, is at the front line of civil protection issues at the local level when facing natural and "human-made" disasters, as well as health threats like the COVID-19 pandemic that impact people's security.

To this end, the EC should consider the following proposals:

1. **Include CSO representatives in the [Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network's board](#)[311] and [Capacity Development Pillar working group](#)** for a more structured and all-encompassing engagement around disaster prevention and response operations.

2. **Ensure the application of Principle 18 of the** [EU Global Health Strategy](#)[312] on strengthening the engagement with key global health stakeholders (i.e. CSOs) to address health emergencies.

3. **Implement basic and primary health care EU-wide**.

4. **Regularly consult the Advisory Committee on public health emergencies** established by Article 24 of the [Regulation 2022/2371 on serious cross-border threats to health](#)[313] when dealing with public health issues. The Advisory Committee is composed, among others, of civil society representatives who can give effective support thanks to their closer links with local communities.

We also encourage Member States to:

5. Empower and better engage CSOs in disaster response by **including CSOs in the** [European Civil Protection Pool](#)[314].

6. **Engage with CSOs in planning community resilience and disaster response strategie**s. In particular, it should be ensured that CSOs which rely on volunteers are engaged in the strategies as key players and that their involvement is properly resourced.

6.2. Building a safe, inclusive and resilient European society

CSOs have a close and strong bond with European society and for this reason they need to be at the core of EU strategies to create an inclusive and safe societal environment, protecting citizens from discrimination and social exclusion.

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **End gender discrimination in European society** by fully implementing the 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy[315] and the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025[316].

2. **Tackle all forms of discrimination**, including multiple discrimination, by concluding negotiations in the Council on the EU Horizontal Non-Discrimination Directive[317].

3. **Adopt a more comprehensive approach to the rule of law, democracy and human rights** and make more consistent use of all tools available to address deficiencies in the rule of law. Also, **add civic space as a separate pillar in the EC's Rule of Law Reports**, specifically by creating an additional chapter that would systematically analyse the state of civic space in EU Member States and its connection to the rule of law context.

4. **Enhance social inclusion and integration in Member States** by promoting and empowering volunteering and other non-formal learning activities. Any existing barriers to participation in the aforementioned activities should be removed.

5. **Ensure food safety** by developing a legislative framework for sustainable food systems by the end of the current legislature. This should be done by considering the relevant work of the European Citizens' Food Waste Panel[318] and its recommendations, as well as by involving relevant national and local stakeholders (including CSOs) from the food production sectors in the consultation process.

We also urge EU institutions to:

6. **Defend and empower CSOs, their actions and claims** in the face of censorship or any other barriers to their activities that Member States have put or may put in place.

6.3. Protecting European citizens in the digital space

Building a safe digital space for European citizens needs to be among the EU's policy priorities in the upcoming months. CSOs support the development of citizen-oriented and value-based cyber security policies and underline the need to empower European society with proper digital skills to navigate the internet equally and safely.

Adding to the previous chapter's recommendations on cyber security, we call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Implement the Digital Education Action Plan**[319]—notably Priority 2, on enhancing digital skills and competences, and Action 10, on a proposal for a Council recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training—by the end of the current legislature.

2. Ensure the application of the **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles**[320] to protect internet users.

3. Resume the discussion on the **proposed Regulation on the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and access to justice in cross-border civil, commercial and criminal matters**[321] for better transnational coordination against cyberthreats of all nature, ensuring not to undermine citizens' freedoms.

4. Finalise the building of the **Joint Cyber Unit**[322] by the end of the current legislature, to better prevent, deter and respond to cyberattacks, bearing in mind not to restrict European civic space.

6.4. Increasing energy security through renewable energy production

Russia's invasion of Ukraine calls for swift and effective action to deliver energy security to European citizens, reduce dependence on Russian energy sources and promote a shift towards renewable energy production and use. CSOs have a dual role to play in this transition, both in developing strategies to reduce the EU's vulnerability to energy imports and in raising awareness across society.

To this end, we call on EU institutions and Member States, in close dialogue with CSOs, to:

1. **Speed up the implementation of the [REPowerEU Plan](#)[323]** with an inclusive approach that leaves no one behind in order to reduce the EU's dependence on foreign actors in the energy sector.

2. **Adopt the [Renewable energy Directive 2018/2001/EU](#)[324] as soon as possible**—well before the end of 2023—to provide legal clarity and put EU countries on track to meet their final energy consumption needs with a higher share of renewable energy.

3. Rapidly conclude negotiations on an ambitious [Energy Performance of Buildings Directive](#)[325] to **decarbonise EU heating and cooling**, as well as on the [Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulation](#)[326], taking into account the principle of [territorial cohesion](#)[327] across the EU and the importance of prioritising direct electrification of land transport.

4. **Establish a public energy saving monitoring task force** to track energy savings and consumption reduction measures across the EU. Promote the dissemination of information and best practices on energy savings in line with the [Council recommendation to stimulate learning for the green transition and sustainable development](#)[328].

6.5. Combatting internal and external threats while reinforcing civic space in the EU

The war at the EU's doorstep has strengthened the push for a further securitisation of the continent, and for putting in place measures to counter internal and external threats. Among these, CT and AML policies and measures to combat foreign interference in the EU are being discussed. CSOs are carefully following this process and raising their concerns about these initiatives' potential negative impact on the European civic space.

We urge EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Implement the [Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU](#)[329]**, all the while recognising CSOs' role as relevant stakeholders in the "Anticipate, Prevent, Protect and Respond" approach and ensuring that counterterrorism measures will not result in a general undermining of European citizens' freedoms and CSOs' capabilities.

2. **Address CSOs' concerns on the [proposed Directive on foreign interference](#)[330]**, and develop measures on covert foreign interference that do not undermine CSOs' crucial role regarding European democracy and do not undermine the EU's role in promoting human rights and democracy globally.

3. **Clarify the definition of "beneficial ownership" in the [new EU AML/CFT Package](#)[331]** to ensure that for public-benefit foundations and associations, the beneficial owner is the one owning, having rights over the assets or controlling the organisation. This would get rid of unnecessary administrative burdens for CSOs that may hinder their actions[332].

4. Develop and fully implement a **risk-based and proportionate approach to CT and AML policies**—with a multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue that involves CSOs, policymakers and banks—to avoid excessive restrictions that may undermine CSOs' initiatives and the respect of fundamental rights[333], notably the ones enshrined in Articles 7 and 8 of the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU](#)[334].

We also call on the EC to:

5. Watch over the implementation of the new EU AML/CFT Package in national legislations to **avoid misapplications that may result in overly restrictive measures for CSOs**, thereby hindering their engagement in and for European society.

6.6. Enshrining peace, democracy and fundamental freedoms in the EU's Global Strategy

Human security has to be at the core of EU external policies to achieve high levels of protection of individuals and communities' fundamental rights and to grant long-lasting peace. CSOs play a pivotal role in developing and implementing a human security approach and they should be involved in a systematic way in all policymaking steps.

We call on EU institutions and Member States to:

1. **Commit to conflict prevention and active diplomacy to end armed conflicts**, including by redirecting funding allocated to militarisation to better support stronger political, diplomatic and developmental action to drive human security, climate transition and social and climate justice across the globe[335].

2. **Make greater use of the <u>EU global human rights sanctions regime</u>**[336] in order to ensure accountability and prevent impunity.

3. Work towards **making the EU a nuclear weapons-free zone** through the implementation of the <u>Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons</u>[337].

4. **Establish common European rules on controlling the production and sale of conventional arms**, to prevent arms exports to countries at war, or which violate human rights, or in which civil society is not allowed to freely operate[338].

5. **Shift towards a <u>bottom-up approach</u>**[339] in conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding policies and operations, in order to have a community-oriented perspective and, thus, better respond to the local security demands.

6. Fully develop an **integrated approach to conflict and crises**, as part of the EU Global Strategy, merging crisis management with a long-lasting peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development of communities affected by conflicts, all of which should involve a broader and more structured involvement of CSOs and regional and local actors.

7. Include **community resilience as a pillar of the EU's external action**, <u>insisting on the commitment of the EU in building resilient societies by reinforcing democratic mechanisms, developing accountable and institutions and reinforcing the civic space</u>[340].

8. **Work closely together with CSOs to design policies for reconstruction and reconciliation** in countries affected by conflicts, including for Ukraine's reconstruction.

List of contributing and consulted organisations

The independent European networks of civil society organisations (CSOs) listed below contributed to parts of this report. This does not necessarily represent a full endorsement of all of the report's content. The organisations listed further down under "Consulted organisations" were consulted but did not contribute to the report's writing.

Contributing civil society organisations (CSOs):

European Center for
Not-for-Profit Law

ecas
European Citizen Action Service

EUROPEAN
CIVIC
FORUM

EDDA
European Digital Development Alliance

EDRi
EUROPEAN DIGITAL RIGHTS

EUROPEAN
DISABILITY
FORUM

EEB
European
Environmental
Bureau

EFF
European
Future
Forum

ENAR

ECOLISE
EUROPEAN NETWORK
FOR COMMUNITY-LED
INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE
CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

EUROPEAN
PARTNERSHIP FOR
DEMOCRACY

ESU
EUROPEAN
STUDENTS'
UNION

european youth forum

EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS

DROITS EUROMED RIGHTS

EUROPA FESTIVAL

EUROPA NOSTRA 60 YEARS

FEANTSA

FOND

German NGO Forum on Environment and Development

LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM
EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

Michael Culture Association

NETWORKNGO FOR INCLUSIVE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Philea
Philanthropy Europe Association

social platform

solidar

solidar FOUNDATION

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL EU

TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

Union of European Federalists
Union Europäischer Föderalisten
Union des Fédéralistes Européens

volonteurope

YOUNG EUROPEAN FEDERALISTS

Consulted civil society organisations (CSOs):

94

DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

EUROPEAN
ALTERNATIVES

CITIZENS
TAKE OVER
EUROPE

Notes

1. Strengthening democracy, fundamental rights and civic space in the EU and the world

1. European Union, "Conference on the Future of Europe", https://futureu.europa.eu/en/.

2. European Commission, "European Democracy Action Plan", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan_en.

3. European Commission, "Rule of law mechanism", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism_en.

4. European Commission, "Defence of Democracy – Communication", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13730-Defending-European-democracy-Communication_en.

5. European Civic Forum, "Response to the European Commission's consultation on the Defence of Democracy Package", Brussels, April 2023, https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ECF-Response-to-European-Commission-Consultation-on-the-Defence-of-Democracy-Package.pdf.

6. Edelman, "2023 Edelman Trust Barometer – Global Report", 2023, https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2023-03/2023%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report%20FINAL.pdf.
    Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Trust in government", https://www.oecd.org/governance/trust-in-government/.

7. Eurobarometer, "Standard Eurobarometer 98 - Winter 2022-2023", https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2872.

8. European Civic Forum, "Civic Space Report 2023 – Fighting for democratic empowerment and resilience", Brussels, March 2023, https://civic-forum.eu/

wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Civic-Space-Report-2023-European-Civic-Forum.pdf.

Civil Liberties Union for Europe, "Liberties – Rule of Law Report 2023", Berlin, 2023, https://dq4n3btxmr8c9.cloudfront.net/files/-3lkvi/Liberties_Rule_of_Law_Report_2023_EU.pdf.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Protecting civic space in the EU (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-protecting-civic-space-key-findings_en.pdf.

9.   EnTrust Project, "European Policy Brief, Issue 3 – The role of democratic social movements in trust & distrust building", August 2022, https://entrust-project.eu/files/2022/09/EnTrust-Policy-Brief-Issue-III.pdf.

10. Conference on the Future of Europe, "Report on the final outcome", Brussels, May 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf.

11. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Conference on the Future of Europe – Putting vision into concrete action" (COM/2022/404), Brussels, 17 June 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0404.

12. European Commission, "European Citizens' Panels", Brussels, https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

13. Conference on the Future of Europe, "Report on the final outcome", Brussels, May 2022, Annex 1, p. 32, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf.

14. European Parliament, "Proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the European Electoral Act", Brussels, 20 June 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-constitutional-affairs-afco/file-reform-of-the-electoral-law-of-the-european-union.

15. European Parliament, "Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe", Brussels, 20 June 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-new-push-for-european-democracy/file-future-of-europe.

16. Conference on the Future of Europe, "Report on the final outcome", p. 80, Brussels, May 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf.

17. Conference on the Future of Europe, "Report on the final outcome", p. 83, Brussels, May 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf.

18. European Civic Forum, "Response to the European Commission's consultation on the Defence of Democracy Package", Brussels, April 2023, https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ECF-Response-to-European-Commission-Consultation-on-the-Defence-of-Democracy-Package.pdf.

19. European Commission, "Transparency of covert interference by third countries", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13744-Transparency-of-covert-interference-by-third-countries_en.

20. Civil Society Europe, "EU foreign interference law: Is civil society at risk?", Brussels, May 2023, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/eu-foreign-interference-law-is-civil-society-at-risk/.

21. Civil Society Europe, "Defence of Democracy Package: Civil society is key", Brussels, 27 October 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/defense-of-democracy-package-civil-society-is-key/.

22. Civil Society Europe, "EU foreign interference law: Is civil society at risk?", Brussels, May 2023, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/eu-foreign-interference-law-is-civil-society-at-risk/.

23. Civil Society Europe, "EU foreign interference law: Is civil society at risk?", Brussels, May 2023, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/eu-foreign-interference-law-is-civil-society-at-risk/.
For more information: European Civic Forum, "Response to the European Commission's consultation on the Defence of Democracy Package", Brussels,

April 2023, https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ECF-Response-to-European-Commission-Consultation-on-the-Defence-of-Democracy-Package.pdf.

24. European Commission, "Rule of law mechanism", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism_en.

25. Coalition Against SLAPPs In Europe, "Governments' agreed stance on EU anti-SLAPP directive – a disappointing failure to support the adoption of robust safeguards for public watchdogs", 12 June 2023, https://www.the-case.eu/latest/governments-agreed-stance-on-eu-anti-slapp-directive-a-disappointing-failure-to-support-the-adoption-of-robust-safeguards-for-public-watchdogs/.

26. Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union of 9 May 2008, art. 11, 2008 O.J. (C 115/13), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0013:0045:en:PDF.

27. Civil Society Europe, "Civil dialogue in the EU – What's next? Lessons learnt from the Conference on the Future of Europe and suggestions to strengthen future civil dialogue", Brussels, 12 December 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/civil-dialogue-in-the-eu-whats-next/.

28. European Parliament, "European Parliament resolution of 9 June 2022 on the call for a Convention for the revision of the Treaties" (2022/2705(RSP)), Strasbourg, 9 June 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0244_EN.html.

29. Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union of 9 May 2008, art. 7, 2008 O.J. (C 115/13), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0013:0045:en:PDF.

30. Civil Society Europe, "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society", 28 June 2022, p. 16, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSOCoFoE-Recommendations.pdf.

31. European Parliament, "Rules of procedure of the European Parliament", Brussels, May 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-05-08-TOC_EN.html.

32. European Parliament, "Multiannual financial framework", Brussels, April 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/29/multiannual-financial-framework.

33. European Parliamentary Reasearch Serivce, "Spitzenkandidaten or the lead candidate process: Ways to Europeanise elections to the European Parliament", 12 June 2023, https://epthinktank.eu/2023/06/12/spitzenkandidaten-or-the-lead-candidate-process-ways-to-europeanise-elections-to-the-european-parliament/.

34. See source 30, p. 14.

35. See source 30, p. 17.

36. See source 30, p. 17.

37. European Commission, "Why a transparency register?", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/staticPage/displayStaticPage.do?locale=en&reference=WHY_TRANSPARENCY_REGISTER.

38. European Commission, "European Citizens' Initiative", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/get-involved/european-citizens-initiative_en.

39. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01), Nice, 7 December 2000, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf.

40. European Confederation of NGOs working on Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, "Guide to policy coherence for sustainable development", 13 October 2020, https://concordeurope.org/resource/a-guide-to-pcsd/.

41. See source 30, p. 84.

42. See source 30, p. 84.

43. European Commission, "Sustainable Development Goals", Brussels, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/sustainable-development-goals_en.

44. European Confederation of NGOs working on Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, "Promotion of civic space and enabling environment in EU external action", 13 March 2018, https://concordeurope.org/2018/03/13/civic-space-enabling-environment-paper/.

45. European Confederation of NGOs working on Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, "Promotion of civic space and enabling environment in EU external action", 13 March 2018, https://concordeurope.org/2018/03/13/civic-space-enabling-environment-paper/.

46. European External Action Service, "Ensuring protection – European Union guidelines on Human RIghts Defenders", https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_guidelines_hrd_en.pdf.

47. Front Line Defenders, "Toolkit for the European Union on Women Human Rights Defenders", 2020, https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/whrd_toolkit_en.pdf.

    European Parliament, "Report on the EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders", 17 February 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0034_EN.html.

48. European Commission, "Just and sustainable economy: Commission lays down rules for companies to respect human rights and environment in global value chains", Brussels, 23 February 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1145.

49. Front Line Defenders, "Attacks against Human Rights Defenders engaged with European companies and investors, 1 March 2023, https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/csdd24_04.pdf.

50. Front Line Defenders, "Global Analysis 2022", 4 April 2023, https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1535_fld_ga23_web.pdf.

51. See source 30, p. 83.

52. Council of the European Union, "EU adopts a global human rights sanctions regime", Brussels, 7 December 2020, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/07/eu-adopts-a-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime/.

53. See source 30, p. 83.

54. United Nations, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", 1 July 1968, https://treaties.unoda.org/t/npt.

55. See source 30, p. 84.

56. See source 30, p. 84.

2. Enhancing freedom of movement and solidarity for a more inclusive European society

57. European Commission, "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State (recast)" (COM/2022/655), Brussels, 27 April 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A655%3AFIN&qid=1651221925581.

58. European Commission, "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents (recast)" (COM/2022/650), Brussels, 27 April 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A650%3AFIN&qid=1651218479366.

59. Council of the European Union, "Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof", 20 July 2001, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001L0055&qid=1648223587338.

60. European Commission, "What is the new Pact on Migration and Asylum of the EU?", Brussels, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en.

61. European Council on Refugees and Exiles, "Editorial: Migration Pact agreement point by point", Brussels, 9 June 2023, https://ecre.org/editorial-migration-pact-agreement-point-by-point/.

62. European Commission, "What is the new Pact on Migration and Asylum of the EU?", Brussels, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en.

63. European Union, "European Year of Skills", https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index_en.

64. European Commission, "Erasmus+", Brussels, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/.

65. European Students' Union, "Functional Overview Tuition Fees", Brussels, 3 March 2020, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED607320.pdf.

66. European Commission, "EU Talent Pool Pilot", Brussels, https://eures.ec.europa.eu/eu-talent-pool-pilot_en.

67. European Commission, "Talent partnerships", Brussels, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/talent-partnerships_en.

68. Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC, Official Journal of the European Communities L 158/77, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32004L0038.

69. European Commission, "EU disability card", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1139.

70. European Commission, "Union of equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030", Brussels, 3 March 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes.

71. Civil Society Europe, "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society", 28 June 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSOCoFoE-Recommendations.pdf.

72. European Commission, "Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin Regulation)", Brussels, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application-dublin-regulation_en.

73. European Commission, "Common European Asylum System", Brussels, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en.

74. See source 71, p. 80.

75. European Commission, "European Education Area", Brussels, https://education.ec.europa.eu/.

76. See source 71, p. 80.

77. European Commission, "The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en.

78. See source 71, p. 81.

79. See source 71, p. 81.

80. Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC, Official Journal of the European Communities L 158/77, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32004L0038.

81. See source 71, p. 28.

82. See source 71, p. 30.

83. European Commission, "EU disability card", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1139.

84. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), "Global Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education", Paris, 25 November 2019, https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education?hub=66535.

85. Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (recast), Official Journal of the European Union L 132/21, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/801/oj.

3. A socially just EU

86. European Commission, "The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en.

87. European Commission, "The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1607&langId=en.

88. European Council, "The Porto declaration", Porto, 8 May 2021, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/08/the-porto-declaration/.

89. European Commission, "State of the Union 2022", Brussels, 14 September 2022, https://state-of-the-union.ec.europa.eu/state-union-2022_en.

90. Civil Society Europe, "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society", 28 June 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSOCoFoE-Recommendations.pdf.

91. Lifelong Learning Platform, "Status quo or a new age for social investment in Europe?", Brussels, February 2023, https://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Reaction-on-ASGSEC-Communication-on-Fiscal-Framework.

[pdf](#).

92. European Commission, "Economic governance review", Brussels, [https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-and-fiscal-governance/economic-governance-review_en](#).

93. European Commission, "The European Semester", Brussels, [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/european-semester_en](#).

94. European Commission, "Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure", Brussels, [https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-and-fiscal-governance/macroeconomic-imbalance-procedure_en](#).

95. European Commission, "European Education Area", Brussels, [https://education.ec.europa.eu/](#).

96. European Commission, "Commision calls for massive boost in enabling digital education and providing digital skills", Strasbourg, 18 April 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_2246](#).

97. Council of the European Union, "Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability - Adoption" (2021/0402(NLE)), Brussels, 25 May 2022, [https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf](#).

98. European Parliament, "European Parliament Forum for Academic Freedom", Brussels, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/en/ep-academic-freedom](#).

99. European Union, "European Year of Youth 2022", [https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth_en](#).

100. European Union, "European Year of Skills", [https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index_en](#).

101. European Commission, "Virtual exchanges in higher education and youth", Brussels, [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/virtual-exchanges](#).

102. 102. European Commission, "Education and Training Monitor 2020 – 2.7 Learning mobility", Brussels, https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2020/en/chapters/chapter2.html#ch2-7.

103. Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union L 275/33, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022L2041#PP2Contents.

104. Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (2021/0050(COD)), Brussels, 11 April 2023, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/PE-81-2022-INIT/en/pdf.

105. European Commission, "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving working conditions in platform work" (COM/2021/762), Brussels, 9 December 2021, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A762%3AFIN.

106. European Commission, "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee – Report on the implementation by Member States of Directive 2003/88/EC concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time" (COM/2023/72), Brussels, 15 March 2023, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A72%3AFIN&qid=1678893509163.

107. European Commission, "Have your say", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/.

108. Council of the European Union, "Proposal for a Council recommendation on strengthening social dialogue in the European Union" (2023/0012(NLE)), Brussels, 13 June 2023, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10542-2023-INIT/en/pdf.

109. European Commission, "Report of the High-Level Group on the future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU", Brussels, 7 February 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=2057&furtherEvents=yes.

110. Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (2023/C 41/01), Official Journal of the European Union C 41/1, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0203%2801%29.

111. European Parliament, "Motion for a resolution on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion" (2022/2840(RSP)), Brussels, 8 February 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2023-0099_EN.html.

112. European Commission, "The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan", Brussels, https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/.

113. European Commission, "European Child Guarantee", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en.

114. European Commission, "European Platform on Combating Homelessness", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1550&langId=en.

115. European Commission, "A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers", Brussels, 7 September 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10382#navItem-1.

116. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025" (COM/2020/565), Brussels, 18 September 2020, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf.

117. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation" (COM/2020/620), Brussels, 7 October 2020, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030_0.pdf.

118. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social

Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025" (COM/2020/698), Brussels, 12 November 2020, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0698.

119. European Commission, "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence" (COM/2022/105), Strasbourg, 8 March 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0105.

120. Council of Europe, "Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence", Istanbul, Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210, 11 May 2011, https://rm.coe.int/168008482e.

121. European Parliament, "European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2023 on combating discrimination in the EU – the long-awaited horizontal anti-discrimination directive" (2023/2582(RSP)), Strasbourg, 19 April 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0111_EN.html.

122. 122 European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025" (COM/2020/152), Brussels, 5 March 2020, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152.

123. European Youth Forum, "EU Youth Test", Brussels, https://www.youthforum.org/topics/eu-youth-test.

124. European Commission, "Better Regulation: why and how", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation_en.

125. Council of the European Union, "European Semester 2023 – 2. A Social Convergence Framework for possible integration in the European Semester" (9608/23), Brussels, 26 May 2023, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9608-2023-INIT/en/pdf.

126. See source 90, p. 50.

127. 127 See source 90, p. 50.

128. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01), Nice, 7 December 2000, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf.

129. See source 90, p. 50.

130. European Commission, "The Recovery and Resilience Facility", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

131. See source 90, p. 39.

132. European Commission, "Erasmus+ 2021-27 interim evaluation & Erasmus+ 2014-20 final evaluation", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13454-Erasmus%2B-2021-27-interim-evaluation-Erasmus%2B-2014-20-final-evaluation_en.

133. See source 90, p. 39.

134. See source 90, p. 39.

135. European Commission, "Erasmus+ Programme Guide", Brussels, 24 November 2021, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-11/2022-erasmusplus-programme-guide.pdf.

136. See source 90, p. 44.

137. European Women's Lobby, "Purple Pact: A feminist approach to the economy", Brussels, 2019, https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/purplepact_publication_web.pdf.

138. Council of the European Union, "Council conclusions on telework" (9747/21), Brussels, 15 June 2021, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9747-2021-INIT/en/pdf.

139. European Parliament, "Report with recommendations to the Commission on

the right to disconnect" (2019/2181(INL)), Brussels, 4 December 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0246_EN.html.

140. See source 90, p. 44.

141. European Trade Union Confederation, SOLIDAR, "Open letter for an effective Directive on improving working conditions in platform work", Brussels, 25 October 2022, https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/629/original/20221128_OpenLetter_FairPlatformWork.pdf.

142. European Commission, "The reinforced Youth Guarantee", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en.

143. European Commission, "Commission proposals to improve the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms", Brussels, 9 December 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6605.

144. Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (2021/0050(COD)), Brussels, 11 April 2023, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/PE-81-2022-INIT/en/pdf.

145. Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (2023/C 41/01), Official Journal of the European Union C 41/1, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0203%2801%29.

146. Social Platform, "An EU Framework Directive on adequate minimum income", Brussels, September 2020, https://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EUDF-Position-Paper-.pdf.

147. European Commission, "A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers", Brussels, 7 September 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10382#navItem-1.

4. Fighting against climate change's impacts and addressing (global) environmental challenges

148. Climate Action Network Europe, "Factsheet: science shows 65% emission reduction by 2030 is feasible and pays off", 9 August 2020, https://caneurope.org/factsheet-science-shows-65-emission-reduction-by-2030-is-feasible-and-pays-off/.

149. Civil Society Europe, "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society", 28 June 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSOCoFoE-Recommendations.pdf.

150. European Commission, "Nature restoration law", Brussels, https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en.

151. European Commission, "Soil health", Brussels, https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/soil-and-land/soil-health_en.

152. European Commission, "Critical Raw Materials: ensuring secure and sustainable supply chains for EU's green and digital future", Brussels, 16 March 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1661.

153. European Environmental Bureau, "Weber fails to derail EU Green Deal, but Parliament agrees to a weakened Nature Restoration Law", Brussels, 12 July 2023, https://eeb.org/weber-fails-to-derail-eu-green-deal-but-parliament-agrees-to-a-weakened-nature-restoration-law/.

154. Wetlands International-European Association, "EU waters suffering from lack of effective action by Member States", 26 February 2019, https://europe.wetlands.org/news/eu-waters-suffering-lack-effective-action-member-states/#_ftn1.

155. European Environment Agency, "Health impacts of air pollution in Europe, 2022", 24 November 2022, https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2022/health-impacts-of-air-pollution.

156. See source 149, p. 52.

157. European Chemicals Agency, "EU chemicals legislation finder", https://echa.europa.eu/legislation-finder.

158. Consolidated text: Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency, amending Directive 1999/45/EC and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 793/93 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1488/94 as well as Council Directive 76/769/EEC and Commission Directives 91/155/EEC, 93/67/EEC, 93/105/EC and 2000/21/EC, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02006R1907-20221217.

159. United Nations Environment Programme, "Historic day in the campaign to beat plastic pollution: Nations commit to develop a legally binding agreement", Nairobi, 2 March 2022, https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/historic-day-campaign-beat-plastic-pollution-nations-commit-develop.

160. See source 149, p. 52.

161. European Commission, "Food waste – reduction targets", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13223-Food-waste-reduction-targets_en.

162. Global Change Data Lab, "Our World in Data – Who has contributed most to global CO2 emissions?", 1 October 2019, https://ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2.

163. Eurostat – Statistics Explained, "Oil and petroleum products – a statistical overview", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Oil_and_petroleum_products_-_a_statistical_overview&oldid=315177.

164. See source 149, p. 52-53.

165. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "What is the triple planetary crisis?", 13 April 2022, https://unfccc.int/blog/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis.

166. See source 149, p. 60.

167. The Council, "European Green Deal", Brussels, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/.

168. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Sixth assessment report – Working group III: Mitigation of climate change – Press release", 4 April 2022, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/resources/press/press-release/.

169. See source 149, p. 55.

170. See source 149, p. 56.

171. See source 149, p. 56.

172. Caroline Paunov and Sandra Planes-Satorra, "Engaging citizens in innovation policy – Why, when and how?", OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers, No. 149, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1787/ba068fa6-en.

173. European Commission, "The Aarhus Convention and the EU", Brussels, https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/aarhus_en.

174. See source 149, p. 56.

175. European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Lawyers for Nature, "Report from the Europe regional consultation on climate change and civic space with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément N. Voule", The Hague, 27 August 2021, https://ecnl.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Report%20from%20Climate%20Consultation%20with%20UNSR%20-%20Europe.pdf.

176. See source 149, p. 56-57.

177. See source 149, p. 57.

178. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Conference of the

Parties (COP)", https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop.

179. See source 149, p. 57.

180. European Network Against Racism, "The climate crisis is a (neo)colonial capitalist crisis: Experiences, responses and steps towards decolonising climate action", Brussels, 2021, https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022_report-climatechangeandrace_final.pdf.

181. European Environment Agency, "Environmental inequalities", Brussels, 28 April 2023, https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/environmental-inequalities.

182. Carmen Anthonj, Karen E. Setty, Fatine Ezbakhe, Musa Manga, Christoph Hoeser, "A systematic review of water, sanitation and hygiene among Roma communities in Europe: Situation analysis, cultural context, and obstacles to improvement", International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health, Volume 226, May 2020, 113506, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijheh.2020.113506.

183. European Environmental Bureau, Women Engage for a Common Future, "Why the European Green Deal needs ecofeminism – Moving from gender-blind to gender-transformative policies", 16 July 2021, https://eeb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Report-16-1.pdf.

184. European Parliament, "Report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the environment through criminal law and replacing Directive 2008/99/EC" (A9-0087/2023), Strasbourg, 28 March 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0087_EN.html.

185. See source 149, p. 58-59.

186. European Environmental Bureau, "Decoupling debunked – Evidence and arguments against green growth as a sole strategy for sustainability", Brussels, 8 July 2019, https://eeb.org/library/decoupling-debunked/.

187. See source 149, p. 57.

188. EU Wellbeing Coalition (2023), "Discussion Paper on EU Wellbeing Economy", June 2023, https://ieep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Discussion-Paper-on-EU-Wellbeing-Economy.pdf.

189. Nick Fitzpatrick, Timothée Parrique, Inês Cosme, "Exploring degrowth policy proposals: A systematic mapping with thematic synthesis", Journal of Cleaner Production, Volume 365, 10 September 2022, 132764, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.132764.

190. See source 149, p. 57-58.

191. European Commission, "Just and sustainable economy: Commission lays down rules for companies to respect human rights and environment in global value chains", Brussels, 23 February 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1145.

192. See source 149, p. 60.

193. Communities for Future, "Advocacy & Policy Campaign", https://communitiesforfuture.org/advocacy-policy-campaign/.

194. See source 149.

195. United Nations Economic and Social Council, "Statement submitted by European Women's Lobby, a non-governmental organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council", December 2021, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3950433?ln=en.

196. Eurogroup for Animals, "European Citizens' Initiative: "Save Cruelty Free Cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without animal testing", Brussels, 2022, https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/campaigns/eci-save-cruelty-free-cosmetics.

197. See source 149, p. 62.

198. See source 149, p. 62-63.

199. See source 149, p. 63.

200. European Women's Lobby, "Purple Economy – The case for placing the economics of care at the heart of sustainable development", Brussels, 25 January 2018, https://www.womenlobby.org/Purple-Economy-The-case-for-placing-the-economics-of-care-at-the-heart-of.

201. European Commission, "Social Climate Fund", Brussels, https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/european-green-deal/delivering-european-green-deal/social-climate-fund_en.

202. The Council, "Fit for 55", Brussels, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/fit-for-55-the-eu-plan-for-a-green-transition/.

203. See source 149, p. 61.

204. Astghik Mavisakalyan, Yashar Tarverdi, "Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make difference?", European Journal of Political Economy, Volume 56, January 2019, Pages 151-164, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2018.08.001.

205. See source 149, p. 61.

206. See source 149, p. 63.

207. Council of the European Union, "Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability – Adoption" (2022/0004(NLE)), Brussels, 25 May 2022, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9242-2022-INIT/en/pdf.

208. European Commission, "GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework", Brussels, https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en.

209. European Commission, "Education for Climate Coalition", Brussels, https://www.scienceiswonderful.eu/en/other-helpful-resources/education-for-climate-coalition.

5. A digital transformation that leaves no one behind in the EU

210. Civil Society Europe, "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society", 28 June 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSOCoFoE-Recommendations.pdf.

211. European Commission, "The Digital Markets Act: ensuring fair and open digital markets", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-markets-act-ensuring-fair-and-open-digital-markets_en.

212. European Commission, "The Digital Services Act package", Brussels, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package.

213. European Commission, "Audiovisual and Media Services", Brussels, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/audiovisual-and-media-service.

214. European Parliament, "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on markets in crypto-assets", Brussels, before October 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-europe-fit-for-the-digital-age/file-crypto-assets-1.

215. European Commission, "Commission proposals to improve the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms", Brussels, 9 December 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6605.

216. European Commission, "European Citizens' Initiative", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/get-involved/european-citizens-initiative_en.

217. See source 210, p. 64.

218. See source 210, p. 64.

219. European Commission, "Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030, Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/

priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

220. See source 210, p. 64-65.

221. See source 210, p. 65.

222. European Commission, "Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council laying down harmonised rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Acte) and amending certain Union legislative acts, Brussels", 24 April 2021, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021PC0206.

223. See source 210, p. 65.

224. See source 210, p. 65.

225. See source 210, p. 67.

226. See source 210, p. 67.

227. See source 210, p. 67.

228. See source 210, p. 67.

229. See source 210, p. 66

230. See source 210, p. 66.

231. Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/2102/oj.

232. See source 210, p. 66.

233. See source 210, p. 66.

234. See source 210, p. 66.

235. See source 210, p. 67.

236. European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20230302STO76818/european-digital-identity-easy-online-access-to-key-services.
https://publiccode.eu/en/.

237. European Commission, Open source software strategy, https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/informatics/open-source-software-strategy_en.

238. See source 210, p. 67.

239. See source 210, p. 68.

240. See source 210, p. 68.

241. See source 210, p. 68.

242. See source 210, p. 68.

243. See source 210, p. 68.

244. See source 210, p. 68-69.

245. See source 210, p. 69.

246. See source 210, p. 69.

247. European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/lifelonglearning/.
See source 210, p. 69.

248. See source 210, p. 69.

249. See source 210, p. 69.

250. See source 210, p. 69.

251. See source 210, p. 70.

252. See source 210, p. 70.

253. See source 210, p. 70.

254. See source 210, p. 70.

255. JEF Europe, https://jef.eu/resolution/calling-for-an-ethical-and-efficient-eu-policy-framework-on-artificial-intelligence/.

256. JEF Europe, https://jef.eu/resolution/calling-for-an-ethical-and-efficient-eu-policy-framework-on-artificial-intelligence/

257. JEF Europe, https://jef.eu/resolution/calling-for-an-ethical-and-efficient-eu-policy-framework-on-artificial-intelligence/.

258. JEF Europe, https://jef.eu/resolution/calling-for-an-ethical-and-efficient-eu-policy-framework-on-artificial-intelligence/.

259. See source 210, p. 71.

260. See source 210, p. 71.

261. See source 210, p. 71.

262. European Commission, "Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on harmonised rules on fair access to and use of data (Data Act)", Brussels, 23 February 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A68%3AFIN.

263. See source 210, p. 72.

264. See source 210, p. 72.

265. European Commission, Global Gateway, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en.

266. European Commission, Digital for Development (D4D) Hub, https://d4dhub.eu/.

267. Forus, https://www.forus-international.org/en/pdf-detail/77151-towards-an-enabling-digital-environment-for-civil-society-full-report.

268. Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj.

269. European Commission, "The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation", Brussels, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/code-practice-disinformation.

270. Directive 2002/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2002 concerning the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector (Directive on privacy and electronic communications), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32002L0058.

271. European Commission, "Proposal for an ePrivacy Regulation", Brussels, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/eprivacy-regulation.

272. See source 210, p. 73.

273. See source 210, p. 73.

274. See source 210, p. 73.

275. 'Zero-rating' occurs when an internet service provider (ISP) applies a price of zero to the data traffic associated with a particular application or class of

applications (and the data does not count towards any data cap in place on the internet access service). For more information: Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), "What is zero-rating?", https://berec.europa.eu/eng/netneutrality/zero_rating/.

276. See source 210, p. 73.

277. See source 210, p. 73.

278. See source 210, p. 73.

279. Supporting …, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/supporting-telecommunications-networks-and-digital-service-infrastructures-across-europe.html.

280. See source 210, p. 74.

281. See source 210, p. 74.

282. Proposal …, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/HIS/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0209.

283. See source 210, p. 74.

284. See source 210, p. 74.

285. DIRECTIVE (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market and amending Directives 96/9/EC and 2001/29/EC, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32019L0790&qid=1688482337070.

286. See source 210, p. 74.

287. See source 210, p. 75.

288. See source 210, p. 75.

289. See source 210, p. 75.

290. See source 210, p. 75.

291. See source 210, p. 76.

292. See source 210, p. 76.

293. European Commission, Digital Industry 5.0, https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/industry-50_en.

294. See source 210, p. 76.

295. See source 210, p. 76.

296. See source 210, p. 76.

297. European Commission, "Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI)", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/competition-policy/state-aid/legislation/modernisation/ipcei_en.

298. European Digital Innovation Hubs, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/edihs.

299. See source 210, p. 76.

300. See source 210, p. 76.

301. Study about the impact of …, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/study-about-impact-open-source-software-and-hardware-technological-independence-competitiveness-and.

6. Shielding the future of European society through human-centred security policies

302. Civil Society Europe, "The future of Europe is ours: A view from civil society", 28 June 2022, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSOCoFoE-Recommendations.pdf.

303. European Union External Action, "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", Brussels, 15 December 2019, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en.

304. The Council, "Fit for 55", Brussels, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/fit-for-55-the-eu-plan-for-a-green-transition/.

305. European Commission, "Recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine", Brussels, https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/eu-assistance-ukraine/recovery-and-reconstruction-ukraine_en.

306. Centre for European Volunteering, "Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030", Brussels, https://www.europeanvolunteercentre.org/bev2030.

307. The Council, "Fight against money laundering and terrorist financing", Brussels, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/fight-against-terrorist-financing/.

308. Global Non-Profit Organisation Coalition on Financial Action Task Force, https://fatfplatform.org/.

309. European Commission, "Transparency of covert interference by third countries", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13744-Transparency-of-covert-interference-by-third-countries_en.

310. Civil Society Europe, "EU foreign interference law: Is civil society at risk?", Brussels, May 2023, https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/eu-foreign-interference-law-is-civil-society-at-risk/.

311. European Union, "Knowledge Network Governance", Brussels, https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/knowledge-network-governance.

312. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions – EU Global Health Strategy", Brussels, 30 November 2022, https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-03/international_ghs-report-2022_en.pdf.

313. Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU, Official Journal of the European Union L 314/26, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32022R2371.

314. European Commission, "European Civil Protection Pool", Brussels, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-civil-protection-pool_en.

315. European Commission, "Gender equality strategy", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en#:~:text=Gender%20Equality%20Strategy%202020%2D2025,-The%20EU%20Gender&text=The%20goal%20is%20a%20Union,and%20lead%20our%20European%20society.

316. European Commission, "LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025", Brussels, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en.

317. European Commission, "Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation" (COM/2008/426), Brussels, 2 July 2008, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52008PC0426.

318. European Commission, "European Citizens' Food Waste Panel", Brussels, https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/food-waste-panel_en.

319. European Commission, "Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)",

Brussels, https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan#:~:text=The%20Digital%20Education%20Action%20Plan%20(2021%2D2027)%20is%20a,States%20to%20the%20digital%20age.

320. European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/94370.

321. European Commission, "Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and access to justice in cross-border civil, commercial and criminal matters, and amending certain acts in the field of judicial cooperation" (COM/2021/759), Brussels, 1 December 2021, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/1_1_178479_regul_dig_coop_en.pdf.pdf.

322. European Commission, "Joint Cyber Unit", Brussels, https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/joint-cyber-unit.

323. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – REPower EU Plan" (COM/2022/230), Brussels, 18 May 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A230%3AFIN&qid=1653033742483.

324. Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (recast), Official Journal of the European Union L 328/82, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2018.328.01.0082.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2018:328:TOC.

325. Council of the European Union, " 'Fit for 55': Council agrees on stricter rules for energy performance of buildings", Brussels, 25 October 2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/25/fit-for-55-council-agrees-on-stricter-rules-for-energy-performance-of-buildings/.

326. Council of the European Union, "Alternative fuel infrastructure: Provisional agreement for more recharging and refuelling stations across Europe", 28 March 2023, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/03/28/alternative-fuel-infrastructure-provisional-agreement-for-more-recharging-and-refuelling-stations-across-europe/.

327. European Commission, "Territorial cohesion", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/what/territorial-cohesion_en#:~:text=and%20cities%20%2D%20Eurostat.-,Territorial%20development,improve%20citizens%27%20quality%20of%20life.

328. Council of the European Union, "Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability" (2022/0004(NLE)), Brussels, 25 May 2022, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9242-2022-INIT/en/pdf.

329. European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Socil Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond" (COM/2020/795), Brussels, 9 December 2020, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-12/09122020_communication_commission_european_parliament_the_council_eu_agenda_counter_terrorism_po-2020-9031_com-2020_795_en.pdf.

330. European Commission, "Transparency of covert interference by third countries", Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13744-Transparency-of-covert-interference-by-third-countries_en.

331. European Parliament, "New EU measures against money laundering and terrorist financing", Brussels, 28 March 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230327IPR78511/new-eu-measures-against-money-laundering-and-terrorist-financing.

332. Civil Society Europe, "Urgent call to clarify and simplify AML beneficial ownership policy for public benefit foundations and NPOs in light of new proposals", February 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rqoFH1JS57oO--kPxggr43NdufBIEzpU/view?usp=sharing.

333. Civil Society Europe, "Urgent call to clarify and simplify AML beneficial ownership policy for public benefit foundations and NPOs in light of new proposals", February 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rqoFH1JS57oO--kPxggr43NdufBIEzpU/view?usp=sharing.

334. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2016/C 202/02),

Official Journal of the European Union C 202/389, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12016P/TXT&rid=3.

335. See source 302, p. 83.

336. Council of the European Union, "EU adopts a global human rights sanctions regime", Brussels, 7 December 2020, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/07/eu-adopts-a-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime/.

337. United Nations, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – New York, 12 June 1968", https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/tnpt/tnpt.html#:~:text=The%20Treaty%20on%20the%20Non,force%20on%205%20March%201970.
See source 302, p. 84.

338. See source 302, p. 84.

339. European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, "Civil Society Dialogue Network – EU Conflict Prevention after the Global Strategy: A Look at Mediation and Security Sector Reform", Helsinki, 10 November 2016, https://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/CSDN_Member-State-Meeting_Finland_Conflict-Prevention_Meeting-Report.pdf.

340. European Commission, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council – A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action" (JOIN/2017/021), Brussels, 7 June 2017, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52017JC0021.