



**156 civil society networks,  
organisations & representatives  
from 26 Member States signed the  
OPEN LETTER  
#EUCivilDialogueNow**



To:  
H.E. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission  
H.E. Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament  
H.E. Willem van de Voorde, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the EU

Brussels,  
24 January 2024

**JOINT OPEN LETTER FROM THE EESC'S CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' GROUP  
AND CIVIL SOCIETY EUROPE**

## **European Institutions must recognise, involve and support Civil Society as part of a structured Civil Dialogue**

Dear Ms von der Leyen,  
Dear Ms Metsola,  
Dear Mr van de Voorde,

The signatories to this letter call on the European Institutions to take **real measures to implement the Treaty provisions for an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society in all policy areas.**

The signatories call on the EU Institutions to:

1. initiate an inter-institutional agreement on civil dialogue,
2. establish within each institution leadership positions in charge of relations with civil society and
3. encourage and promote greater cooperation between civic and social actors.

As part of the EU democratic principles enshrined in the Treaties, Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union calls

for EU Institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society. However, in spite of these legal provisions, civil dialogue remains patchy and unstructured across EU Institutions. Civil dialogue has too often been organised on a purely ad-hoc basis and it has been highly variable in terms of quantity and quality, depending on the policy area, the European Institution or Member State.

The value of **civil dialogue was once again brought to policy-makers' attention**, when it was **recognised by the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe**, which comprised members of the public, representatives of the EU Institutions and advisory bodies, elected representatives at national,

regional and local levels and organised civil society. The final report of the Conference, issued in May 2022, urged for “...reforming the way the European Union works by better involving social partners and organised civil society. Strengthening the existing structures in order to better reflect the needs and expectations of EU citizens in the decision-making process...” (proposal 39, in the chapter on European democracy). You will also recall proposal 36, the objective of which is to “increase citizens’ participation and youth involvement”, amongst other things by “strengthening cooperation between EU legislators and civil society organisations to utilise the link between decision-makers and citizens which civil society organisations constitute”.

The signatories to this letter hereby urge that these recommendations be followed up with an ambitious approach. They are strongly convinced that fully harnessing the potential of involving civil society organisations (CSOs) in policy-shaping will require a more structured approach at EU level.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, they jointly call on the European institutions to:

1. **Initiate an inter-institutional agreement on civil dialogue**<sup>2</sup>, providing structure, regularity, transparency and inclusiveness for civil dialogue in EU and national policy-making as part of the full implementation of article 11 (1) and (2)<sup>3</sup> of the Treaty of the European Union<sup>4</sup>.
2. **Within this framework, establish the post of “Civil Society Coordinator”** in each Directorate General of the European Commission, similar to the proposed “Social Dialogue Coordinators”. Furthermore, EU Institutions should establish leadership positions in charge of relations with civil society. A **European Commission Vice-President** should take on the task of dialogue with civil society and the role of the **European Parliament Vice-President in charge of contacts with civil society** should be strengthened. The Council Secretariat and, at national level, European Parliament and Commission Offices should also establish a regular dialogue with civil society.

Introducing direct channels for CSOs to engage in the EU policy-making process can lead to more targeted and effective policies in all fields and socio-economic issues.

3. The signatories fully respect the prerogatives of the social partners in social dialogue, tripartite negotiations and collective bargaining. At the same time, civil society stakeholders have extensive knowledge, expertise and networks in communities and societies, therefore the signatories believe that civil society actors when appropriate, should have their voices heard. After all, effective and responsible civil society organisations can cooperate with governments, employers’ and workers’ organisations in promoting rights at work, encouraging job creation, implementing the ecological and digital transition and strengthening social protection.

The European Institutions have all the necessary tools at their disposal to commit to and make considerable progress on these proposals ahead of the European elections in 2024. A first step in this direction could be a **European Commission Communication on strengthening civil dialogue at EU level and a Proposal for a Recommendation on promoting civil dialogue** in the Member States, **similar to the initiative on Strengthening social dialogue**<sup>5</sup> and as a follow up of the Annual Report on the implementation of the Charter on Fundamental Rights<sup>6</sup>. This would also be in line with the call for a Civil Society Strategy<sup>7</sup>.

The signatories to this letter stand ready to work in partnership with the Institutions in order to define the key building blocks and requirements to put these proposals into practice.

Yours sincerely,

*European networks*

*National organisations*

*Members of the EESC’s Civil Society Organisations’ Group*

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1 The call for signatures for this letter was open between September and November 2023.

2 As called for by the EESC ([SOC/672](#)) and civil society organisations (cf. [Civil Society 2024 EU Elections Manifesto – For better civic space and civil dialogue](#))

3 [Treaty of the European Union TEU, Art. 11.](#)

4 The EESC has repeatedly called for the implementation of art. 11 TEU, Cf.: the EESC’s resolution [United for Democracy](#), adopted by the EESC plenary in March 2023; the [conclusions and recommendations](#) of the EESC’s Civil Society Organisations’ Group conference *Civil society organisations defending and strengthening European democracy* on 30 March 2023; EESC opinions [SOC/605](#), [SOC/639](#), and [SOC/672](#).

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5 “Commission sets out concrete actions for greater involvement of social partners at national and EU level”, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_290](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_290).

6 European Commission annual Report on the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights: A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU.

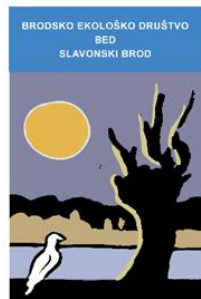
7 EESC [SOC/672](#) and the Final Report of the COFOE (proposal 36 (8.)).

## European Networks





### National Organisations

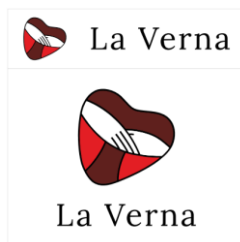






Foundation for Healthcare,  
Social and Public Service  
Workers







### Members of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group

Ágnes Cser, Ákos Topolánszky, Alain Coheur, Alari Rammo, Alessandro Mostaccio, Andreas Kruse, Andris Gobiņš, Antastasis Yiapanis, Arnaud Schwartz, Benjamin Rizzo, Bernd Schlüter, Bogomil Nikolov, Branko Ravnik, Christian Moos, Cristian Pîrvulescu, Danko Relić, Diana Indjova, Dominique Gillot, Dovilė Juodkaitė, Edgar Diogo Elena Calistru, Elvira Drobinski-Weiß, Ileana Izverniceanu de la Iglesia, Ioannis Kolyvas, Ioannis Vardakastanis, Ionuț Sibian, Irma Kilim, Jan Andersson, Jan Dirx, Joe Healy, John Comer, Josiane Willems, Juliane Marie Neiiendam, Kerli Ats, Kinga Joó, Krzysztof Balon, Krzysztof Pater, Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, Louise Grabo, Lutz Ribbe, Maciej Kunysz, Małgorzata Anna Bogusz, Maurizio Mensi, Michael McLoughlin, Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna, Monika Haukanõmm, Neža Repanšek, Patricia Blanc, Pietro Vittorio Barbieri, Rudolf Kolbe, Séamus Boland, Sif Holst, Simo Tiainen, Stoyan Tchoukanov, Thierry Libaert, Tiina Vyyryläinen, Tudorel Tupiluși, Tymoteusz Zych, Vertti Kiukas, Zuzana Brzobohatá.



## Appendix: Detailed list of signatories\*

1. A Familiar Associação de Socorros Mútuos da Póvoa de Varzim (Mutual Aid Association), Edgar Diogo, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
2. Ákos Topolánszky, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
3. Alzheimer Europe
4. Amnesty International European Institutions Office
5. Arnaud Schwartz, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC), and Vice-President of France Nature Environnement
6. Association for Civil Society Development (SMART)
7. AWO Bundesverband e.V. (Workers' Welfare Umbrella Organisation)
8. Beef Breeders Association of Bulgaria, Stoyan Tchoukanov, President of the Board Members, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
9. Belgian Disability Forum
10. Bernd Schlüter, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
11. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
12. Bogomil Nikolov, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
13. Branko Ravnik, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
14. Brod Ecological Society (BED)
15. Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Seniorenorganisationen (German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations) (BAGSO), Andreas Kruse, Board Member, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
16. Bundeskonferenz der Freien Berufe Österreichs (Federal Conference of the Liberal Professions in Austria), Rudolf Kolbe, Vice-President, and Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
17. Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (Federal Network for Civic Engagement) (BBE), Rainer Hub, Chairman of the BBE Spokespersons' Council
18. Caritas Germany

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\*When calculating the number of signatories (156), the EESC Members who also signed on behalf of their organisation are counted as single signatories.

19. CEE Bankwatch Network, Mark Martin, Executive Director
20. Centar za Karijere Mladih Dubrovnik (Centre for Youth Careers Dubrovnik), Ivan Potrebeca, Erasmus+ Projects Coordinator
21. Center for Education, Counselling and Research (CESI)
22. Centre for European Volunteering
23. Centro per i Diritti del Cittadino (Center for Citizen Rights) (CODICI), Ivano Giacomelli, President
24. CERANEO, Gojko Bezovan, President
25. Christian Moos, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC), and Representative for European Affairs for the Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (Federal Network for Civic Engagement)'s Spokespersons' Council
26. CIU-Unionquadri, Maurizio Mensi, Member of the Scientific Committee, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
27. Civil Liberties Union for Europe
28. Civil Society Committee of Malta, Benjamin Rizzo, Chairperson, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
29. Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF), Ionuț Sibian, Executive Director, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
30. Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, Chiara Martinelli, Director
31. CNVOS Slovenia
32. Coface Families Europe
33. Confederación Empresarial Española de la Economía Social (Spanish Business Confederation of the Social Economy ) (CEPES), Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna, Advisor, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
34. Consumers' Union of Finland, Tiina Vyyryläinen, Head of Policy Team, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
35. Coordinating Council - Union of the Non-Governmental Organisations WRK
36. Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network, Katrin Schiffer, Director
37. Cristian Pîrvulescu, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
38. Croatian Permaculture
39. Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity

40. Danko Relić, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
41. Democracy International, Daniela Vancic, European Program Manager
42. Democratic Trade Union of Hungarian Employees, Workers in the Social and Health Sector, Ágnes Cser, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
43. Disabled Peoples Organisations Denmark, Thorkild Olesen, Chairperson
44. DKolektiv - Organisation for Civil Society
45. Dominique Gillot, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
46. Društvo za Oblikovanje Održivog Razvoja (Society for Sustainable Development Design), Miljenka Kuhar, Executive Director
47. Elvira Drobinski-Weiß, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
48. Esenca
49. Estonian Chamber of Disabled People (EPIK), Monika Haukanõmm, Representative, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
50. Estonian Farmers' Federation, Kerli Ats, CEO, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
51. Estonian LEADER Union
52. Eurochild
53. Eurodiaconia, Heather Roy, Secretary General
54. European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
55. European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Paul Ginnell, Director
56. European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
57. European Civic Forum
58. European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Patrizia Heidegger, Deputy Secretary General
59. European Federation for Intercultural Learning
60. European House, Miklós Barabás, Director
61. European Large Families Confederation (ELFAC), Raúl Sánchez, Secretary General
62. European Liver Patients' Organisation (ELPA), Marko Korenjak, President

63. European Movement Latvia (Eiropas Kustība Latvijā), Andris Gobiņš, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
64. European Network for Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability (ECOLISE), Nina Klein, Policy Lead
65. European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)
66. European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)
67. European Public Health Alliance, Milka Sokolović, Director General
68. European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA)
69. European Students' Union
70. European Youth Forum
71. Europe's People's Forum, Bent Noerby Bonde, Secretary General
72. Fédération Générale des Pupilles de l'Enseignement Public, Fernand Vanobberghen, President
73. Foundation for Healthcare, Social and Public Service Workers, Ágnes Fazekas, President
74. France Nature Environnement, Antoine Gatet, President
75. Funky Citizens, Elena Calistru, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
76. Global Disability Movement, Diana Indjova, Chairperson, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
77. Hrvatski Centar Za Razvoj Volonterstva
78. Ileana Izverniceanu de la Iglesia, Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC) Member
79. Institute for Social Policy Development, Małgorzata Anna Bogusz, President of the Board, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
80. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO)
81. Ioannis Kolyvas, Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC) Member
82. IOGT-NTO, Irma Kilim, Head of Advocacy, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
83. Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
84. Irish Rural Link, Séamus Boland, CEO, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
85. Italian Consumers for Europe (CIE)

86. Jan Andersson, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
87. Jan Dirx, Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
88. Joe Healy, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
89. John Comer, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
90. Josiane Willems, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
91. Kinga Joó, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
92. Krzysztof Pater, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC), and President of Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego
93. Latitude Jeunes asbl
94. Liages asbl, Maïté Frérotte, Secretary General
95. Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
96. Life Quality Improvement Organisation FLIGHT, Iva Jovovic, Executive Director
97. Lithuanian Disability Forum, Dovilė Juodkaitė, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
98. Louise Grabo, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
99. Lutz Ribbe, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
100. Maciej Kunysz, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
101. Malta Local Councils Association, Mario Fava, President
102. Mental League
103. Movimento Consumatori APS, Alessandro Mostaccio, Secretary General, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
104. Nagycsaládosok Országos Egyesülete (NOE)
105. National Confederation of Disabled People, Ioannis Vardakastanis, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
106. National NGO Coalition Lithuania

107. Network of Estonian Non Profit Organizations (Vabaühenduste Liit), Alari Rammo, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
108. Neža Repanšek, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
109. NGO Eko-Zadar, Nives Rogoznica, Vice-President
110. ODRAZ-Sustainable Community Development, Višnja Jelić Mueck, President
111. Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
112. Organizacji Socjalnych WRZOS (Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations in Poland WRZOS)
113. Panagrotikos Farmers Union, Antastasis Yiapanis, Secretary General, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
114. Patricia Blanc, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
115. Pietro Vittorio Barbieri, Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
116. Plataforma de Mayores y Pensionistas (Platform for Seniors and Pensioners) (PMP)
117. Protection International
118. S.O.S.- Counseling, Empowerment, Cooperation, Desa Kolesarić, President
119. Savez Sumsi
120. SDG Watch Europe
121. Seventh Confederation, Ágnes Cser, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
122. Sif Holst, Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
123. Simo Tiainen, Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
124. Social Justice Ireland, John McGeady, CEO
125. Social Platform, Laura de Bonfils, Secretary General
126. SOLIDAR - SOLIDAR Foundation
127. Solidaris, Alain Coheur, Directeur, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
128. SOLIDARNA Foundation, Ivan Blažević, Director
129. Soste, Vertti Kiukas, Secretary General, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)

130. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC)
131. The National Council for Rural Affairs, Steffen Damsgraad, Chair
132. The National Youth Council of Latvia
133. The Wheel, Ivan Cooper, CEO
134. Thierry Libaert, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
135. Tolerant Youth Association, Arturas Rudomanskis, Chairperson
136. Transparency International EU
137. Tudorel Tupiluși, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
138. Tymoteusz Zych, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
139. Udruga Breza (Breza Association)
140. Udruga Feniks Split (Association Phoenix Split), Marina Vidović, President
141. Udruga Osoba s Invaliditetom "Sveti Bartolomej" Knin (Association of Persons with Disabilities)
142. Udruga Pariter (Human Rights and Civic Participation Association "Equal and Together")
143. União das Mutualidades Portuguesas (Union of Portuguese Mutualities)
144. Unión de Asociaciones y Entidades de Atención al Drogodependiente (Union of Associations and Entities for the Attention of Drug Addicts) (UNAD)
145. Volunteers in Palliative Care (LA VERNA), Blaženka Eror-Matić, President
146. Women's Association Vukovar
147. Women's Council Denmark, Juliane Marie Neiiendam, Board Member, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
148. Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations in Poland WRZOS; Greater Poland, Justyna Kalina Ochędzan, President, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
149. Working Community of Associations of Social Organizations (Wspólnota Robocza Związków), Krzysztof Balon, President of Programming, and Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (EESC)
150. YES Forum, Violeta Bakia, EU Projects and Advocacy Officer
151. Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)

152. Youth Work Ireland, Michael McLoughlin, Head of Advocacy and Communication, and Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
153. Zeleni forum (Green Forum)
154. Zuzana Brzobohatá, Civil Society Organisations' Group Member (EESC)
155. ZvoniMir, Renata Madzar, Head of the Association
156. Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego (The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association), Martyna Kowacka