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Dear Mr Boland,

I would like to thank you for sending the open letter #EUCivilDialogueNow, initiated by the European Social and Economic Committee's Civil Society Organisations' Group and Civil Society Europe.

On behalf of President von der Leyen and myself, I would like to reiterate the key role of civil society in the democratic life of the Union.

Against this background, civil society organisations have been the focus of various Commission initiatives such as the Democracy Action Plan of December 2020, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme of April 2021 or the recent Recommendation of December 2023 on 'Inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the Union'. With all of them, our objective has been to support, protect, and empower civil society actors as the cornerstone of an open and pluralistic democracy.

Turning to the three specific recommendations of your letter, first, you suggest an Interinstitutional Agreement on Civil Dialogue under Article 11 TEU.

In our opinion, each EU institution should organise its dialogue with civil society in accordance with their respective roles, mandates, and working methods.

When it comes to the Commission, we are fully committed to implementing Article 11 TEU and have been engaging in a wide range of decentralised forms of structured dialogues and consultations with civil society across numerous policy areas, such as trade and agriculture, migration, energy, or health.

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*Mr Séamus Boland
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At the same time, we stand ready to build on existing instruments and initiatives. This was the case in October 2022, when we revised the Protocol of cooperation between the Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee to facilitate the involvement of civil society organisations in the Union's policy decision-making process. Therefore, we do not see the need to create a new horizontal inter-institutional instrument.

Second, in relation to your suggestion to establish the post of 'Civil Society Coordinator' in each Directorate-General of the European Commission, I would like to reassure you that the importance of civil society is recognised and taken seriously across the Commission both at political and services level.

The range and intensity of the aforementioned sectorial structural dialogues prove the engagement at services level and politically. As the Commission Vice-President in charge of dialogue with the civil society, I not only make sure that the civil society dimension is reflected in every Commission initiative but also that the Commission takes action to support, protect and empower civil society actors.

In our view, the current set up works well and instead of creating additional layers, we should focus our efforts on delivering results.

Third, I support your recommendation to encourage and promote greater cooperation between civic and social actors. In this context, our better regulation agenda provides the necessary tools and opportunities for all interested stakeholders to contribute throughout the policy cycle.

Finally, I would like to stress that creating a supportive and enabling environment for civil society is a shared responsibility of the EU and its Member States. While we already work with Member States and encourage them to reinforce civil society capacities at both national and local level, in December 2023, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes.

I would like to thank you, once again, for your letter and express my strong support for continuous and close dialogue with civil society organisations. I remain personally committed to this cause and, together with Vice-President Šuica, remain available to continue together our fruitful discussions.

Yours sincerely,


Věra Jourová