

The President

Mr Séamus Boland
President
Civil Society Organisations' Group - Groupe III

D 302167 05.03.2024

Ms Gabriella Civico
President
Civil Society Europe

European Economic and Social Committee

Dear Mr Boland and Ms Civico,

Thank you for your open letter dated 24 January 2024 calling for concrete measures to implement the Treaty provisions for an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society in all areas.

The European Parliament fully agrees that civic space and a vibrant civil society are essential for the functioning of democratic societies. Civil society plays a crucial role in upholding, protecting and promoting the rights and values enshrined in Article 2 TEU and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The European Parliament has expressed its views in this regard on many occasions and in different contexts, for example when considering the rule of law and fundamental rights situation in the European Union, when expressing itself on strengthening democracy, media freedom and pluralism in the EU, when reporting on the shrinking space for civil society in Europe, when promoting citizens' dialogues and citizens' participation in EU decision-making, when assessing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme and funding for non-governmental organisations, or in the context of Better Law-making.

Within the European Parliament, a Vice-President has special responsibilities for contacts with civil society organisations representing citizens. Committees have regular contacts with the EESC and representatives from civil society organisations in their daily work. Parliament's Liaison Offices are also actively gathering input and opinions from citizens and stakeholders. Furthermore, the European Parliament has a special cooperation agreement with the EESC and on 27 February 2024, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the EESC President, Mr Oliver Röpkke, to strengthen the cooperation and formalise a joint commitment to inform citizens about the European elections and the importance of voting.

The European Parliament is continuously striving to further strengthen democratic accountability and legitimacy and promote civil dialogue and participation in policy making. Parliament has taken the view that all EU institutions should review their terms of engagement with civil society organisations in line with Article 11 TEU to ensure an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society organisations on an equal footing with other stakeholders.

To that end, Parliament has invited the Commission to consider the submission of an interinstitutional agreement on civil dialogue. In the context of its reports on the rule of law situation, Parliament considers that the situation of civic space in the Member States deserves a separate chapter in such reports and the creation of a civic space index.

Parliament is committed to giving proper follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe. It has recently adopted proposals for the amendment of the Treaties and called on the European Council to convene a Convention. The proposals that Parliament wishes to discuss during such Convention are wide-ranging and comprise institutional reforms, modifications to the Union's competences, proposals to better protect the rule of law, proposals to strengthen the links between citizens and their elected representatives, as well as proposals to increase accountability and transparency and to promote citizen participation and a more inclusive decision-making process. Within that context, Parliament has also reiterated its position that representatives of the Union's social partners, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Central Bank, Union's civil society and candidate countries should be invited as observers to the Convention.

Improving citizen participation and transparency at EU level are key for bringing the Union closer to citizens and increasing citizens' trust and confidence in EU institutions. Civil society organisations, social partners, the EESC and the Committee of the Regions have a major role to play alongside the institutions and I thank you for your dedication and efforts to improve the functioning of the European Union.

Yours sincerely,



Roberta Metsola