

## **Activity Report 2018**

### **1. Introduction**

CSE has continued to work actively through its working groups, through the leadership of its Steering Committee and the control of its plenary to support the coordination of civil society organisations at European level in the following areas:

- Civic space
- Civil dialogue & CSO recognition
- Funding issues

### **2. Priority areas and activities**

#### **2. 1 Civic Space**

**Objectives:** Raise awareness of decision makers at EU level of shrinking civic space in Europe and the need to put in place action to address this. Ensure exchange and coherence among different CSOs initiatives in this area.

**Resources:** The working Group on Civic Space and Fundamental Rights

#### **Activities:**

CSE has published a report on Civic space in Europe 2017 presenting the perception of civil society organisations across the European Economic Area and the accession countries. The report has been presented at a side event of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 22 June 2018 in cooperation with Civicus. The event was co-hosted by the Human Rights House, ECNL, the International Civil Society Network amongst others. It was also disseminated towards the European Institutions and in particular through meetings with DG Justice and the Director responsible for Fundamental Rights, and the

Chair of the FREMP (Fundamental Rights) working Group of the Council of the EU. Two national cases on Italy and Romania were presented. CSE also facilitated meetings with UN bodies as a result. The findings of the report were also presented at the Hub 3 meeting of Concord Europe in March, at the Euromed rights advocacy network the same month, and at the Black Sea NGO Forum in Brussels in November.



**ADDRESSING BACKSLIDING ON CIVIC SPACE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**SIDE EVENT AT 38TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**FRIDAY, 22 JUNE  
12:00-13:00  
PALAIS DES NATIONS  
ROOM XXVI**

Across the world, backsliding on civic space has deepened and accelerated. Attacks on core civic freedoms – of association, peaceful assembly and expression – are happening in Europe as well and have become more brazen. This event will provide an opportunity to examine key trends across the EU and take a look at a number of member state case studies. New research and presentations will provide insights on: 1) the widespread development of regulatory measures, such as anti-terrorism, limitation to donations, and anti-money laundering legislation; 2) smear campaigns against civil society organisations and the criminalisation of assistance to migrants. The panel will equally talk about practical policy-making on how to uphold human rights commitments on civic space across the EU.

**SPEAKERS:**

- Felipe Gonzalez Morales, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants
- EU Representative (TBC)
- Carlotta Besozzi, Civil Society Europe
- Simona Constantinescu, Civil Society Foundation, Romania
- Francesco Martone, IN Difesa Di, Italy

Moderator: Matthew Jones Human Rights House Foundation

Refreshments served at 11:45  
For more information contact: [clementine.demontjoye@civiceurope.org](mailto:clementine.demontjoye@civiceurope.org)  
The event will be livestreamed on the @CIVICUS Facebook page

Event Organisers



CSE contributed to the discussions at the European Parliament on civic space with a plenary debate in February, by issuing a statement on shrinking civic space in Europe. Some of the proposals was taken up in the debate, and also followed up in a subsequent EP resolution. CSE also contributed to the EP resolution for a EU values instrument. The Civic Space working Group also cooperated for a civil society statement “Civil Society on

the frontline - 5 points for EU action” which was issued at the European Commission Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights in November.

CSE has continued to work in cooperation with CSOs and in particular the Not for Profit Financial Action Task Force Coalition to engage with the European Commission (DG justice) on the follow up to the Supranational Risk Assessment of civil society on money laundering and terrorism financing and its recommendations. In particular, CSE engaged with the European Commission on the transposition of legislation at national level and facilitated meetings with Romanian organisations. CSE has participated in a workshop organised by Human Security Collective on bank de risking.

CSE has continued discussions on possible avenues for a framework for EU civil society organisations. In particular, a survey was disseminated on obstacles to cross border cooperation among CSOs.

CSE working group has also contributed to the work of the GSP Platform which is advocating to strengthen the participation of civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) within the framework of its mid-term evaluation.

## 2.2 Civil dialogue and CSO recognition

**Objectives:** raise awareness of EU institutions of the need to set in place a legal framework for the organisation of civil dialogue

**Resources:** The working Group on CSOs Recognition

**Activities:**

CSE has issued a response to the European Ombudsman enquiry on the transparency of the Council's legislative work, and the European Ombudsman has addressed CSE members at the General Assembly.

CSE has continued to monitor the negotiations of the Interinstitutional agreement on a revised Transparency register and participated in relevant public events. It has also joined forces with other organisations on a common statement.

Through the task force on CSOs added value, a meeting of communication officers was organised in June in order to start working on communications tools towards the EU institutions to present the added value of Civil Society Organisations. A terms of reference was approved.

CSE has contributed to ECNL review of the legislation and rules on Transparency at national level and their interaction with civic space, and to its preparatory workshop in December.

Finally, CSE hosted meetings of the EESC NGO club, which gathered NGO nominated representatives in the EESC, providing information on key developments on civic space, civil dialogue and funding. The group was then discontinued with the established of an official category within the EESC on the voluntary sector.

## **2.3 Funding**

**Objectives:** to ensure that civil society is adequately supported and benefits from the new financial framework and rules

**Resources:** working group on financial issues

### **Activities**

CSE has organised in January 2018 a first exchange with the European Parliament co-rapporteurs on the MFF and issued a paper outlining key CSOs asks which were partly integrated in the EP report. CSE has also contributed to the discussions on the Rights and Values programme by coordinating input into the EP report. In March 2018, together with the European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH), CSE issued a joint call for an ambitious investment in FP9 for a grand challenge to achieve a People's Union, covering research addressing civil society's main concerns. This was a follow up of the European Civic Academy 2017 in Brussels.

CSE has monitored and input into the Special Report of the Court of Auditors on the Transparency of NGO funding. In particular, a meeting with the member of the Court in charge, Ms Turtelboom was organised for CSOs representatives and took place in July.

CSE also intervened at the International Budget Partnership Forum on Strengthening the Influence of Civil Society on Public Budgets in Europe. The International Budget Partnership collaborates with civil society around the world to analyze and influence public budgets in order to reduce poverty

and improve the quality of governance International Budget Partnership collaborates with civil society around the world to analyze and influence public budgets in order to reduce poverty and improve the quality of governance.

CSE coordinator also contributed as an expert to the EESC opinion on the Rights and Values and Justice Programme presented by CSE President.



### 3. Governance

The working groups met regularly in 2018: The financial issues working group held meetings on 15 March, 3 July and 17 September, the working group on civic space met on 6 March and 30 August. A joint meeting on 22 May was organised with the CSO recognition working Group. The high level Group on countering attacks on NGO funding met on 25 January and this was also followed by a meeting of Communication's Officers on 8 June. The task for this group had also regular meetings.

The steering Group met four times: on 29 March, 12 July, 6 September and 29 November 2018.





A plenary meeting was organised in January

2018 with the participation of the European Parliament co-rapporteur on the MFF, Ms Thomas, and the Annual General Assembly was held on 28 April with the participation of the European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly and with a debate on civic space with a representative of the European Federation of Journalists.

#### **4. Membership**

CSE welcomed the following members: Transparency International EU, the European Patients Forum and the Eurogroup for Animals.