

CSE Annual Activity Report

June 2021 - June 2022

WHO WE ARE

Civil Society Europe (CSE) is the **coordination of civil society organisations at the European (EU) level**. It is **currently composed of 22 platforms and networks of civil society organisations** that include the most representative European and national networks in different areas of citizens' concerns, such as education, social rights, environmental and animal rights, culture, international cooperation, governance and transparency, active citizenship, volunteering, youth, patients' rights, the fight against racism, as well as the rights of persons with disabilities.

Through its membership, CSE reaches out to millions of people who are active in or supported by not-for-profit organisations and NGOs across the EU. CSE was created by civil society organisations themselves as a follow-up of the European Year of Citizens, and established as a not-for-profit organisation in 2016.

CSE works towards regenerating the European project around the shared values of *equality, solidarity, inclusiveness and democracy*.

OUR MISSION

Through its work, Civil Society Europe (CSE) **contributes to EU and national institutions' recognition of the role and value of independent and plural civil society organisations (CSOs) in building and nurturing a democratic society based on fundamental rights**. CSE also **works to create the conditions for the development of a strong and independent civil society voice and an effective, open, and structured civil dialogue at the EU level**, as well as **a thriving and enabling civic space** in the Union.

Civil Society Europe's mission, as established in the organisation's statutes and in its founding Rome Declaration, is to:

- Create an enabling environment for horizontal exchanges among CSOs and movements across the EU;
- Promote civic space for civil society, based on fundamental rights, at all relevant levels;
- Ensure the renewal of European democracy, including by promoting transparency in decision-making and the participation of CSOs in EU decision-making processes
- Strive for the recognition of CSOs by policymakers;
- Contribute to policy development on transversal issues of common interest, as agreed by CSE's membership.

OUR MEMBERS

Civil Society Europe gathers 22 European platforms and networks of civil society organisations working in various areas of citizens' actions and concerns:

- 1.** AEGEE-Europe – European Students' Forum
- 2.** ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy
- 3.** CEV – Centre for European Volunteering
- 4.** CONCORD Europe – European confederation of NGOs working on sustainable development and international cooperation
- 5.** Culture Action Europe
- 6.** EASPD – European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
- 7.** ECAS – European Citizen Action Service
- 8.** ECF – European Civic Forum
- 9.** EDF – European Disability Forum
- 10.** EHF – European Humanist Federation
- 11.** ENAR – European Network Against Racism
- 12.** EPF – European Patients' Forum
- 13.** Eurodiaconia
- 14.** Eurogroup for Animals
- 15.** EYF – European Youth Forum
- 16.** Green10
- 17.** JEF Europe – Young European Federalists
- 18.** LLLP – Lifelong Learning Platform
- 19.** Social Platform
- 20.** Solidar
- 21.** TI EU – Transparency International EU
- 22.** Volonteuropa

OUR INTERNAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

General Assembly: 1 delegate for each member organisation



Meets annually and adopts a work programme, budget and accounts



elects every 2 years

Steering Committee composed of 9 members



Appoints the President and Treasurer

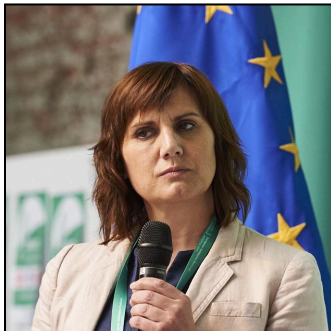


Oversees the Working Groups and task forces

OUR STEERING COMMITTEE (ELECTED UNTIL JUNE 2023)



Jean Marc Roirant
(President)
European Civic Forum



Gabriella Civico
(Treasurer)
*Centre for European
Volunteering*



Elisa Gambardella
*Lifelong Learning Platform,
since June 2022*



Milosh Ristovski
Young European Federalists



Tere Badia
Culture Action Europe



Alva Finn
Social Platform



Heather Roy
Eurodiaconia



Sonia Goicoechea
Green 10



Yannis Vardakastanis
European Disability Forum



Tamara Gojkovic
*Lifelong Learning Platform,
until June 2022*

OUR SECRETARIAT



From right to left:

- **Carlotta Besozzi**, Coordinator;
- **Syasya Roslan**, Policy and Communications Assistant (until September 2022);
- **Nastassia Maes**, Policy and Membership Officer.

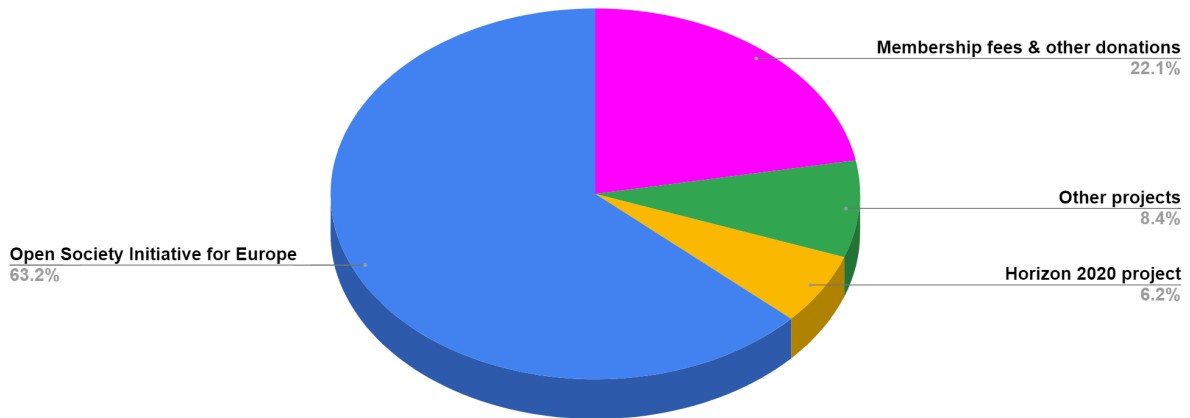
FINANCES

Civil Society Europe's 2021 accounts were reviewed by an accountant and CSE's Treasurer, as well as an external auditor. The 2021 accounts were approved unanimously during the General Assembly in June 2022.

The information below covers the period of January to December 2021.

Income in 2021

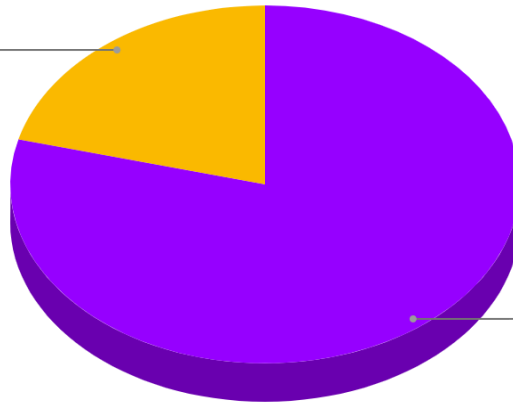
Total income in 2021 = €80,538.49



Expenditure in 2021

Total expenditure in 2021 = €16,837.87

Operational costs
21.0%



Staff costs
79.0%

Since January 2022, CSE receives EU funding through an operational grant within the framework of the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.

CIVIL SOCIETY CONVENTION FOR THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

HIGHLIGHTS

In a historic move, Civil Society Europe (CSE) launched a [Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe \(CSOCoFoE\)](#) in February 2021, bringing together more than 80 European networks and platforms that unite millions of active individuals engaged in many aspects of life. The Civil Society Convention had its kick-off event in June 2021, with the support and participation of European Commission (EC) Vice-President Dubravka Šuica, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Helmut Scholz and MEP Daniel Freund.

The work of the Civil Society Convention was structured around five thematic clusters which were coordinated by CSE member organisations within the framework of a Steering Committee:

- *The Fight against Climate Change and Environmental Challenges*, chaired by **Green10**
- *Social Europe*, chaired by **SOLIDAR**
- *Europe's Digital Transformation*, chaired by **ECAS**
- *Our European Life*, co-chaired by **Volonteuropa** and **CEV**
- *The Union's Democratic Foundation and Rule of Law*, chaired by **ALDA**.

Via the dissemination of surveys and public consultations, CSE ensured the progression of the Civil Society Convention by taking the latter's work to the local level, and by involving grassroots constituencies in the deliberation and drafting of the Convention's final recommendations.

The Civil Society Convention managed to secure its representation after relentlessly campaigning for the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). The CSOCoFoE was given five seats (out of a total of eight seats for civil society) in the Plenary of the CoFoE, which was an important accomplishment and acknowledgement of the collective work of CSOs from all over the EU.

As the principal output of the CSOCoFoE initiative, an official report titled ["The Future of Europe is Ours: A View from Civil Society"](#) was produced. This report is the result of more than 80 European organisations collaborating since February 2021, with the goal of bringing together citizens' associations for equality, justice and solidarity, as well as the protection (and practice) of human rights and the environment. It compiles more than 200 recommendations developed by the CSOCoFoE's different thematic clusters.

The CSOCoFoE worked to ensure appropriate links between discussions and decisions within the CoFoE and citizens' expectations. The Convention's members performed this role within the CoFoE (in Plenary session and working groups). Prior to the CoFoE's closing event, **CSE participated in the [European Civil Society Assembly](#) organised within the framework of the Strasbourg Summit and campaigned for European leaders to translate citizens' proposals made during the CoFoE into action.**

CSE, in collaboration with the French Economic, Social, and Environmental Council (CESE) and the Mouvement Associatif (LMA), **organised a [high-level conference in Paris on 30 June 2022](#)**, the last day of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU. The conference was organised as a follow-up event to the CSOCofE initiative. The deliberations among the conference's 120 participants culminated in the **adoption of the [Paris Declaration](#) or [Appel de Paris](#)**, which outlined the participants' vision for the EU's future and the role of civil society in achieving it.

CSE continues and will continue to push for the implementation of the CoFoE conclusions and to promote the Civil Society Convention's recommendations.

CIVIL DIALOGUE

HIGHLIGHTS

Civil Society Europe (CSE), **together with the European Civic Forum (ECF), published a [study on civil dialogue](#)**; CSE's Working Group on Civic space and fundamental rights participated in this process. The publication was followed by internal meetings to develop a follow-up strategy, including on the promotion of an interinstitutional agreement on civil dialogue. The report updates the study that CSE carried out in 2018 and gives concrete suggestions on how to develop or reform existing mechanisms.

CSE sent a **[letter to EP President Roberta Metsola](#) shortly after her election in January 2022 to share key recommendations on civil dialogue**, including the appointment of a Vice-President in charge of structured dialogue with civil society organisations (CSOs) representing citizens. **As a result, and for the first time in EU history, a Vice-President is in charge of dialogue with CSOs representing citizens.**

CSE, with the support of ECF, sent a letter in June 2022 **[urging EC President Ursula von der Leyen to include a European Civil Society Strategy in the EC's 2023 work programme](#)**. The letter was signed by more than 300 CSOs across the EU.

CIVIL SPACE AND RULE OF LAW

Highlights:

- CSE coordinated and published a **[joint contribution](#) from civil society organisations to the European Commission (EC)'s annual rule of law cycle, specifically on civic space**, which is one of the checks and balances of the rule of law. CSE also coordinated meetings of its Working Group on Civic space and fundamental rights, as well as a meeting between the

Working Group and the Rule of Law Unit within the EC's DG JUST. CSE also contributed to the European Parliament (EP)'s report on the EC's annual Rule of Law Report and to a [joint statement](#) with representatives of media and democracy organisations, leading to a meeting with EC Vice-President Věra Jourová.

- Similarly, **CSE coordinated civil society input** into the EP's report on shrinking space for civil society in the EU, the EP's report on foreign interference in democratic processes, and, together with Philea, the EC's Action Plan on anti-money laundering and the fight against funding terrorism. CSE contributed through civil society coordination meetings, meetings with MEPs and other EU officials, written contributions, joint amendments and other actions.
- In February 2022, CSE, together with several other non-profit organisations, **published a civil society position statement on the EP's proposal for a [European Association Statute](#)**, which followed contributions and meetings with the EP Rapporteur and other relevant stakeholders, as well as expert advice to the Information Report and hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).
- CSE also **cooperated in a tender for the production of a study of the EESC on [the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on fundamental rights and civic space](#)**.
- Following an invitation from the EC, CSE **issued in May 2022 a [response to the targeted consultation on the EC's report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)**, whose 2022 edition will focus on civic space for the first time ever.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLANS

HIGHLIGHTS

Civil Society Europe (CSE) **contributed to a [joint statement](#) calling on the European Commission's NextGenerationEU instrument** to include student and youth organisations, educational and training providers, and wider civil society organisations (CSOs), as CSOs are essential for ensuring an equitable and effective recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU.

CSE **conducted a follow-up survey to get an updated overview of civil society's involvement in the preparation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) across the EU**. This resulted in the publication of a [joint study](#) with the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL).

Furthermore, CSE **organised a training session for 50 CSOs at the EU and national level on the Technical Support Instrument** available through the EU Recovery Package.

ENTRUST PROJECT

Civil Society Europe (CSE) is a partner in a Horizon 2020 project called “EnTrust – Enlightened trust in governance” that will end in 2024. A consortium of seven European universities and civil society, led by the University of Siegen in Germany, works on this project which seeks to identify solutions to increase trust in national and EU governance, as well as other institutions, and to improve relations between citizens and institutions. The other universities involved in the project are from Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Poland and Serbia.

Highlights:

- Within the framework of the EnTrust project, CSE **organised an [expert round-table on “Trust & distrust at the street level of public policy”](#)** in December 2021, with the participation of experts from civil society and local public authorities. Following this, a [policy brief](#) on improving trust relations between citizens and social service administrations was published.
 - CSE **organised a round-table discussion** in June 2022 on **“Social movements as alternative arenas of political participation – Mobilising citizens in the re-creation of trust and distrust”**. The online event brought together experts from some of the partner universities, civil society, governance actors and the European Parliament. They discussed the findings of the [EnTrust project’s “Integrated Report on the Role of Democratic Social Movements”](#).
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SUPPORTING (CIVIL SOCIETY IN) UKRAINE

Highlights:

- Civil Society Europe (CSE) **strongly condemns Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and stands with Ukraine, including Ukrainian civil society.** In early March 2022, CSE **issued a [statement of support for Ukraine](#)** and **organised an online meeting within the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe** to exchange information about Russia’s war against Ukraine, the actions that CSOs are taking at both EU and national levels, and to discuss how EU CSOs can support Ukrainian civil society in the long run.
 - CSE, **together with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), published a statement [urging the EC to guarantee a meaningful role for civil society in the ‘RebuildUkraine’ reconstruction platform](#)** that was announced in May of the same year. The statement was **signed by 159 civil society organisations across the EU and Ukraine** working on a diverse spectrum of issues.
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FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil Society Europe (CSE) **organised its first strategic meeting on EU funding for civil society organisations in June 2022**. This issue has become critical across different sectors. Ultimately, CSE **prepared and sent a letter to the EC's DG BUDG** about the challenges identified during the meeting, including obstacles to CSOs getting funding both at the EU and national levels.

CIVIL SOCIETY EUROPE GOVERNING BODIES AND WORKING GROUPS

Civil Society Europe (CSE) **held annual General Assembly (GA) meetings in June 2021 and 2022** to approve its draft activity reports, accounts, work programmes and budgets. During the GA in June 2022, a new Steering Committee member, Elisa Gambardella, was elected until June 2023.

Part of CSE's work is centred around the four working groups that it has established to create a space for dialogue between CSOs and movements across the EU. These working groups regularly meet to exchange experiences and good practices, knowledge and documentary resources, and campaigns and other forms of collective actions. Currently, **the working groups focus on four thematic areas:**

- 1. Civic space and fundamental rights
 - 2. Recognition of civil society organisations
 - 3. Financial issues
 - 4. Communication.
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PARTNERSHIPS

- **Civil Society Europe (CSE) & the European Economic and Social Committee's Group III**
 - CSE strengthened its collaboration with the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group, also known as Group III, by co-organising a joint conference titled "Civil Society Organisations: Key Actors for the Future of Europe" to explore the crucial role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in aiding underrepresented and marginalised groups, delivering essential services, and contributing to social cohesion and the preservation of democratic life through their various missions.
- **CSE & Trade Unions**
 - CSE also collaborated closely with trade unions during the Conference on the Future of Europe, presenting key trade union and civil society priorities with respect to the diverse issues discussed in the different Plenary sessions. This collaboration will hopefully result in a Memorandum of Understanding which is currently under negotiation.
- **CSE & PHILEA**

- CSE has established a partnership agreement with the Philanthropy Europe Association (PHILEA) to cooperate on issues related to civic space and the rule of law.