Civil Society Europe Newsletter

October 2026

Welcome to our October 2026 newsletter! In this edition find out about our new member ENCC, our CoQuality conference, how 900+ organisations join against AgoraEU's reduction, and more!

What has CSE been up to?

Welcome ENCC!

We are delighted to announce that the **European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)** has recently joined our network and we welcome them warmly.



Based in Brussels, ENCC unites over 200 socio-cultural organisations from 39 countries across Europe and beyond. Their main purpose is to **connect, support, and strengthen cultural centres** in Europe on urban, regional and national level. They work around three pillars to enhance cultural centres' potential and importance to society: **training, cooperation, and advocacy**.

We share their commitment to advocate for culture while revitalizing European democracy, civil society, inclusion and intercultural dynamics. We look forward to working together to strengthen civic space in the EU!

For more information about ENCC's role, history, events, and more, visit their website.

CoQuality Conference

On October 14th, we hosted, under the CoQuality network, the event **“Civil Society Co-designing Quality: Building Resilience in a Challenging Environment”**, a full day that brought together organisations and stakeholders from across Europe, to assess how **quality can promote resilience, partnership, and change**, especially in a context of shrinking civic space.



The event began with the presentation of our **study on challenges and differences in quality management in the European third sector organisations**.This presentation was followed by roundtables, workshops, and activities with the participation of civil society representatives from Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, and Belgium.

It was a lively event that led into genuine connections and conversations between participants from across the sector. **We thank everyone who joined and the CoQuality network for the work behind this experience.** Let’s keep working together for quality to be a driver of resilience and change!

Read more

Open Letter: 900+ Organisations Join to Defend AgoraEU

Ahead of the European Council of the 15th and 16th October, **more than 900 organisations** across different sectors joined forces to send the governments a clear message: **Europe needs a strong AgoraEU**, the proposed new programme to support culture, media and journalism, and civil society.

In a context of growing disillusionment, AgoraEU supports organisations that bring people together across territories to make their voices heard and participate with equal opportunities, without discrimination. With its limited budget compared to the

whole MFF, **AgoraEU is an investment in Europe's resilience, independence, and innovation**.

Stronger, more resilient communities are the backbone of a functioning democracy and cohesive society. This is why **we call the governments to reject the disproportionate cuts to the programme proposed by the Irish Presidency**: for a saving of a mere 0.2% of the total budget, the damage to Europe's resilience would be exponential and potentially irreversible.

You can still sign the letter here.

Read the full letter

AgoraEU Demonstration

On **October 29th**, we joined more than **150 artists, cultural workers, journalists, independent media, and civil society representatives** in front of the European Council and European Commission in Brussels, to **protest the proposed 30% cut to AgoraEU**, the EU's future programme for culture, media and civil society.



The European Union institutions are negotiating the EU's next long-term budget for the 2028-2034 period. **Member States**, under the Irish Presidency, have **proposed** significant cuts, including **AgoraEU's reduction from €8.6 billion to €6 billion**. This cut "saves" only about 0.2% of the proposed EU budget, but it would remove almost a third of the resources intended to support European cultural cooperation, audiovisual production, independent journalism, civil society, equality, rights and values.

As CSE's President Gabriella Civico stated, "the proposed reduction of the AgoraEU budget will **seriously affect the possibility for associations to support their communities, make citizens' voices be heard at all levels of government and act as watchdogs for rights violations**".

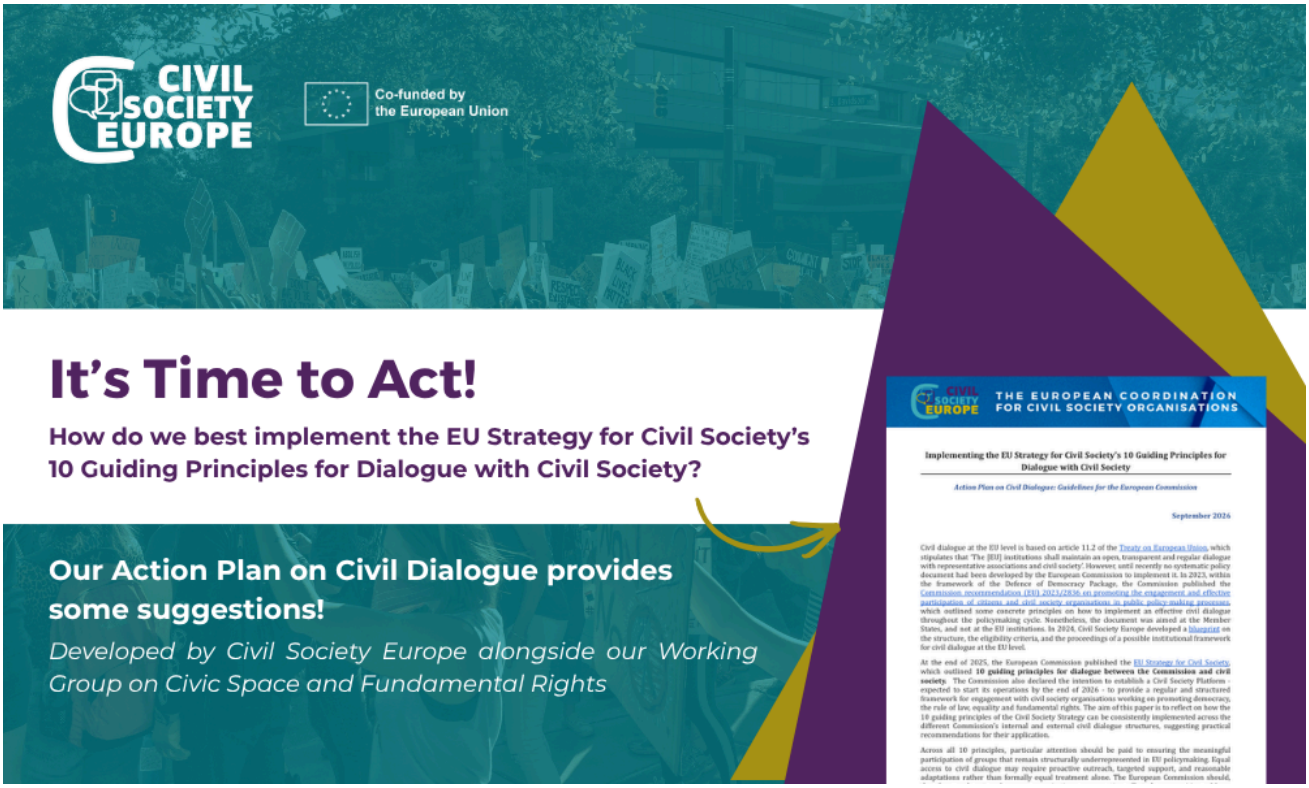
We organised this demonstration along Culture Action Europe, European Civic Forum, European Federation of Journalists, Center for Sustainable Media, in partnership with

the Future of Europe cohort.

Photo: CSE President, Gabriella Civico, with the Chair of the CULT Committee on Culture and Education, Nela Riehl.

See more

It’s Time to Act! Read Our Action Plan on Civil Dialogue



CSE, together with other CSOs, published a Q&A document to address key questions about the scope of the proposed Directive on third-country interest representation. The document covers the Directive’s implications for **foreign interference in Europe; foreign interest representation legislation outside of the EU; disinformation, media and social media; freedoms of association and expression; and academic freedom**.

Read more

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865 Billion Euros Are on the Line - We Must Pay Attention: New Briefing for How to Draft NRPPs

The negotiations around the next multi-year EU budget (2028-2034) have started. As part of a new funding architecture, every Member State will create a “National and Regional Partnership Plan” (NRPP) outlining major national investments and reforms in key sectors, like energy, agriculture, and regional cohesion.

In this new briefing coordinated by REScoop.eu and Climate Strategy, 20 civil society organisations from across the EU, including CSE, present recommendations for how to draft NRPPs that boost economic efficiency, nature protection, and the energy transition - while ensuring strong public participation.

Read the briefing

CSE President Gabriella Civico Participates at the Conference “Rural Civil Dialogue: Opportunities & Challenges in Rural Areas”

On Oct. 15th, **CSE President Gabriella Civico** spoke at the conference **‘Rural Civil Dialogue: Opportunities & Challenges in Rural Areas’** in the European Parliament. The event discussed how the EU can engage more effectively with local communities and rural areas, as the Commission prepares its Communication on the Right to Stay, putting rural communities on the EU agenda.



Gabriella emphasised several points, including how 1) **dialogue with rural civil society must be permanent**, not a one-off consultation, 2) **dialogue must be present before decisions are made to include rural civil society** meaningfully, and 3) **rural organisations must be invested in** to ensure they have a seat at the table.

Thank you to Vice-Presidents Nicolae Ștefănuță and Katarina Barley for organising this event and shining a spotlight on the needs of rural communities.

Photo: Laurie DIEFFEMBACQ / © European Union 2026 - Source : EP

Match Made in Heaven: Connecting National Civil Society Organisations to Advocate for the MFF

On October 20th, Civil Society Europe and REScoop.eu hosted the webinar “Match made in Heaven: Connecting national civil society organisations to advocate for the MFF”. The event brought together civil society organisations to review the latest developments of the MFF negotiations and delve into concrete examples of mobilisation tactics. Through breakout groups, national organisations had the opportunity to network with people from their region.

Other news

Democracy Shield: Council Approves Conclusions on Inclusive Democratic Participation, and Societal and Community Resilience

On 13th October, the General Affairs Council approved the Council conclusions on inclusive democratic participation, and societal and community resilience. Promoted by the Irish Presidency, the conclusions include a section on strengthening support for civil society engagement, such as adequate and sustainable funding including for advocacy activities.

Read the Council conclusions here.

On 22 October the EESC adopted the exploratory opinion requested by the Irish Presidency "Inclusive Democratic Participation".

This Opinion aims to make inclusive democratic participation a core element of democratic resilience, strengthening meaningful and lasting cooperation between public authorities, citizens, communities and civil society throughout the policy cycle. It emphasises the role of resilient communities and calls for participation to be inclusive, accessible and protected from undue interference. It also promotes civic education, digital literacy and the responsible use of digital tools.

You can find the opinion here.

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