

2024 EU Elections Manifesto

For better civic space
and civil dialogue



Civil society is an essential part of **healthy democracies**.

We play a key role in promoting and protecting the rule of law and **fundamental rights**.

We provide **crucial and empowering services** that enable people and societies to be more resilient in times of crisis, and more inclusive overall.

We provide **a platform for people** - especially marginalised groups - to connect with policy makers and participate in decisions that affect them.

Yet, **civic space** - the political, legislative, social and economic environment that enables people and civil society actors to play their role in shaping our societies - is shrinking all over the world, with **growing restrictions at all levels**. The EU and its Member States are no exception to this trend.

Moreover, **civil dialogue** - the essential exchange between civil society and policy-makers - is not sufficiently open, transparent or regular, leading to a democratic deficit which means that many people living in the EU are uncatered for.

We envisage a European Union where civic space is strengthened and civil dialogue is valued and encouraged, so that we as civil society - including the philanthropy sector - can continue to exercise our vital role in achieving positive social outcomes and increased wellbeing for all.

We call on European political parties and groups to make civic space and civil dialogue central topics in the 2024 European elections, and on the future European Parliament and European Commission to take concrete steps during the next five years to better recognise, protect and engage civil society at all levels.



A European Civil Society Strategy

While some encouraging measures have been taken at European level in support of civic actors, these will have limited impact in countering the shrinking space trend if there is no comprehensive EU strategy dedicated to civil society.

To fill the gaps in existing policies and to mainstream positive practices, we call on the EU institutions to develop a **Civil Society Strategy aimed at strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders** and at protecting them from attacks and smear campaigns, with the following **key areas**:



A EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY

A safe and enabling environment for civil society

- **An open, safe, accessible and enabling regulatory and political environment** is a prerequisite for civil society to thrive and meaningfully play its fundamental role. All restrictions to civic space and barriers to action must be removed, and freedom of association, assembly and expression must be guaranteed at any time in all civic matters, as enshrined in EU and international law.
- We call on decision makers and institutions at EU and national level to commit to the formal recognition of the role, value, and specificity of civil society, and to speak up to promote them. They should also commit to protect and support CSOs through different regulatory and policy measures, as well as ensure that all policies impacting the civil society sector are in line with EU fundamental rights.
- As societal challenges have an increasingly European or even global dimension, it is critical to enable full transnational cooperation among CSOs. Existing obstacles to civil society cross-border activities - e.g. legal and fiscal uncertainties - should be addressed.



A EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY

An **EU mechanism to protect civil society, activists and defenders**

- Civil society staff and volunteers, human rights and environmental activists and defenders, as well as the communities they represent, **must be protected from all forms of discrimination on any ground, and from judicial or other forms of harassment, violence or ill-treatment.** Special attention should be placed on minorities, marginalised groups and those who defend them, who are more frequently under attack.
- We call on the EU to develop a mechanism that allows CSOs, activists and defenders to report on an ongoing basis all forms of attacks, threats, smear campaigns and limitations of civic space, and to address such reports in a timely manner. This mechanism should include an early warning system to help prevent such threats from arising.



A EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY

Adequate funding

- As civil society actors we need proper human, material and financial resources to carry out our role effectively. **Access to multi-annual, consistent, and flexible structural funding for CSOs should be guaranteed** to respond to operational needs and ensure stability, long-term planning and independence.
- Civil society should be involved from the beginning in the design of funding policies and programmes, including the definition of thematic priorities and accessibility criteria. A structured mechanism should be put in place to ensure adequate and regular dialogue and information flow between civil society and public donors on the implementation of funding programmes.
- **Overall accessibility to funding should be increased**, especially for small-size, grassroots and volunteer-run organisations, by simplifying administrative procedures and reducing the overall bureaucratic burden. CSOs should also be guaranteed increased access to core funding in the shape of grants, to carry out their policy and advocacy work on behalf of the groups and communities they represent.
- EU and national policies should remove regulatory and fiscal obstacles to access funding and donations, including across borders, and facilitate cross-border philanthropy.



A civil dialogue agreement

Civil dialogue should be organised on an equal footing to social dialogue along the entire policy-making cycle and treated as distinct and complementary to forms of citizen engagement.

We call on the EU institutions to conclude a civil dialogue agreement, **recognising civil dialogue as an essential element of European participatory democracy**. This agreement should be developed in cooperation with civil society, to ensure it fully reflects its needs.

It should aim to harmonise standards for civil dialogue across EU institutions and Member States, so that every opportunity for civil dialogue leads to quality engagement. It should also provide space for cross-sectoral dialogue on transversal developments and strategic priorities.

- CSOs in all their diversity need to be given a real seat at the table to contribute meaningfully to all steps of policy-making - at both EU and national level - on behalf of the groups and communities they represent, going beyond box ticking exercises and consultations. CSOs should be involved as key strategic partners in the co-creation of policies, programme development, policy debates and agenda-setting exercises, among others.
- Openness and transparency of EU and national policy processes should be increased, ensuring effective access to decision-makers and to documents - including legislative preparatory works - and making all relevant information available in an accessible, clear and timely manner.



- The mandate of the Vice President of both the European Parliament and the European Commission in charge of dialogue with civil society needs to be confirmed and further strengthened. It should be developed to ensure a more structured civil dialogue, as well as to assess overall coherence of EU policies impacting on civil society, with the aim of supporting a thriving civic space. The mandate should also include proactive support for civic actors under pressure.
- Permanent civil dialogue structures should be created at the appropriate level in each relevant Member State and EU institution - including the European Council - ensuring overall consistency and coordination within and among institutions. CSOs taking part in such structures should receive adequate support in terms of funding and resources to ensure the operational capacity to meaningfully participate in such dialogues.



About the manifesto

proponents

Civil Society for EU is a broad and diverse coalition of civil society and philanthropy organisations at the EU and national level, working in fields such as human rights, social policies, international cooperation, democracy support, environment, health, youth, children, women and girls, and the representation of marginalised groups.

We collectively represent millions of people living in the EU and are independent of any political party.

For all matters regarding the manifesto and campaign, please contact Social Platform and Civil Society Europe at: **platform@socialplatform.org** or **info@civilsocietyeurope.eu**



Initial list of endorsers:

EU-level organisations and networks

1. Access Info Europe
2. ACT Alliance EU
3. Action Européenne des Handicapés (AEH)
4. ADRA Europe
5. AEGEE-Europe / European Students' Forum
6. AIDS Action Europe
7. Alzheimer Europe
8. Amnesty International - European Institutions Office
9. Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale (AFEM)
10. Association for Natural Medicine in Europe (ANME)
11. ATD Fourth World
12. Autism-Europe
13. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
14. Brot für die Welt
15. Caritas Europa
16. Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)
17. Civil Liberties Union for Europe
18. Civil Society Europe
19. CONCORD Europe
20. Corporate Europe Observatory
21. Defend Democracy
22. Democracy International
23. Election-Watch.EU
24. End FGM European Network
25. ENGSO/ENGSO Youth
26. EU4Health Civil Society Alliance
27. Eurochild
28. Eurodiaconia
29. Eurogroup for Animals
30. European AIDS Treatment Group
31. European Alternatives
32. European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
33. European Association for the Education of Adults
34. European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD)
35. European Center for Not-for-Profit Law Stichting
36. European Civic Forum
37. European Council of Associations of General Interest (CEDAG)
38. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
39. European Disability Forum
40. European Federation for Family Employment and Home Care (EFFE)
41. European Forum of Muslim Women
42. European Liver Patients' Organisation (ELPA)
43. European Network Against Racism
44. European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention
45. European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)
46. European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE)
47. European Network on Religion & Belief



48. European Parents' Association (EPA)
49. European Partnership for Democracy
50. European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
51. European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
52. European Scout Region of the World - Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM)
53. European Students' Union (ESU)
54. European Youth Forum
55. EURORDIS - Rare Diseases Europe
56. Fédération internationale des ACAT (FIACAT)
57. FH Europe Foundation
58. Finance Watch
59. Friends of the Earth Europe
60. Health Action International
61. Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN)
62. IFSW Europe
63. IGLYO - The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation
64. ILGA-Europe
65. Indigo Rights
66. International Federation of Social Workers Europe
67. International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN)
68. International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)
69. La Strada International
70. Lifelong Learning Platform
71. Make Mothers Matter
72. Mental Health Europe
73. NOVACT
74. Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
75. Oxfam
76. Philea
77. Phiren Amencia International Network
78. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
79. Quaker Council for European Affairs
80. RECLAIM
81. RREUSE
82. Safe Food Advocacy Europe
83. Samaritan International
84. Save the Children Europe
85. SDG Watch Europe
86. SOLIDAR
87. Social Platform
88. Surfrider Foundation Europe
89. Terre des Hommes International Federation
90. The Good Lobby
91. Transparency International EU
92. Transport & Environment
93. Validity Foundation - Mental Disability Advocacy Centre
94. Victim Support Europe
95. Volonteuropé
96. Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network
97. WWF European Policy Office
98. YES Forum



Austria

- 99. Gaia Education
- 100. ÖJAB

Belgium

- 101. ACODEV
- 102. CNCD-11.11.11
- 103. European Patients' Forum
- 104. GAMS Belgium
- 105. Pour la Solidarité (PLS)

Bulgaria

- 106. Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
- 107. Bulgarian Platform EWL
- 108. The Collective Foundation

Croatia

- 109. Gong

Cyprus

- 110. Cyprus Liver Patients Association

Czech Republic

- 111. EDA cz
- 112. Spiralis

Denmark

- 113. Baltic Sea NGO Network, Denmark
- 114. BROEN Danmark
- 115. Danish NGO Network for International Project Work
- 116. Global Focus
- 117. Nyt Europa

France

- 118. Equipop
- 119. European University Institute (EUI)

- 120. Le Mouvement Associatif
- 121. Ligue de l'Enseignement
- 122. Réseau Euromed France (REF)
- 123. VoxPublic

Germany

- 124. Algorithmwatch
- 125. Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement
- 126. Democracy Reporting International

Greece

- 127. Greek Forum of Refugees
- 128. Inter Alia
- 129. SolidarityNow

Hungary

- 130. Clean Air Action Group
- 131. Ökotárs - Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
- 132. Roots and Wings Foundation

Ireland

- 133. Alcohol Action Ireland
- 134. AsIAm - Ireland's National Autism Charity
- 135. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
- 136. The Wheel

Italy

- 137. A.N.G.E.V.-Pro.Civ. OdV
- 138. ARCI
- 139. Associazione Italiana Medici per l'Ambiente (ISDE)
- 140. COSPE
- 141. European Movement Italy
- 142. EUROPIAMO ETS



- 143. Italia Nostra Onlus-APS
- 144. Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie
- 145. LILA - Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro l'AIDS
- 146. Verdi Ambiente e Società

Latvia

- 147. Čiekurkalna attīstības biedrība
- 148. Civic Alliance - Latvia
- 149. European Movement - Latvia
- 150. Latvian Network of Patient Organizations

Lithuania

- 151. Human Rights Monitoring Institute

Malta

- 152. Malta Health Network

Netherlands

- 153. Netherlands Helsinki Committee

Poland

- 154. OFOP - National Federation of Polish NGOs
- 155. Panoptykon Foundation
- 156. Partnership Fund
- 157. Stowarzyszenie Trenerskie Organizacji Pozarządowych

Portugal

- 158. ACI - Centro InterCulturaCidade
- 159. Associação Portuguesa para a Cultura e Educação Permanente
- 160. CASES
- 161. Federação Nacional dos Estudos Europeus
- 162. Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD

Romania

- 163. Asociația Pacienților cu Afecțiuni Hepatice din România (APAH-RO)
- 164. Centrul FILIA
- 165. Civic Radauti Association
- 166. Civil Society Development Foundation
- 167. Diaspora Solidarity Group
- 168. Fundatia Pentru Parteneriat
- 169. Justitie pentru minori
- 170. Resource Center for Public Participation (CeRe)

Slovakia

- 171. Ekopolis Foundation
- 172. Sanca Pre Pecen

Slovenia

- 173. CNVOS

Spain

- 174. ACEFIR
- 175. Asociación Española de Deficit de Lipasa Acida Lisosomal (AELALD)
- 176. Federaciòn de asociaciones de mujeres arena y laurisilva
- 177. FNETH
- 178. Fundación CIVES
- 179. Òmnium Cultural
- 180. Plataforma del Tercer Sector
- 181. Red Acoge

Sweden

- 182. Frälsningsarmén
- 183. Riksföreningen hepatit C - och andra leversjukdomar



Non-EU countries

184. CIVICUS

185. Child Rights Centre Albania
(CRCA/ECPAT Albania)

186. Civil Society Consulting

187. Drug Policy Network South East
Europe

188. European Platform for Democratic
Elections

189. Hope and Homes for Children

190. InterAgency Institute

191. SOS Podgorica - SOS telephone
for women and children victims of
violence Podgorica



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