



ökotárs
alapítvány

Towards a comprehensive EU civil society policy/strategy

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The need – current situation

Civil society needs an enabling environment in order to fulfill its role in upholding democracy and European values



Shrinking civil space in the EU – harassment and restrictions of the free operation of CSOs observed in more and more countries

Civil society affairs is largely Member State competence



CSOs look at the EU as a supportive political actor and a donor

The way forward?

Current EU instruments only allow for a piecemeal, case-by-case reaction (e.g. infringements), while a more systemic, 'big picture' approach would be necessary.



Hence the need for a comprehensive civil society strategy or policy (as in external affairs), e.g.
Commission White Paper

Possible components:

Minimum standards of civic freedoms

Interpretation and implementation of relevant international treaties:

- (1) the right to entry (freedom of association);
- (2) the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference;
- (3) the right to free expression;
- (4) the right to cooperation and communication;
- (5) the right to freedom of peaceful assembly;
- (6) the right to seek and secure resources;
- (7) state duty to protect.

What Member States should do and refrain from doing?

Monitoring and flagging

Regular monitoring „**European Democracy Semester**” – review the implementation of minimum standards

Regular EU surveys on the state and trends of civil society – mandate the **Fundamental Rights Agency**

High-level „whistleblower” in case of breaches – e.g. the **Ombudsman**

Structured dialogue

Between EU institutions and organised civil society

- the Commission
- Individual Commissioners and DGs
- Chair of the Parliament
- Committees of the Parliament
- Council Presidency

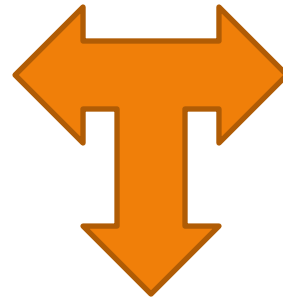
Modalities and timetables to be develop:

- who – participants
- when – how often
- where and how to access / participate

Follow-up of outcomes

Civic education

Effective civic education
is a precondition of the
enabling environment



CSOs can contribute
through their own
activities and projects

Minimum standards / guidelines for a European curriculum of
citizen education – Council of Europe Charter

Facilitate relations among CSOs and education institutions

European CSO registration

Explore potential avenues to help CSOs whose existence is threatened in a Member State and /or more efficient European-level operation:

- European foundation /association statutes (earlier advocacy by the philanthropic sector, 2012-15)
- Recognition of CSOs in countries other than their own (Council of Europe Convention)
- Enable / facilitate relocation in case of need

Strengthen 3rd group of EESC

The European Economic and Social Council is an important consultative body with civil society represented

- CSO delegates should be elected in an open and fair process (not simply nominated by governments)

Media independence

Unbiased reporting and coverage of CSOs is important to increase visibility and credibility

- Amendment of the Audio-Visual Media Services Directive and competition rules

Participation on all levels

Participation on local and national level should be boosted – guidelines

e.g.

- participatory budgeting
- procurement rules

Anti-money laundering rules

Efforts to counter terrorism financing and anti-money laundering should not disproportionately affect and harm legitimate CSOs (e.g. bank de-risking)

- Commission should continue working with expert CSOs and their recommendations (see www.fatfplatform.org)

Funding for civil society

Justice, Rights & Values program:

- Allocation of 1.83 billion € for 2021-27 (in accordance with the Parliament's decision)
- Procedures to allow meaningful access of CSOs working on the local / national level, and guarantees that support is provided to those truly working on democracy (including re-granting)
- Provide support to
 - independent media
 - civic education
 - legal training and litigation
 - work with vulnerable groups



NEXT STEPS?

Thank you for your attention

www.environmentalpartnership.org