Ms Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission  

cc: Ms Vera Jourova  
Vice-President of the European Commission  

Mr Didier Reynders  
Commissioner for Justice  

Brussels, 21 June 2022  

Object: European Commission work programme 2023: the need to include the development of a European Civil Society Strategy

Honourable President,

We, civil society organisations acting at local, national and European level, call on the European Commission to include in the work programme of 2023 a proposal for a European Civil Society Strategy¹.

Civil society organisations, such as citizens’ associations, NGOs and public benefits foundations, and human rights defenders are instrumental to make effective the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the rights proclaimed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, on a daily basis, both at European and national level.

Our action strives to leave no one behind and is crucial in the area of culture, social care, education, health, anti-corruption, environment, anti-discrimination and much more.

¹ European Civic Forum, TOWARDS VIBRANT EUROPEAN CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE. The case for a European civil society strategy and preliminary reflections on the gaps, challenges and opportunities to be addressed (2022).
We intervene as democratic antibodies when rights, democracy and the rule of law are under attack.

Our role is key to build public spaces, upscale participatory democracy and channel citizens' participation.

Our rapid mobilisations and recommendations have been and are essential in the context of the multifaceted crises affecting our societies which each time exacerbate the many vulnerabilities people are confronted with, such as the financial crisis in the early 2010s, the COVID-19 pandemic, the humanitarian crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the environmental catastrophes resulting from the climate emergency.

Unfortunately, evidence from the field\(^2\) shows growing obstacles and attacks affecting civil society’s ability to act in full capacities and independence, as research\(^3\) and the findings of the European Commission rule of law report\(^4\) confirm. As a result of these attacks, our collective European future is jeopardised.

The ongoing measures and actions taken at the European level in support of civic actors’ activities have mostly been limited in scope and impact. It is now urgent to provide an overarching solution to fill the gaps of existing policies and mainstream positive practices.

The call for a civil society strategy has been a long-term demand of CSOs at European and national level\(^5\). This demand is now supported by a European Parliament resolution on the shrinking space for civil society in Europe (2021/2103(INI)) voted with a large majority on 8 March 2022, and recommendation 36.8 of final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe\(^6\).

\(^2\) European Civic Forum, Civic Space Watch report 2021 - ACTIVIZENSHIP #6 (2022); Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Bringing human rights and Article 2 values to life: the roles, challenges and solutions for civil society (2022); Civil Society Europe, Contribution to 2022 Rule of Law Report (2022); CIVICUS, People Power under attack 2021 (2022); European Youth Forum, Safeguarding civic space for young people in Europe (2022).

\(^3\) European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Protecting civic space in the EU (2021); Civic space – experiences of organisations in 2019 (2020); Civil society space: views of organisations (2018); Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU (2018).


We urge the European Commission to consider all this, and in consequence to give substance to the mandate of the Vice President of the European Commission for values and transparency and resources for carrying out a regular, open and transparent civil dialogue - along the provision of Article 11 of the Treaty - and safeguard civil society space by developing, in cooperation with CSOs and human rights defenders, a comprehensive European civil society strategy before the end of the current five-years term.

We remain at your disposal to discuss the overall content of such a strategy, and the steps to be started immediately.

For further communication, you can contact the initiators of the letter: Civil Society Europe (Carlotta Besozzi, carlotta.besozzi@civilsocietyeurope.eu) and European Civic Forum (Alexandrina Najmowicz, anajmowicz@civic-forum.eu).

Initial signatories:

**European organisations and networks**

1. Alzheimer Europe
2. Amnesty International
3. Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE)
4. Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)
5. Civil Liberties Union for Europe
6. CIVICUS
7. Compassion in World Farming EU
8. CONCORD Europe
9. Culture Action Europe
10. Eurochild
11. Eurodiaconia
12. Eurogroup for Animals
13. European Alliance for Responsible R&D and Affordable Medicines
14. European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
15. European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD)
16. European Citizen Action Network (ECAS)
17. European Civic Forum
18. European Council of Associations of General Interest (Comité européen des associations d'intérêt général - CEDAG)
19. European Disability Forum
20. European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
21. European Federation of Elderly and Retired People
22. European Federation for Intercultural Learning
23. European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW)
24. European Humanist Federation
25. European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
26. European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP)
27. European Network on Religion & Belief
28. European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)
29. European Patients’ Forum
30. European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
31. European Rivers Network (ERN)
32. European Students’ Union (ESU)
33. European Union of Mountaineering Associations (EUMA)
34. European Women’s Lobby
35. European Youth Forum
36. EURORDIS - Rare Diseases Europe
37. EU4Health Civil Society Alliance
38. Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)
39. Green 10
40. Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), EU Internal Human Rights Policy Working Group
41. Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
42. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
43. International Federation of ACAT (FIACAT)
44. JEUNE - Young Entrepreneurs Organization of European Union
45. Lifelong Learning Platform
46. New Europeans
47. Oxfam
48. Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association
49. RECLAIM (reclaiming.eu)
50. Revibra Europa
51. SMES - Europa (Santé Mentale Exclusion Sociale)
52. Social Platform
53. SOLIDAR Foundation
54. Transparency International EU
55. Volonteurope
56. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
57. YES Forum
58. Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)

Austria
59. Documentation and Counseling Center Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism (Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus)
60. Global Responsibility - Austrian Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid
61. Interest Group of Public Benefit Organisations (IGO - Die Stimme der Gemeinnützigen)
62. RED NOSES - Clowndoctors International
63. South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)

Belgium
64. Association for Ethics in Fundraising (VEF-AERF)
65. Belgian Federation of Philanthropic Foundations (lesfondations.be - stichtingen.be)
66. De Verenigde Verenigingen
67. Kif Kif
68. Pour la Solidarité (PLS)

Bulgaria
69. Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL)
70. Bulgarian Institute for Legal Initiatives (BILI)
71. Citizen Participation Forum (CPF)
72. European Institute Foundation

Croatia
73. Association for Civil Society Development - SMART
74. Association Terra
75. Center for Cultural Activities
76. Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights - Osijek
77. Centre for Peace Studies - Croatia (CMS)
78. Civil Rights Project - Sisak
79. Community Foundation Slagalica
80. Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL)
81. Croatian Union of Associations for Autism (SUZAH)
82. Croatian Volunteer Development Centre
83. Croatian Youth Network (Mreža mladih Hrvatske)
84. DKOlektiv - organizacija za društveni razvoj (Organisation for Social Development)
85. Dragodid
86. Društvo za istraživanje i potporu (Society for Research and Support)
87. Europska civilna inicijativa Zagreb
88. Gong
89. Human Rights House Zagreb
90. Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (ISRZ)
91. ISKORAK
92. Kurziv - Platforma za pitanja kulture, medija i društva (Platform for Matters of Culture, Media and Society)
93. ODRAZ - Održivi razvoj zajednice
94. Parents in Action (RODA)
95. Politiscope
96. Rehabilitation Center for Stress and Trauma (RCT Zagreb)
97. SOLIDARNA Foundation

Cyprus
98. Civil Society Advocates
99. KISA - Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism
100. NGO Support Centre

Czech Republic
101. Asociace NNO Libereckého kraje, ZO ČSOP Armillaria
102. Association for International Affairs (AMO)
103. Aufori, o.p.s.
104. Centrum Kašpar, z.s.
105. ClimaCare, z. s., Mendel University in Brno
106. Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation
107. Czech Forest Kindergartens Association
108. Czech Helsinki Committee
109. Czech High School Students’ Union (CSU)
110. DEMAS - Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights
111. Evropský Institut Renaissance
112. Glopolis
113. Independent Social Ecological Movement (NESEHNUTI)
114. Nadace na ochranu zvířat
115. Nadační fond proti korupci
116. Nova sit z.s.
117. Okrašlovací spolek čelákovický
118. Open Society Fund Prague
119. Platform for Citizen’s Assemblies
120. RADKA z.s.
121. Reconstruction of the State
122. Spiralis - Platform for NGO’s Development
123. Systemický institut, s.r.o.
124. Zakroužkuj ženu, z.s.
125. EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>126. ENAR - Denmark &amp; Ethnic Debate Forum</td>
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<td>127. Fairplay</td>
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<td>128. Nyt Europa</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
<td>129. Estonian Human Rights Centre</td>
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<td>130. Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations (NENO)</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
<td>131. Anti-Racist Forum (ARF)</td>
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<td>132. Central Union for Child Welfare (Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto - LSKL)</td>
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<td>133. Migrant Tales</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>134. Action Droits des Musulmans (ADM)</td>
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<td>135. Animafac</td>
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<td>136. Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS)</td>
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<td>137. Cap Magellan</td>
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<td>138. Collectif des Associations Citoyennes (CAC)</td>
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<td>139. CRID (Centre de Recherche et d’Information pour le Développement)</td>
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<td>140. Fédération Française des Maisons de l’Europe (FFME)</td>
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<td>142. La Coalition pour les Libertés Associatives (L.A. Coalition)</td>
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<td>146. Ligue des Droits de l’Homme</td>
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<td>147. Maison de l’Europe de Paris</td>
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<td>148. Parlement Européen des Jeunes - France</td>
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<td>149. Pas Sans Nous</td>
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<td>150. Tous Migrants</td>
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<td>151. VoxPublic</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>152. #mybrainmychoice Initiative</td>
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<td>153. Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt e.V.</td>
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<td>154. Allianz Kulturstiftung</td>
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<td>155. Allianz &quot;Rechtssicherheit für politische Willensbildung&quot;</td>
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<td>156. Amadeu Antonio Stiftung</td>
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<td>157. Association of German Foundations (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen)</td>
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<td>158. Bewegungsstiftung in Verden</td>
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<td>159. Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (National Network for Civil</td>
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<td>Society - BBE)</td>
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<td>160. Bundesverband Mobile Beratung e.V. (BMB)</td>
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<td>162. Collective Leadership Institute</td>
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<td>163. Democracy International e.V.</td>
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<td>164. Deutsch-Bulgarische Elterninitiative &quot;Jan Bibijan&quot; e.V.</td>
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<td>165. EuropaNova Germany</td>
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<td>166. Forschungs- und Dokumentationszentrum</td>
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<td>167. Forum Menschenrechte</td>
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<td>168. Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V. (forumZFD)</td>
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<td>169. German Fundraising Association</td>
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<td>170. Grundrechte Komitee</td>
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<td>171. Guatemalagruppe Nürnberg e. V.</td>
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<td>172. Guerrilla Foundation</td>
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<td>174. Interessenvertretung Selbstbestimmt Leben in Deutschland e.V. (ISL)</td>
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175. issa e.V.
176. Maecenata Foundation
177. MENSCHENRECHTE 3000 e.V.
178. Society for Threatened Peoples (Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker)
179. TERRE DES FEMMES e.V.
180. Verband der Beraungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt (VBRG)
181. Wartesaal - Kultur in Besigheim e.V.
182. We are Europe! e.V.
183. World, Economy, Ecology & Development - WEED e.V.
184. Whistleblower-Netzwerk (WBN)

**Ireland**

185. ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non Violence
186. Consumers' Association “The Quality of Life” - EKPIZO
187. ECOCITY
188. Greek Forum of Migrants
189. Greek Forum of Refugees
190. Ivorian Community Of Greece (La Communauté Ivoirienne de la Grèce - CIG)
191. SolidarityNow

**Greece**

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191. SolidarityNow

**Hungary**

192. Danubiana Network
193. European House (EH)
194. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU)
195. Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC)
196. Nyomtass te is!
197. Ökotárs Alapítvány (Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation)

**Italy**

198. Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland
199. CityWide Drugs Crisis Campaign
200. Intersex Ireland
201. Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC)
202. Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
203. One Family
204. Outhouse - LGBT+ Community Centre
205. The Wheel
206. Voluntary Service International (VSI)
207. Waterford Integration Services

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**Latvia**

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207. Waterford Integration Services
Lithuania
224. Center for Equality Advancement
225. National NGO Coalition
226. Non-Governmental Organisation
   Information and Support Centre (NISC)

Malta
227. Migrant Women Association Malta
228. SOS Malta

Netherlands
229. Association of Charitable Funds in
     The Netherlands (FIN)
230. Citizens’ Climate Europe
231. Dutch Association of Volunteer
     Organizations (Vereniging Nederlandse
     Organisaties Vrijwilligerswerk - NOV)
232. European Network for Citizen
     Initiatives in Global Solidarity
233. Goede Doelen Nederland
234. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
     (NHC)
235. Netwerk Democratie
236. Partin

Poland
237. Association for Legal Intervention
     (SIP)
238. "Blue Line" - Institute of Health
     Psychology Polish Psychological
     Association
239. Citizens Network Watchdog Poland
240. Civic Movement Citizens for
     Education
241. Comenius Foundation for Child
     Development
242. Committee for the Defence of
     Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji
     - KOD)
243. Foundation for Polish Science (FNP)
244. Fundacja Centrum im. prof.
     Bronisława Geremka
245. Fundacja Collegium Polonicum
246. Fundacja Dokładam Się
247. Fundacja Edukacji Parlamentarnej
248. Fundacja Idealna Gmina
249. Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana
250. Fundacja Ośrodku KARTA
251. Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji
     Lokalnej im. Jerzego Regulskiego
252. Greenways Poland Association
253. Helsinki Foundation for Human
     Rights (HFHR)
254. In.Europa Institute
255. Information Society Development
     Foundation
256. Inicjatywa 30. Rok Wolności
257. Institute for Sustainable
     Development (ISD) Foundation
258. Institute of Public Affairs (Instytut
     Spraw Publicznych)
259. Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej w
     Warszawie
260. Liberal Culture (Kultura Liberalna)
261. National Federation of Polish NGOs
     (OFOP)
262. Open Republic - Association against
     Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia
263. Panoptikon Foundation
264. Parents in Education Association
     (Stowarzyszenie Rodzice w Edukacji)
265. Partnership Fund
266. Polish Donors Forum
267. Polish Women’s Strike (Ogólnopolski
     Strajk Kobiet)
268. Polska Fundacja im. Roberta
     Schumana
269. Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze Oddział Żyrardów
270. Polish Janusz Korczak Association (Polskie Stowarzyszenie im. Janusza Korczaka)
271. School with Class Foundation (Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą)
272. Shipyard Foundation (Fundacja Stoczni)
273. Stefan Batory Foundation (Batorego Fundacja)
274. The Field of Dialogue Foundation (Fundacja Pole Dialogu)

**Slovakia**

288. Association for Culture, Education and Communication (ACEC)
289. Association of social services providers in the Slovak Republic
290. Carpathian Foundation Slovakia (Karpatská nadácia)
291. Center for Community Organizing
292. Center for Environmental Activities (Centrum environmentálnych aktivít)
293. Centre for Philanthropy (Centrum pre filantropiu n.o.)
294. Cvernovka Foundation
295. Donio n.f.
296. Ekopolis Foundation
297. Friends of the Earth-CEPA
298. Iniciatíva Inakosť
299. Institute for Public Affairs Slovakia
300. Open Society Foundation (Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti Bratislava NOS-OSF)
301. Nadacia Rafael
302. PDCS
303. People in Need Slovakia
304. Post Bellum Slovakia
305. Slovak humanitarian council
306. Slovak Mountain Rescue Team Mala Fatra Region
307. SOSNA
308. Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations

**Portugal**

275. Academia Cidadã - Citizenship Academy
276. Djass - Association of Afrodescendants
277. Plataforma PAJE
278. Portuguese NGO Platform (Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD)
279. Transparency International Portugal

**Romania**

280. 2Celsius
281. ACIA - Asociatia de Constientizare a Industriei Agricole
282. ActiveWatch
283. APADOR-CH
284. ASFANU - Asociatia Famililor Numeroase
285. Civil Society Development Foundation (Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile - FDSC)
286. Environmental Partnership Foundation
287. Expert Forum Association

**Slovenia**

309. Association for culture and education PiNA
310. Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence
311. Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs (CNVOS)
312. Društvo Ekologi brez meja
313. Focus Association for Sustainable Development
314. Humanitas - Centre for Global Learning and Cooperation
315. Institute Circle
316. LRF za Pomurje
317. Peace Institute
318. Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (PIC)
319. Regionalno stisisce Novus
320. Slovenian NGO platform for development, global education and humanitarian aid (SLOGA)
321. Umanotera, The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development
322. Zavod Dobra druzba
323. Zavod PIP
324. Zavod TRI
325. ZLHT

Spain
326. Asociación Baizara
327. Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana
328. Calala Women’s Fund
329. Fundacion CIVES
330. Irídia, Centre per la Defensa dels Drets Humans
331. Liga Española de la Educación
332. NOVACT - International Institute for Nonviolent Action
333. Òmnium Cultural

Non-EU countries
334. Agora Association, Turkey
335. ALFA Centre Niksic, Montenegro