

NGOS UNDER ATTACK

570+ ORGANISATIONS JOIN FORCES TO DEFEND CIVIL SOCIETY

Unprecedented Attacks on NGOs in the EU - We Call on All Democratic Forces To Act for a Strong and Independent Civil Society

Civil Society Statement

European civil society organisations (CSOs) are currently facing an unprecedented attack coming from certain Members of the European Parliament. The attack, spearheaded by some MEPs from the European People's Party (EPP) and by the far-right groups, is fuelled by disinformation. The attack resorts to misleading arguments to artificially fabricate a scandal, and is carried and amplified by badly informed media articles. At a time when democratic values are being eroded across the EU and Member States, and civic actors acting for these values are increasingly under attack, this renewed offensive on funding for CSOs and on our legitimacy in the democratic process risks not only shrinking European civic spaces further but weakening democracy as a whole.

Disinformation from elected Members of Parliament

On 22 January 2025, some MEPs brought a targeted debate to the Plenary of the European Parliament (EP) on public funding of NGOs, focusing on environmental civil society organisations receiving operating grants under the LIFE programme. The debate raised questions about the legitimacy for CSOs to get such subsidies from the European Commission to carry out their missions. Many MEPs spoke in favour of the right of citizens organisations to engage in the democratic process. However, some MEPs mismatched arguments, suggesting that environmental organisations had been paid by the Commission to lobby the European Parliament on its behalf. This false narrative brings together opponents to the European Green Deal and adepts of conspiracy theory. MEPs wrongly spoke about fictional amounts of billions of Euros going to CSOs. False claims that CSOs were not duly using the Transparency Register were made – even though EU transparency measures resulted from campaigns by civil society, and CSOs were amongst the first adopters when they were put in place.

Why should CSOs receive public funding?

The focus of the current attacks is the EU's LIFE programme, the main funding instrument for nature conservation and climate action.

It totals around €700 million per year. As part of this programme, the EU Commission allocates €15.6 million annually across a number of environmental NGOs in compliance with the provisions agreed by the European Parliament and the EU member States after a competitive and open procedure to support civil society's invaluable role in providing evidence-based, scientifically supported and constructive recommendations to policymakers on issues that matter to people.

These funds are already dramatically insufficient to pursue the goals they are tasked to support: create a level-playing field,¹ helping policy makers access information, fact-based evidence and best practices from the ground; and hear about citizens' needs and expectations for their health and wellbeing, social inclusion and equality, their rights and justice, the promotion of the rule of law, the fight against corruption, and a healthy environment for current and future generations. Millions of citizens support these contributions to EU policies, through national, local and grassroots constituencies, volunteering and community engagement, provision of services and access to rights for the most vulnerable and excluded.

For a strong civil society, the development of a framework for civil dialogue based on Art.11 TEU is a priority for this five-years term for the EU institutions. Properly resourcing civil society organisations to engage in this dialogue by involving their constituencies across Europe is crucial. In the EU, as in any democracy, public funding is needed to support the work of civil society organisations whose mission and objectives are strengthening the values enshrined in the treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

It is a characteristic of authoritarian regimes that institutions consider no intermediary bodies are needed and that citizens are fully and only represented by the leader/s they elected. Indeed, the current debate illustrates the overall confrontation underway between European values and autocratic perspectives.

We call on all democratic forces to oppose false narratives and disinformation around the role of civil society organisations, to protect our unique role in European democracy and to support public funding for civil society. Civic participation is an essential pillar of our shared European values. We call on decision-makers to ensure a robust legal framework in which civil society and citizens organisations can thrive and play their role in interacting with policy-makers in order to have a more fully informed decision-making process. Democracy is about the right of citizens to be collectively heard for building an inclusive society and a shared European future and properly funded independent CSOs are a crucial tool for that.

¹ For-profit corporate lobbying in Brussels is off the charts compared to advocacy of not-for-profit organisations. In 2024, the 50 corporations with the largest lobbying budgets collectively spent nearly €200 million on lobbying the EU alone (66% more than in 2015), played a decisive role in weakening or discarding many vital policies within the European Green Deal, public health and natural resources for future generations.

Supported by:

European organisations

ADRA Europe
Agroecology Europe
AIDS Action Europe
ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy
Alliance4Europe
Alzheimer Europe
Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale AFEM
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
Caritas Europa
CEE Bankwatch Network
Centre for European Volunteering
Cerebral Palsy Europe
CESES - Confederation of European Senior Expert Services
ClientEarth
Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
COMMUNIA - Association for the Public Domain
CONCORD Europe
Cool Heating Coalition
Corporate Europe Observatory
Culture Action Europe
DARE network - Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe
Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE) Network
Drug Policy Network South East Europe
DSW - Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung
DYPALL Network
ECIT foundation on European Citizenship
ECOLISE AISBL
Erasmus Student Network
EU LAT Network
Eumans
Eurocarers
Eurodiaconia
Eurogroup for Animals
EuroMed Rights
European Alternatives
European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)
European Citizen Action Service
European Civic Forum
European Disability Forum
European Dyslexia Association
European Environmental Bureau
European Federation of Journalists
European Folk Network

European Liver Patients' Association - ELPA
European Music Managers Alliance
European Network against Racism (ENAR)
European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention-ENSP
European Network of Cultural Centres / ENCC
European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad)
European Partnership for Democracy
European Students' Union
European Youth Forum
Fédération Internationale des ACAT
Fédération Spéléologique Européenne
FEMYSO - Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations
Friends of the Earth Europe
Greenpeace
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)
HRDN (Human Rights & Democracy Network)
IGLYO - International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex
Youth and Student Organisation
International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network
Liberties - The Civil Liberties Union for Europe
Lifelong Learning Platform
Michael Culture Association
OBESSU - Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions
Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa
Pesticide Action Network Europe
Quaker Council for European Affairs
REScoop.eu
Samaritan International
Seas At Risk
Shifting Advocacy
Social Platform
SOLIDAR
T&E - Transport and Environment
The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
Trans Europe and Central Asia (TGEU)
Transparency International EU
Union of European Federalists
Volonteuropé
Wetlands International Europe
Women Engage for a Common Future
WWF EU
YEU International
Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)
Youth and Environment Europe
Zero Waste Europe

Austria

ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA

Austrian Council on Smoking & Health

GLOBAL 2000

oevdf - association of Austrian experts in the field of drugs

ÖJAB - Österreichische Jungarbeiter Bewegung

Österreichische Liga für Menschenrechte

Südwind

Belgium

ARPi

Association of European Journalists in Belgium (AEJ Belgium)

BASTA!

Belgian Alliance for a Smoke-Free Society

Bond Beter Leefmilieu

Carbon Market Watch

Institute for international assistance and solidarity (IFIAS)

Kif Kif vzw

Les Amis de la Terre - Belgique asbl

Mutualité Chrétienne - Christelijke Mutualiteit

Natagora

OXY Belgium

Protestants Sociaal Centrum Antwerpen

The School for Moral Ambition

UTSOPI

Bulgaria

Alliance for regional and civil initiatives (ARCI)

Blg Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria

Bulgarian platform European Women's Lobby

Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID)

Dose of love Association

Economic Policy Institute

European Institute Foundation

Marginalia

Multi Kulti Collective

National Network for Children - Bulgaria

Union of Bulgarian Journalists

Young, Active, Creative NGO

Croatia

ADRA Hrvatska
BIOM Association
Brodsko ekološko društvo-BED
Centre for Peace Studies
Centre for peace, nonviolence and human rights-Osijek
Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL)
Croatian Volunteer Development Centre (Hrvatski centar za razvoj volonterstva)
DKolektiv
Forum for Freedom in Education
Gong
Human Rights House Zagreb
Information Legal Centre
IPE
ISKORAK
kolektIRV | For the rights of trans, intersex and gender variant persons
LAG Zagorje-Sutla
Life Quality Improvement Organisation FLIGHT
Marine Explorers Society 20000 Leagues
NGO "Eko-Zadar"
Status M
Terra Hub Croatia
Trade Union of Croatian Journalists
Zeleni Osijek

Cyprus

CARDET
Civil Society Advocates
UNION OF CYPRUS JOURNALISTS

Czechia

AutoMat, z.s.
Beleco, z.s.
Centre for Transport and Energy
Czech Forest Kindergarten Association
Děti Země (Children of the Earth)
Ekumenická akademie, z. s. (Ecumenical Academy)
Fórum 50 %
Frank Bold Kids z.s.
Glopolis
Hnutí Brontosaurus
Kavyl z.s.
Klimatická koalice / Czech Climate Coalition

Lesní mateřská škola Hvězdy v lese, z.s

NESEHNUTÍ

Regional Centre for Expertise Czechia

Society for Sustainable Living (STUŽ)

Spiralis

Středisko ekologické výchovy SEVER (Centre for Environmental Education SEVER)

Syndicate of Journalists of the Czech Republic

Ústecké šrouby, z. s.

Zelený kruh (Green Circle)

Denmark

Baltic Sea NGO Network Denmark

Europe Dialogue

HealthTeam for the Homeless

Estonia

Estonian Association of People Using Psychotropic Substances "LUNEST"

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation

Finland

Association of Children's Culture in Finland

Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto (Finnish Association for Nature Conservation)

France

AIDES

AIODD

Cap Magellan

CFDT-Journalistes

CRID

European Center for Human Rights

Génération Futures

Global Health Advocates

La Ligue de l'enseignement

LDH (Ligue des droits de l'Homme)

MeetEU

Mouvement européen France-Vaucluse

nouvelle aube

VoxPublic

Germany

Araminta
BUND e.V. (Friends of the Earth Germany)
Deutsche Aidshilfe
Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa e.V.
German Speleological Federation VdHK
JES Bundesverband
LIFE Bildung Umwelt Chancengleichheit
LobbyControl E.V.
SUPERRR Lab
Sustainable Europe Research Institute, Germany

Greece

Community Rights in Greece
CYCLISIS
DAFNI KEK
Electra Energy
Emfasis Non-Profit
Greek Forum of Refugees
Inter Alia
NIDO Greece
PeerNUPS
Positive Voice - Greek Association of People Living With HIV

Hungary

"I'd like to teach" Movement (Tanítanék Mozgalom)
Alternative Communities Association
Anthropolis Association
Artemisszio Foundation
Civil College Foundation
Civil Platform for Public Education
Clean Air Action Group
Diákszolidaritás Akció
Dialogue Association
Emberség Erejével Alapítvány
Földkelte Foundation
Green Action Association
HAND
Human Platform
Humusz Szövetség
Hungarian Association of Social Workers (= SzMME)

Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
Hungarian Press Union
Hungarian Society for Environmental Education (HSEE)
Jane Goodall Institute Hungary
Magosfa Foundation for Environmental Education and Eco-tourism
Motivation Educational Association
Nyomtass te is! (Print it yourself!)
Ökotárs-Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
Oktatói Hálózat (OHA) - Hungarian Network of Academics Academics
School of Public Life
Tavirozsa Association for Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation

Ireland

An Taisce - the National Trust for Ireland
BirdWatch Ireland
TobaccoFree Research Institute Ireland
Zero Waste Alliance Ireland

Italy

Amici di Sardegna
ARCI APS
ASD VICENZA CALCIO FEMMINILE
Associazione La Strada ODV
Associazione non profit Le cose che vanno International
Centro d'ascolto Mons. Spettu ODV
CIES ONLUS
Concord Italy
Consorzio delle Ong Piemontesi ETS
Cooperativa Sociale Parsec
COSPE
Croce Bianca - Baunei Santa Maria Navarrese
CSV SARDEGNA SOLIDALE ODV
CSVPOLIS
Domus Oristano OdV
EPLI ENTE PROLOCO ITALIANE
European Movement Italy
FNSI - Federazione nazionale Stampa italiana
Fondazione LILA Milano ETS
Forum Droghe APS
Forum nazionale del Terzo Settore
Haliéus
I Mandaresi APS Cagliari
ICARO-ODV

ISCOS
ISDE, International Society of Doctors for Environment Italy
Italian Climate Network
ITANPUD APS
ITARDD Italian Harm Reduction Network
Kyoto Club
L'Isola di Arran ODV
La Mente Comune APS
LEGAMBIENTE
LILA ONLUS NAZIONALE
Marche a Rifiuti Zero ETS
Mediterranea saving humans
MEDREACT
Osservatorio Fairwatch
Paese dell'Acqua
Parsec ngo
Progetto Sud ETS
SITAB (Italian Society of Tobaccology)
Società Italiana di Tabaccologia
SOS Elmas
volontariato sardo

Latvia

Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture
Latvia Hemophilia Society
Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation
Pasaules dabas fonds
Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia
Zero Waste Latvija

Lithuania

Lithuanian Development Cooperation Platform
Lithuanian NGDO Platform
Lithuanian Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition
VšĮ Žiedinė ekonomika

Luxembourg

Action Solidarité Tiers Monde
Associtaion luxembourgeoise des journalistes professionnels (ALJP)
CELL
Cercle de Coopération des ONGD du Luxembourg
Le Soleil dans la Main A.S.B.L.

Malta

Friends of the Earth Malta
Harm Reduction Malta
ReLeaf Malta

The Netherlands

BankTrack
Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network
Defend Democracy
ECNL - European Center for Not-for-Profit Law
Human Security Collective
Liga voor de Rechten van de Mens
Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands)

Poland

Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP, BirdLife Poland)
Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network
Ethnographic Laboratory Association
Expedition Inside Culture Association
Federacja Mazowia
Foundation "Smart Health - Health in 3D"
Green REV Institute
Grupa Zagranica
Habitat for Humanity Poland
Institute for Sustainable Development Foundation
Institute of Public Affairs
Kultura Liberalna
National Federation of Polish NGOs
NOMADA Association
Open Republic – Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia
Panoptykon Foundation
Polish Ecological Club Mazovian Branch
Polish Zero Waste Association
PREKURSOR Foundation
Rodzice dla Klimatu
School with Class Foundation
Social Ecologic Institut
Society of Journalists (Warsaw)
Space for Life Foundation
The Power of Partnership Foundation / Fundacja Moc Partnerstwa [PL]
To Proste Foundation

Portugal

A ROCHA- Associação Cristã de Estudos e Defesa do Ambiente

Academia Cidadã

ACI - Centro InterCulturaCidade

ADRACES

AEPGA - Associação para o Estudo e Protecção do Gado Asinino

Alambi - Associação para o estudo e defesa do ambiente do concelho de Alenquer

ALDEIA

Almargem Associação de Defesa do Património Cultural e Ambiental do Algarve

APDES - Piaget Agency for Development

Ares do Pinhal

Associação ALDEIA

Associação Dunas Livres

Associação Movimento Mira-Minde

Associação Vita Nativa - Conservação do Ambiente

AVE - Associação Vimaranense para a Ecologia

Campo Aberto - associação de defesa do ambiente

CEENTAA associação cultural e ambiental

Confederação Portuguesa do Voluntariado

Cova da Beira Converge

CPADA - Confederação Portuguesa das Associações de Defesa do Ambiente

Evoluir Oeiras Associação

FAPAS - Associação Portuguesa para Conservação da Biodiversidade

GAT - Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos

GEOTA - Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente

Grupo Ecológico de Cascais

Juntos pelo Sudoeste

KASA|PT

Kosmicare

Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (LPN)

Movimento Glocal Faro

NDMALO-GE

Observalicia

Oikos - Cooperação e Desenvolvimento

Palombar - Associação de Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural

Pequena Ilha Verde - Associação de Educação Neohumanista

Pista Mágica

Plataforma Cívica Aeroporto BA6-Montijo Não

PRIP | Cova da Beira Converge

proTEJO - Movimento pelo Tejo

Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza

RWSW

Sciaena

SPEA - Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves

SPECO - Sociedade Portuguesa de Ecologia

Último Recurso

ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável

Romania

ActiveWatch

Aer Pur Romania

AFFMR

ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS

ARC

Asociatia de Ajutor AMURTEL Romania

Asociatia GEYC

Asociatia Nevo Parudimos

Asociatia Orientat

Asociația Română d Consiliere și Sprijin; Grupul de Acțiune Locală Clisura Dunării

Asociatia Samusocial din Romania

Asociatia Unic

Association Rroma Center "Amare Rromentza"

Center for Public Innovation

Center for the Study of Democracy

Centrul FILIA

Civic Radauti Association

CIVICA Association

Civil Society Development Foundation (FDSC)

Civitas Foundation for Civil Society Cluj

E-Romnja Association

Ecoteca

eLiberare

Expert Forum

FEDERATION OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES-FONSS

Fundatia Civitas pentru Societatea Civila - Odorheiu Sec.

Fundatia Comunitara Banatul Montan

Fundatia Corona

Fundatia Inima de Copil

Fundatia PARADA

FUNDATIA SF. DIMITRIE

Ghita Eugen

Impreuna Agency for Community Development

MASTERPEACE RO

Miliția Spirituală

MozaiQ LGBT Association

Organizatia Umanitara CONCORDIA

Pro Vobis - National Resource Center for Volunteering

Resource Center for Public Participation on behalf of NGOs for Citizens Coalition

Roma Cultural Center O Del Amenca
Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation
Romanian Society of Pneumology
Romanian Women's Lobby
Sustainable Development Center
TERRA Mileniul III

Slovakia

Civic Association Odysseus
Friends of the Earth - SPZ
Iniciatíva Inakosť
Institute for Circular Economy,
Nitra Community Foundation
Platforma dobrovoľníckych centier a organizácií
Presovske dobrovolnicke centrum
Rada mládeže Slovenska
Slovak humanitarian council
Society for Sustainable Living in the Slovak Republic
Sytev
ZIPCeM

Slovenia

Association for harm reduction Stigma
Citizen D / Državljan D
DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia
Focus Association for Sustainable Development
Kultlab Celje Society
PIC- Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
Povod Institute
SIBAHE - Slovenian Food Bank
Slovene Philanthropy
Slovenian Coalition for Public Health, Environment and Tobacco Control
Umanotera

Spain

ABRACEMOS AL MAR MENOR
ACCAS, ASOCIACIÓN CIUDADANA CÁNTABRA ANTI SIDA
ACE Traductores
ACICOM (ASSOCIACIÓ CIUTADANIA I COMUNICACIÓ)
Aculco
ADAVAS - León
Al Tarab
AMAL-ASOCIACION MADRILEÑA DE ATEOS Y LIBREPENSADORES
APEPOC

Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz
Asociación Cultural Baizara
ASOCIACION SOCIO-CULTURAL Y DE COOPERACIÓN- ACULCO
ASOCIACIÓN ACERCANDO REALIDADES
Asociación PASOS Participación y Sostenibilidad
Asociación T4
Associació Oasiurbà
ATTAC SPain
AUXILIA
Beyond Suncare
casal la viña
Centro de Divulgación Cultural del Estrecho Al Tarab
CIM Burkina
Confederación Intersindical
Convergencia de las Culturas
Coordinadora Estatal de Plataformas Sociales Salesianas
Creación Positiva
Ecologistas en Acción
eco-union
El Cami
Entreculturas
Europimpulse Network
FAPE
Federación de Asociaciones de Personas Sordociegas de España (FASOCIDE)
FUNDACIÓ PAU I SOLIDARITAT-CCOO CATALUNYA
Fundación 1 de Mayo
Fundación Asha-Kiran
Fundación El Pájaro Azul
Fundación Hazlo posible
Fundación por la Justicia de la Comunitat Valenciana
Fundación privada Ficat
Fundación Savia por el Compromiso y los Valores
Futuro en Común
IESMALA Association
Imagen en Acción
Instituto de Cooperación Internacional y Desarrollo Municipal - INCIDEM
Íridia - Centre per la Defensa dels Drets Humans
JUBILADO
La Bolina
La Coordinadora de Organizaciones para el Desarrollo
Lafede.cat - Organitzacions per a la Justícia Global
medicumundi spain
Metzineres
MUJERES PALANTE
Nofumadores.org

ONGAWA
Perifèries del Mon
Plataforma catalana de suport al lobby europeu de dones
Projecte Socioeducatiu Naüm
Sindicalistas sin Fronteras ISCOD UGT
SinergiaTIC
Solidaridad Internacional Andalucía
UKRAID

Sweden

AirClim
Stockholms drug users union
The National Organization for Relatives to Drug Users (NORD)

International organisations

Access Now
ActionAid
Alliance2015
Benzo Research Project
Bridge 47
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Coalition For Women In Journalism
Democracy International
FICEMEA aisbl
FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) Europe
Global Forum for Media Development
Humanists International
INCHES Network
InterAgency Institute
International Alliance of Women
International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
Make Mothers Matter
Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE)
Mossy Earth
Naturfreunde Internationale
NGO Shipbreaking Platform
Protection International
Statewatch
Terre des Hommes International Federation
WFIPP
Women Press Freedom
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Albania

Albanian Human Rights Group - AHRG
Association of Journalists of Albania
Beyond Barriers Association
Regional Development Agency (RDA)

Armenia

ARé Cultural Foundation
Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment NGO

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Center for Environment / FOE Bosnia and Herzegovina
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banjaluka
PROI
THE BH Journalists Association / BH NOVINARI

Georgia

CENN (Caucasus Environment NGO Network)
FCTC Implementation and Monitoring Center in Georgia

Kosovo

Association of Journalists of Kosovo

Moldova

Eco-TIRAS International Association of River Keepers
Terra-1530
Union for Equity and Health

Montenegro

NGO Juventas

North Macedonia

HOPS - Healthy Options Project Skopje
Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers
Macedonian Respiratory Society

Norway

Electronic Frontier Norway

Serbia

GS KUM Nezavisnost
Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia
Initiative for Development and Cooperation

Türkiye

Association of Journalists (GC)
Human Rights Foundation of Turkey

Ukraine

NGO "Advocacy Center LIFE"

United Kingdom

Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
Conflict and Environment Observatory