

Civil Society Space in the EU



Forum on State of Civil Society
and Civic Space in Europe

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What is civil society space?

Civil society space is “the place civil society actors occupy within society; the environment and framework in which civil society operates; and the relationships among civil society actors, the State, private sector and the general public.” (OHCHR)

- Background
- Civil society space
- Four areas of challenges

Background

- Increased attention to inside EU
- Little research – therefore FRA paper (Dec. 2017)
- About FRA and its cooperation with civil society
- EU internal-external coherence

Civil society space in the EU

- Not an end in itself, but contribution to democratic societies and better policy-making
- Very patchy situation – between countries and within countries
- Very complex – interplay of issues
- Civil society is changing / being changed
- Others are facing similar challenges: NHRIs, Equality Bodies, donors
- Lack of Data

Four areas

- Regulatory environment
- Finance and funding
- Right to participation
- Safe environment

➤ **Regulatory environment**

- Freedom of association
 - Registration
 - Prohibition and dissolution
 - Entry restrictions
- Freedom of opinion, expression and information
 - Defamation legislation
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
 - Content restrictions; blanket restrictions, bans,
 - Policing of assemblies, cyclical assemblies, simultaneous assemblies
 - Lobbying regulations and advocacy restrictions
 - Counter-terrorism/emergency laws

➤ Finance and funding

- Amounts – depending on Member State
- Project funding vs core funding
- Annual/short term funding vs multiannual funding
- Procedures, reporting
- Co-financing, cash flow
- Side effects of anti-terrorism and money-laundering rules; foreign funding
- How to ensure access to funding for very small organisations? Trend of consultancies taking over implementing grants.

➤ Participation

- 5 Standards either not in place or not known
- Consultations – challenges: access to information, timing, feedback on input
- Training needed for public services

➤ **Safe environment**

- Physical attacks, threats, intimidation
- Mental health
- Negative public discourse and smear campaigns
- Surveillance