

## Information Guide



# Civil Society, Stakeholders, Pressure Groups and Lobbying in the European Union

**A guide to information sources on civil society, stakeholders, pressure groups and lobbying in the European Union, with hyperlinks to further sources of information within European Sources Online and on external websites**

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## Introduction

The Commission's 12 September 2012 Communication 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations' ([COM\(2012\)492](#)) defines the concept of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from an EU perspective:

The concept of "CSOs" embraces a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates. Definitions vary over time and across institutions and countries. The EU considers CSOs to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations. The EU values CSOs' diversity and specificities; it engages with accountable and transparent CSOs which share its commitment to social progress and to the fundamental values of peace, freedom, equal rights and human dignity.

## Background

Pressure groups have always been involved in attempts to monitor and influence the decision-making and law-making activities of the European Union. As the sphere of EU activities has widened these lobbying organisations have become better organised and taken on a more pro-active role. In order to strengthen their influence they have often grouped together to put forward a particular point of view.

The concepts of 'stakeholders' and 'civil society' have come to prominence over the last few years, starting with the debate on the reform of European governance in 2001 (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

In its widest sense stakeholders at the EU level could mean all organisations that have an interest - or a stake - in decisions taken at the EU level. This could include the EU Institutions themselves, other international organisations, national, regional and local government in Europe, as well as organisations representing 'civil society', including academics and think tanks, pressure groups, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), trades unions, professional, trade and business associations, political parties and consumer organisations.

According to the [European industrial relations dictionary](#), published by Eurofound, [Civil Society](#) is:

the collective name for all kinds of organisations and associations that are not part of government but that represent professions, interest groups or sections of society. It includes trade unions, employer associations, environmental lobbies and groups (NGOs) representing women, farmers, people with disabilities and so on. Since these organisations have a lot of expertise in particular areas and are involved in implementing and monitoring European Union policies, the EU regularly consults civil society and wants it to become more involved in European policymaking.

The importance in particular of the social partners (trade unions and employer organisations) and the social dialogue process is fundamental to the development of EU policy on employment and industrial relations. However, other interests may also provide input to policy-making in this area through a 'civil dialogue'. The role of NGOs in sectors such as tackling discrimination, social exclusion and unemployment is increasingly acknowledged by the Community institutions.

The European Economic and Social Committee produced a summary of the historical background and current role of civil society organisations in a wide-ranging Opinion adopted in September 1999: [The role and contribution of civil society organisations in the building of Europe](#). Section 8 set out a full definition of 'civil society' as including the following types of organisations:

- the so-called labour-market players (i.e. trade unions and employers federations, also called the social partners);
- organisations representing social and economic players, which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term;
- NGOs (non-governmental organisations) which bring people together in a common cause, such as environmental and human rights organisations, consumer associations, charitable organisations, educational and training organisations, etc;
- CBOs (community-based organisations, i.e. organisations set up within society at grassroots level which pursue member-oriented objectives), e.g. youth organisations, family associations and all organisations through which citizens participate in local and municipal life;
- religious communities.

In the discussions leading to the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in June 2004, and the subsequent negotiations over the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007-2008, EU leaders acknowledged the need to involve local, regional and sectoral players.

The work of the Convention was split into three phases: listening, studying and drafting. The listening phase included numerous contacts with civil society (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

In its 12 September 2012 Communication 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations' ([COM\(2012\)492](#)) the Commission proposes a more strategic approach to CSOs, based on three priorities for EU support: enhancing efforts to promote a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries; promoting a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes; and increasing local CSOs' capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively.

## **European Commission consultation**

Having recognised the need to involve stakeholders in shaping European policy, various initiatives have been undertaken by the Commission to make sure that these bodies have the opportunity to contribute to this process.

One of the ambitions stated in the Commission's July 2001 Communication 'European governance - a White Paper' ([COM\(2001\)428](#)) was to encourage more people and organisations to become involved in shaping EU policy. The White Paper was based on 12 reports produced by working groups. Working Group II The Participation of Civil Society remove link discussed ways of formalising the right of civil society to be involved in the European decision-making process and the importance attached to early consultation. Following public consultation, a series of measures for better governance was adopted, many of which had implications for civil society and involved stakeholders (see Press Release [IP/02/1865](#)).

In response to the White Paper on European governance, in December 2002 the Commission adopted the Communication 'Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue - General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested

parties by the Commission' ([COM\(2002\)704](#)). The Communication addressed the specific role of civil society organisations in the consultation process.

It also set out minimum standards for consultations (which have been applied by the Commission since 1 January 2003):

- All communications relating to consultation should be clear and concise, and should include all necessary information to facilitate responses.
- When defining the target group(s) in a consultation process, the Commission should ensure that relevant parties have an opportunity to express their opinions.
- The Commission should ensure adequate awareness-raising publicity and adapt its communication channels to meet the needs of all target audiences. Without excluding other communication tools, open public consultations should be published on the Internet and announced at the 'single access point'.
- The Commission should provide sufficient time for planning and responses to invitations and written contributions. The Commission should strive to allow at least 8 weeks for reception of responses to written public consultations and 20 working days notice for meetings.
- Receipt of contributions should be acknowledged. Results of open public consultation should be displayed on websites linked to the single access point on the Internet.

## **Plan D and the internet**

The Treaty of Lisbon evolved from earlier attempts to create a Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. During discussions leading up to the adoption of that Treaty, provision was made for a two-way dialogue between civil society and the EU institutions. A number of dedicated websites were established, including 'Futurum' and '1000 debates on Europe', which invited political leaders and local and regional representatives to take part in presenting and explaining the Constitution to their publics. Of the significant amounts of information made available, some is still accessible via the [European Convention on the Future of Europe](#) website.

The Constitutional Treaty was rejected by voters in the Netherlands and France in May and June 2005. In the immediate aftermath of the referendum defeat, there was much talk of the need for EU leaders to reconnect with their citizens. It was agreed that there should be a pause for a 'period of reflection', accompanied by a broad debate in each Member State, involving citizens, civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties.

In July 2005, an 'Action plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission' (issued as [SEC\(2005\)985](#); see also Press Release [IP/05/995](#)) set out 50 steps to be taken over the following 12 months.

October 2005 saw publication of 'The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' ([COM\(2005\)494](#): see also [IP/05/1272](#) and [Summaries of EU legislation](#)). Plan D was proposed, said the Commission, 'not as a rescue operation for the Constitution, but to stimulate a wider debate between the European Union's democratic institutions and citizens.'

The Commission's communication efforts were spearheaded by Commission Vice-President [Margot Wallström](#), who held the communication portfolio (a responsibility passed in the second Barroso Commission to Vice-President [Viviane Reding](#), Commissioner responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship).

According to Mrs Wallström's website (still available, even though she is no longer a Commissioner):

Hundreds of debates were held at local, regional, national and European level under the umbrella of Plan D. The debates showed a strong wish among Europe's citizens for more EU action in areas such as creating jobs, managing globalisation, fighting terrorism and organised crime, as well as promoting sustainable development and solidarity.

Plan D was succeeded by Debate Europe, which was launched in Spring 2008 with the aim of broadening the 'two-way dialogue' of Plan D ahead of the June 2009 European Parliament elections.

It also sought to 'foster a general and permanent debate on the future of the European Union among people from all walks of life, both at country and EU level.' (See Commission [news item](#) on Debate Europe website; the Debate Europe website was archived in February 2010).

In December 2007, the Commission announced that it was adopting a new internet-based strategy. 'Communicating about Europe via the Internet - Engaging the citizens' ([SEC\(2007\)1742](#)). The main focus of the strategy was on improving the Europa portal, with more emphasis on theme-based rather than institution-based layout. Europa would, according to the Commission, 'gradually evolve into an ever more interactive exchange channel between the citizens and the EU institutions', allowing people throughout Europe to exchange their views and opinions, thus helping create a sense of community. The development of the Debate Europe Forum website was part of this new internet-based strategy.

## **European Transparency Initiative**

Published in January 2005, 'Strategic objectives 2005 - 2009: Europe 2010: A Partnership for European Renewal: Prosperity, Solidarity and Security' ([COM\(2005\)12](#)) stated:

The Union must be open to public scrutiny and accountable for its work. This requires a high level of openness and transparency. It should be clear how the Union has reached a decision, through analysis such as impact assessment and through maximum public access to the workings of the institutions.

In November 2005, as part of its continuing efforts to make the Union more meaningful and relevant to its citizens, the Commission launched the European Transparency Initiative (ETI; see Press Release [IP/05/1397](#) and the [Communication](#) proposing the launch of the ETI). A Green Paper on the Initiative followed in May 2006 (issued as [COM\(2006\)194](#); see also Press Release [IP/06/562](#)).

The ETI was intended to review the Commission's overall approach to transparency, and to 'identify and stimulate a debate on areas for improvement. Issues addressed included management and use of EU funds, professional ethics in the EU institutions, and the framework within which lobby groups and civil society organisations operate.

The Green Paper defined lobbying as 'all activities carried out with the objective of influencing the policy formulation and decision-making processes of the European institutions.' It went on to define lobbyists as 'persons carrying out such activities, working in a variety of organisations such as public affairs consultancies, law firms, NGOs, think-tanks, corporate lobby units ("in-house representatives") or trade associations.'

Two elements were seen as essential for building a relationship between the EU institutions and lobbyists: minimum standards for consultations and disclosure of the beneficiaries of EU funds.

In March 2007, the Commission issued the Communication 'Follow-up to the Green Paper 'European Transparency Initiative' ([COM\(2007\)127](#)), which committed the Commission to:

- launching a new voluntary Register for interest representatives in Spring 2008
- drafting a Code of Conduct, respect for which would be a requirement for entry in the Register
- establishing a monitoring and enforcement mechanism for both the Code and the Register
- increasing transparency through reinforced application of the Commission's consultation standards, notably via a standard website for internet consultations
- implementing policy on the publication of the beneficiaries of EU funds.

On 27 May 2008, the Communication 'European Transparency Initiative: A framework for relations with interest representatives (Register and Code of Conduct)' ([COM\(2008\)323](#)) gave further details of the measures and reported on progress made towards implementing them.

(See also Summaries of EU legislation: [European Transparency Initiative \(ETI\)](#) and [Green Paper on the European Transparency Initiative.](#))

## **European Citizens' Initiative**

The Treaty of Lisbon introduced a new form of public participation in the form of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Under the Treaty of Lisbon, provision for the ECI is made in both Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union ([TEU](#)) and in Article 24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ([TFEU](#)). Article 11(4) of the TEU reads:

not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

To help inform its drafting of the detailed legislation, the Commission launched a public consultation on 11 November 2009, with publication of the 'Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative' ([COM\(2009\)622](#); see also the [ECI FAQ](#)).

Following the consultation, [Regulation \(EU\) 211/2011](#) 'on the citizens' initiative' was adopted on 16 February 2011. It entered into force on 31 March 2011 and applies from 1 April 2012. The Regulation requires a proposal under the ECI to have the support of at least one million eligible signatories from at least 25% of the Member States, with a minimum number of citizens corresponding to the number of MEPs elected in each of the Member States concerned, multiplied by 750 (see also the Commission's [ECI pages](#) and [Summaries of EU information](#)).

## Websites

### Your Voice in Europe

[Your Voice in Europe](#) was created in the context of the [Interactive Policy Making](#) (IPM) initiative, intended to improve governance of the EU and to promote the concept of Better Regulation. IPM aims to use modern technologies not only to enable EU institutions and Member States to better understand the needs of citizens and businesses, but also to allow more rapid and targeted responses to emerging issues and problems and to provide for greater accountability to citizens.

The site has three main sections:

- [Consultations](#) ('give us your opinion on EU policies and influence their direction')
- [Discussions](#) ('discuss the main issues of the day and chat on-line to EU's leaders')
- [Other tools](#) ('discover other ways in which you can make your voice heard in Europe')

### EU Tube

In June 2007, the Commission launched [EU Tube](#), a dedicated channel on YouTube which allows visitors to find out about the EU and its activities. Speaking at the launch of the service, Margot Wallström, Commission Vice-President for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, said that the initiative reflected 'the Commission's commitment to better explain its policies and actions on issues which concern citizens across the EU - such as climate change, energy or immigration' (see Press Release [IP/07/974](#)). At the end of November 2011 EU Tube had some 16,500 subscribers. By September 2012, that had dropped to some 15,800, but in November 2013 there were a little over 21,000 subscribers (and a total of nearly 21 million views).

### Transparency Register

On 23 June 2011, the European Parliament and the European Commission launched a joint, public [Transparency Register](#). Announcing the initiative (see Press Release [IP/11/773](#)) Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič said:

This is good news for the transparency of policy-making in Europe. All organisations, whether trade and professional associations, NGOs, think tanks or others who have nothing to hide will be in the register and will provide the public and the institutions with information about their work. All those who are not in the register will have to be asked why they can't be transparent - and they will see their daily work made more difficult by not being registered, in particular through the requirements of the European Parliament.

Replacing an earlier version established in 2008 (see below), the new Register extends coverage beyond traditional lobbyists and includes law firms, NGOs, think tanks and other organisations and self-employed people seeking to influence EU policy-making and implementation.

The Commission described the initiative as a key step towards the Union's goal of achieving greater participatory democracy.

Those signing up to the [voluntary](#) Register are required to provide information on the number of staff involved in advocacy, areas of interest, and any EU funding received. There is also a Common Code of Conduct, under which signatories must pledge to always identify themselves accurately and not to obtain information dishonestly (see also Press Releases [IP/11/773](#) and [MEMO/11/446](#)).

Under the 22 July 2011 [Agreement](#) 'between the European Parliament and the European Commission on the establishment of a transparency register for organisations and self-employed individuals engaged in EU policy- making and policy implementation', an annual report on the operation of the Register is to be submitted to the relevant Parliament and Commission Vice-Presidents.

The new Register replaced a Register of Interest Representatives set up by the Commission in 2008. The 4,000 organisations listed on that Register were transferred to the joint Transparency Register which, at the end of November 2011, contained some 4,600 entries. The Commission said that it would test the practicalities of the Register of Interest Representatives for a year. Subsequently, on 28 October 2009, the Commission adopted the Communication 'European Transparency Initiative: the Register of Interest Representatives, one year after' ([COM\(2009\)612](#); see also Press Release [IP/09/1608](#)).

Claiming that registration had become a normal step for those intending to interact with the EU institutions, the Commission said that the voluntary approach had worked and that it looked forward to agreeing a common Register with the European Parliament. A joint Working Group on lobbyists set up by the Parliament and Commission subsequently agreed a series of steps towards creating a common Register and, as an interim measure, launched a common web-page for accessing their existing registers.

The joint Transparency Register celebrated its first anniversary on 23 June 2012 (see Press Release [IP/12/681](#)). With over 5,000 registrations, the Register was said to be an innovative example of cooperation between EU institutions.

However, the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation ([ALTER-EU](#)) criticised the Register for not including many active EU lobbyists. The report 'Dodgy Data – time to fix the EU's Transparency Register' (see [Press Release](#) and [report text](#)) stated:

Overall the quality of the entries in the register is questionable, with a number of significant blind-spots in relation to the lobbying activities of major corporations, consultancies, law firms and trade associations.

- Many of those who are the biggest spenders on EU lobbying according to the register, are in fact very minor players or may not even be lobbying at all
- There appears to be widespread under-reporting by many large lobbying entities
- Law firms continue to evade disclosure
- Many registrants have taken a very lax approach to the accuracy, quantity and quality of their declarations

The Transparency Register is clearly not properly audited or monitored. This undermines its credibility, and raises questions about the register's contribution to increased transparency and accountability.

Indeed, the Transparency Register risks falling into disrepute if the Commission and Parliament allow it to continue in its current form. After four years of experimenting with a voluntary approach, the conclusion is inescapable: if the Commission and Parliament are committed to lobbying transparency, mandatory lobbying disclosure is unavoidable

A Council [Information Note](#) of 11 September 2012 gave background to the Register and to the work and functioning of the Joint Transparency Register Secretariat (JTRS). It showed that, by 10 September 2012, 5,307 individuals and organisations has registered. A public consultation on the Register ended on 31 August 2012. Responses will feed into the Annual Report on the Transparency Register, expected to be published by mid-



October 2012. The Annual Report will, in turn, provide a basis for discussions between the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament concerning the Council's involvement in the Register.

In July 2013, the European Ombudsman called on the Commission, when revising the Transparency Register, to follow the OECD principles for transparency and integrity in lobbying. The Ombudsman argued that doing so would help ensure that information given by companies and organisations which register themselves is accurate (see Press Release [12/2013](#) 11 July 2013).

On 15 November 2012, the Commission presented its 'Annual Report on the operations of the Transparency Register - 2012', which showed that the platform works and that all objectives for its first year of operations were met (see [Report text](#), Press Release [IP/12/1265](#) and Transparency Register [Reports and publications](#) page).

## **CONECCS**

The Commission rationalised the system of consultation to make it more effective and accountable, both for those consulted and those receiving the advice, by creating the CONECCS database (Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society). CONECCS provided information about the Commission's formal or structured civil society consultation bodies, as well as a searchable directory of pan-European civil society organisations representing a wide range of interests in Europe (including those not necessarily involved in the formal consultation process).

In March 2007, the Commission adopted a follow up to the Green Paper on the European Transparency Initiative. On the basis of that follow-up ([COM\(2007\)127](#)), the Commission decided to create a voluntary register for interest representatives and to close the CONECCS database.

## **Register of Expert Groups**

In 2005, the Secretariat General of the Commission established a Register of Expert Groups, intended to ensure transparency in the Commission's dealings with the advisory bodies that assist it in preparing legislative proposals and policy initiatives. It was subsequently expanded into a [Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities](#).

An 'expert group' is defined as:

A body set up by the Commission or its departments to provide it with advice and expertise, comprising at least 6 public and/or private-sector members and meeting more than once.

Experts - who are unpaid - can serve in a personal capacity or as representatives of bodies such as local authorities, NGOs and trade unions. Examples of areas where the Commission uses expertise include air quality, cosmetic products, automobile safety and fish catches.

(Expert groups are not the same as 'comitology committees', which are set up by the Council or Council and Parliament to assist the Commission in areas where the Commission is empowered to implement legislation. The Commission maintains a [Comitology Register](#) and publishes [Annual Reports](#) on the work of the comitology committees; see also [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the Comitology Register.)

'Other similar entities' are defined as:

consultative entities that were not set up by the Commission or its departments, but which have a similar or identical role to a Commission expert group and are administered and financially managed by the Commission.

They are subject to the transparency requirements set up in the rules on Commission expert groups (e.g. to be published in this Register, with the names of their members, etc.).

## **Other sites and initiatives**

The [Contact the EU](#) section of Europa has links to:

- [Blogs](#)
- [Prizes & Competitions](#)
- [Facebook accounts](#)
- [Twitter accounts](#)
- [YouTube accounts](#)
- [Flickr accounts](#)

The web-based platform [SINAPSE](#) offers tools to promote better use of expertise in EU policy making and governance. SINAPSE allows the creation of 'e-communities' through which organisations with a common interest can share and exchange information in a dedicated environment.

Addressing a more specific audience, the EuropeAid initiative [Capacity4Dev.eu](#) supports Commission efforts to improve the effectiveness of technical cooperation, allowing development practitioners, partner countries, donors, academics, civil society representatives and Commission staff to share ideas and knowledge.

The [Communication and Information Resource Centre Administrator](#) (CIRCA) allows a given community (e.g. committee, working group, project group) spread across Europe or beyond to maintain a private space on the internet where they can share information and documents, participate in discussion fora and benefit from other facilities.

The Civil Society Platform to promote Multilingualism was launched by the European Commission in October 2009 (see Press Release [IP/09/1574](#)). A forum for the exchange of best practices for the media, cultural organisations and those involved in non-formal and informal education, the Platform delivered a set of recommendations in June 2011 (see Commission [news item](#), 9 September 2011).

## **EP, EESC and CoR**

All the EU institutions have a part to play in the efforts to promote greater awareness among, and involvement of, European citizens in the EU decision-making and policy formulation process.

According to the European Parliament, its [Citizens' Agora](#) initiative:

represents a link between the European Parliament and European civil society. It is a unique tool, in both structure and breadth, for discussing with citizens issues on Parliament's agenda.

In its Resolution of 7 September 2010 'on journalism and new media – creating a public sphere in Europe', the European Parliament suggests how citizens can become more

involved in debates on EU issues. The Resolution (published as [2011/C 308 E/09](#); see also Press Release [20100902STO81053](#)) takes as its starting point:

the fact that it must be the goal of the EU institutions to create together a European public sphere which is characterised by the opportunity for all EU citizens to participate, and the basis for which is free access, free of charge, to all Commission, Council and Parliament public information in all EU languages

It also noted that, in order to be effective:

communication must make it clear that political decisions taken at EU level are of direct relevance to the daily lives of EU citizens, who see the EU as still being too distant and having too little influence in terms of solving their real problem

The [European Economic and Social Committee](#) (EESC) and the [Committee of the Regions](#) (CoR) play a key part in the consultation process, in accordance with the Treaties.

In 2001, the Commission concluded Protocols on co-operation with both the EESC and the CoR. The rationale behind these Protocols is to reinforce their function as intermediaries between, on the one hand, the EU institutions, and, on the other, organised civil society (EESC) or the regional and local authorities (CoR) respectively. Revised Protocols were adopted in the light of EU enlargement and governance in November 2005, and new texts adopted in 2012 (see EESC [Protocol](#) and CoR [Protocol](#)).

The EESC feels that it is particularly well placed to organise the contribution which civil society can make to the debate on the future of Europe, as it is the EU institution with the means to involve interested and committed citizens on the broadest possible footing (see the Q&A on [The EESC and the Treaty of Lisbon](#), the [European Citizens' Consultations](#) website, and the EESC publications [Discover the European Economic and Social Committee](#) and [The EESC: a bridge between Europe and organised civil society](#)).

In 2009 the EESC published a set of proposals called [A Programme for Europe: Proposals of Civil Society](#). The EESC's role as a bridge between the EU and civil society was acknowledged in a [speech](#) given by the European Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration, Maroš Šefčovič, to the Committee in March 2010.

Since 2006, the EESC has awarded an annual [Civil Society Prize](#), recognising:

tangible achievements and initiatives by civil society organisations at all levels, European, national, regional and local, that significantly contribute to promoting European identity and integration.

An important part of the CoR's role is that of bringing the Union closer to the public. As elected local representatives, the Committee has concentrated on giving local and regional authorities a democratic voice in the activities of the Union (see [A new treaty: a new role for regions and local authorities](#)).

For more information on the Committees, see the ESO Information Guides [European Economic and Social Committee](#) and [Committee of the Regions](#).

## Information sources in the ESO database

Find updated and further information sources in the ESO database:

### [3.5 Pressure groups / Lobbying](#)

- [Key Source](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Policy-making](#)
- [Report](#)
- [Statistics](#)
- [News source](#)
- [Periodical article](#)
- [Textbook, monograph or reference](#)
- [Background](#)

## Further information sources on the internet

- Europa
  - [Your voice in Europe](#)
  - Summaries of EU legislation
    - [The decision-making process and the work of the institutions](#) (includes links to files on [White Paper on governance](#), [Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate](#), [European Transparency Initiative](#) and others)
    - [Development of relations between the Commission and civil society](#)
  - Official press releases and related material from the European Commission and other EU bodies on civil society are available on the [RAPID](#) website (under 'Search by text or reference' type 'civil society' in the text box; check 'Exact phrase'; if desired, check 'Title only' box; click 'Search').
- European Commission
  - Secretariat General
    - [Consultation standards](#)
    - [The European Citizens' Initiative](#)
    - [Transparency](#)
  - DG Agriculture and Rural Development
    - [Advisory Groups](#)
  - DG Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid)
    - [Civil society, a vital development partner](#)
    - [Civil Society & local authorities](#)
    - [Relations with civil society](#)
    - [Civil society - Partner in Commission programmes](#)
  - DG Health and Consumers
    - [Consumer associations & networks](#)
  - DG for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG Connect)
    - [Under the Radar: The Contribution of Civil Society and Third Sector Organisations to eInclusion](#)
  - DG Research and Innovation
    - [Research for CSOs](#) [Civil society organisations]
  - DG Trade
    - [Civil society](#)

## Other external websites

- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Agency Executive Agency (EACEA)
  - [Citizenship](#)
  - [Action 2 - Active civil society in Europe](#)
- Eurofound
  - European industrial relations dictionary: [Civil Society](#)
  - [First European Quality of Life Survey: Participation in civil society](#)
- European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
  - [Homepage](#)
- European External Action Service (EEAS)
  - [Civil society dialogue](#)
- European Parliament
  - [Citizens' Agora](#)
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
  - [Civil society](#)
- Permanent Forum of European Civil Society
  - [Homepage](#)
- Trialog – development NGOs in the enlarged EU
  - [Homepage](#)
- Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe
  - [Homepage](#)
- United Nations
  - [UN and Civil Society](#)
  - [NGO Branch](#)
- World Bank
  - [The World Bank and Civil Society](#)

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