



Civic Space in Europe Survey

-October 2016-



- 
- 1. Introduction**
 - 2. Key Civic Space Freedoms**
 - 3. Challenges & Opportunities for civil society**
 - 4. Broader political trends**
 - 5. Organisational profiles & Feed-back on the process**
 - 6. Conclusions & Next steps**
- Annex - survey questions**

1. Introduction

Why do we need a survey in Europe?

Recent years have witnessed increased challenges to the core democratic values upheld in many parts of the world, protest movements have gathered in many countries to call for greater accountability of governments.

At the same time a number of governments have appeared to regard civil society organisations and active citizens as unhelpful and have at times suggested that the basic freedoms of association, assembly and expression should be limited in favour of vaguely defined 'national interests'; in other cases there have been direct calls for limits to the right to campaign, which would undermine the basic freedoms that lie at the heart of democracy in Europe.

So we set out to understand a core issue: do civil society organisations feel that their rights are being eroded?

This survey set out to draw out some initial perceptions of civil society leaders in Europe as part of a wider global process to understand and analyse the changes that are taking place in many countries. It is intended to highlight some key trends but does not aim to provide a fully comprehensive picture of the situation in every country at this stage.

The survey is a pilot as part of wider development of a new approach for perception-based surveys of civil society and acted as a way to test out this methodology with partners in Europe. It is the intention of CIVICUS to widen out this survey in coming months, as part of a global process called the CIVICUS Monitor.

Who we are

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is present in over 160 countries, dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' fundamental freedoms are threatened.

Civil Society Europe (CSE) brings together 28 European networks of civil society organisations (CSOs) working towards dialogue on European policy around the shared values of Equality, Solidarity, Inclusiveness and Democracy. Our main objectives: to facilitate and enable horizontal and vertical dialogue between European civil society organisations and policy-makers; and to help strengthen CSOs in their activities and relations with the institutions.

About the survey

CIVICUS and Civil Society Europe launched an online survey on civic space in Europe in January 2016, aimed at national civil society organisations in all European Union, European Economic Area and Associate countries to the EU. CIVICUS and Civil Society Europe worked together to develop this survey based on feedback from key members of the Civil Society Europe working group on Civic Space and Fundamental Rights. The survey was widely promoted through all relevant members and partners of CIVICUS and Civil Society Europe over the period of 18 January until 1 March 2016. The survey was hosted on a 'SurveyMonkey' website in English and French, with additional versions also available as a word document in English, French and Polish.

Given recent developments, the survey aimed to assess how operating conditions for civil society have changed in Europe over the past 12 months, to develop a better understanding of the trends and perceptions by civil society organisations themselves in a number of defined areas, including the operating environment for voluntary and non-governmental organisations as well as wider challenges to civic space.

In the context of this survey, CSOs are defined as not for profit associations and/or non-governmental organisations active at either local, national or international level and that adhere to the values of Equality, Solidarity, Inclusiveness and of Democracy and are active in the promotion of civil, political, economic, cultural, social and environmental rights.

The survey aimed to assess the confidence and perception of civil society organisations in three areas:

1. Key civic space freedoms
2. Challenges and opportunities facing civil society
3. Views on broader political trends in Europe

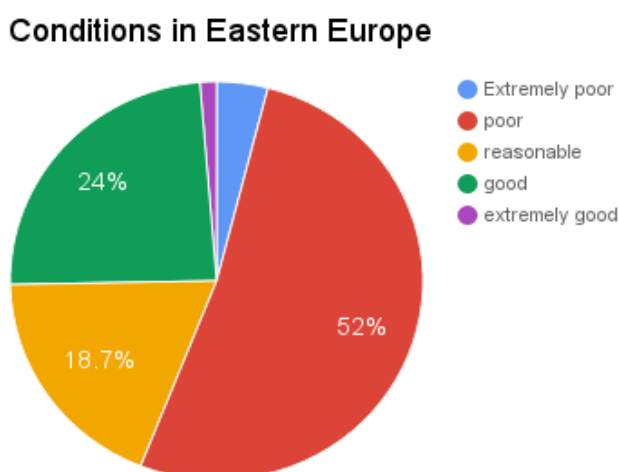
Organisational profile questions about the respondents

300 individuals responded partially to the survey, 180 completed the whole questionnaire. All respondents answered on behalf of their organisation. The greatest proportion of respondents (25,3%) are between 35 and 44 years old, followed by younger respondents who constitute 20,4% of the total, 19,9% are between 55 and 64 and 19,3% between 45 and 54, 15,1% are over 65 years old. There is a slight majority of female respondents: 48,8% compared to 47,5% male. Among the younger respondents, women are 57,6%. All EU countries are represented plus a few other European countries. The highest number of complete answers comes from Hungary (28), followed by Slovenia (17) and France (16), while the lowest is from Luxembourg and Malta with only one respondent.

It appears that in some cases the respondents started the survey but did not have time to complete it and so they had to begin a new log-in when they returned to complete the survey. In other cases, it may be that some respondents were interested to see the survey but did not feel prepared to complete all the questions, it may be that future versions should be shorter and less complex to ensure ease of response. Finally in some cases the language provision may have been a limiting factor and it would be a good idea to ensure any future surveys are available in multiple languages.

2. Key Civic Space Freedoms

Overall conditions for civil society and citizen action are rated by 41% of the respondents below and by 41% above the average. Younger respondents are more positive by rating conditions mostly above the average. However respondents from Eastern European countries consider by 52% that conditions for civil society in their countries are poor. Irrespective of age, 58.7% of the respondents consider that in the last year there is a tendency for deterioration.



In terms of the key freedoms to be analysed, the survey showed the following:

a) Freedom of association

Overall the large majority of respondents felt that the freedom to establish an association was not under threat. The conditions for registration of an association are qualified by a great majority of respondents above average, with the highest number between good and excellent.

In Western Europe there was a sense that confidence in freedom of association, ie. the basic right to register as an NGO, charity or association, remains very strong and it was particularly high in North West Europe, at nearly 90%. In Central, Eastern and Southern Europe the average was lower but still at approximately 60%.

Some respondents from Central and Eastern Europe pointed out that the legal framework was effective to guarantee freedoms in terms of Assembly, Association and Expression, but that there was an increasing undue interference by the Government in the activities of associations. In Hungary “Registration of a CSO can get through the normal bureaucratic way and meetings and gatherings may be organised - even demonstrations. - At the same time - State institutions do not hesitate to search offices, accounts etc. whenever they think it necessary. The government supports quasi-civil organisations (spending huge amount of money) while real CSOs suffer of lacking funds” and “The conditions of CSOs that are critical of the government (generally watchdogs) have deteriorated, they were subjected to harassment by the government”.

In a number of cases civil society representatives consider that the increased bureaucracy and additional requirements to register associations in many countries, makes it harder for people with a lower level of formal education and poor access to information to establish an organisation.

b) Freedom of assembly

In terms of freedom of assembly, ie. the right to organise peaceful demonstrations, there was also a broadly positive response.

In this case confidence levels were slightly lower than the response on freedom of association in Western Europe; however in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe it was actually marginally higher than freedom of association.

A worrying trend affecting freedoms of assembly, due to the increasing influence of real estate companies, was also reported in Estonia: “one strategic lawsuit initiated by a big real estate development company against an active member of a neighbourhood in Tallinn, with the aim to frighten anyone from publicly expressing opinions about the ongoing detailed planning of their plot (at the public seaside). The lawsuit is still at the very beginning, but the Ombudsman of Estonia has claimed, that there are more legal claims (cease & desist) against civic activists by several real estate developers”. Similarly in the UK there are increasing worries over the privatisation of public space “many new developments which get planning consent by promising to incorporate a public space (eg. viewing terrace or a square) and once consent is granted it turns out that the public has no right to organise, demonstrate or even enter without paying”.

c) Freedom of expression

In terms of freedom of expression, ie. the right to publicly raise concerns, in Western Europe confidence levels are similar to the perception of association and assembly at 70%. However in Central & Eastern Europe the confidence in freedom of expression is lower by 15%, and only reaches 55%.

There were numerous other comments on freedoms of assembly and expression, for example in Slovenia, respondents pointed to restrictions following the demonstrations of 2012 and 2013 after a report of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption of the Republic of Slovenia that sparked a series of protests against the Slovenian government and political establishment. In the UK, a comment was received that activists fear restrictions in freedom of protest following the Court sentence on the ‘#Heathrow 13’ environmentalists.

In Romania “there have been mass protests against the government when the authorities didn't intervene, but there were threats of intervention and consistent attempts by officials to discredit the protesters. The officials reserved (themselves) the right to intervene during the peaceful protests whenever they would consider necessary”. Another respondent noted that “while there is freedom of expression ensured by law, there are regular attempts by the top politicians to limit it in order to protect themselves against critical views and public accusations”.

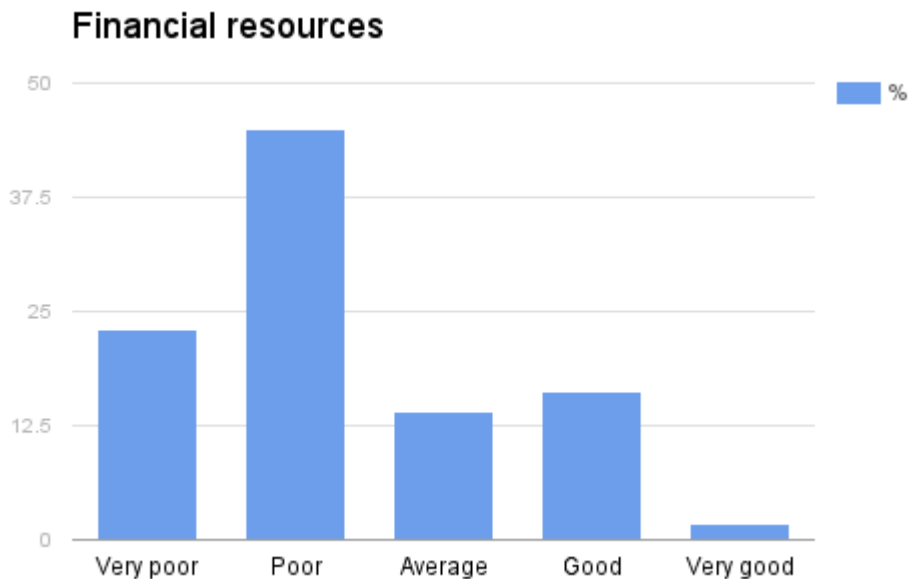
d) State's duty to protect

In the area of the state's duty to protect, the responses were more mixed, there are a number of areas of Europe where this is a growing concern. In Western Europe, overall confidence in this area is somewhat lower than freedom of assembly at only 60%. However most remarkably in Central Eastern & Southern Europe it is significantly lower, only just above 30%.

On the State's duty to protect civil society, several respondents stressed that - while there is the ability to investigate such abuses, there is often little willingness to do so, particularly as NGOs contribute to unveiling corruption that may lead back to those in power. A Greek respondent noted that "Combined financial/political and social crisis are used as an excuse to marginalize any voice seeking for a change. Accusations against NGOs and other representatives of civil society are becoming common, while no protection or investigation is undertaken to balance speculation".

e) Financial resources for civil society

The lowest response in this section was on financial resources for civil society. These responses were much lower across the board and seem to point to a serious cause for concern from civil society leaders in all parts of Europe. In Western Europe the average was 43% and in North Western Europe it was even lower, at only 37%. In Central & Eastern Europe 27%, while in Southern and Eastern Europe only 22%.



Overall financing for civil society activity remains as one of the major areas of concern from many of the comments as "Financial support is lacking, and shrinking each year", it seems that in particular funding for minority groups, such as Roma, LGBTI; as well as environmental protection has declined. The question of mobilisation to support migrants was also raised and a number of organisations were directly engaged in services and volunteering for migrants. While some positive developments were reported over the establishment of a public fund for NGOs in Latvia, the budget allocated is reported as insufficient.

Put together it appears that public funding, in particular to support minorities is declining and therefore more demands are being placed on volunteer based activity.

In terms of overall conditions for civil society and citizens action, specific legislation is now becoming a major concern in a number of locations, such as in France where the state of emergency has led to some specific restrictions: according to one respondent “the law on Intelligence and surveillance, and the State of Emergency have considerably restrained the freedom of demonstration and the freedom of expression”. In Spain a comment on the Public Security Law stated that: “Over the past year a series of legal reforms that undermine the freedoms of assembly and expression (Criminal Code, Public Security Law, anti-terrorism reform) have been adopted. The government has not engaged in adequate consultation with stakeholders, including civil society and human rights experts, nor has it given due consideration to their views. The Transparency Act (sort of Freedom of Information Act) is not effective”. Moreover in Austria the adoption this summer of the State protection Act (*Staatsschutzgesetz*) has led to serious concerns by civil society organisations, trade unions, journalists, lawyers and churches about the reduced safeguards to increased surveillance measures, criminalisation of protests, and risk of misinterpretation and abuse due to lack of clarity of legal definitions.

3. Challenges and opportunities for civil society

Engagement with different levels of government

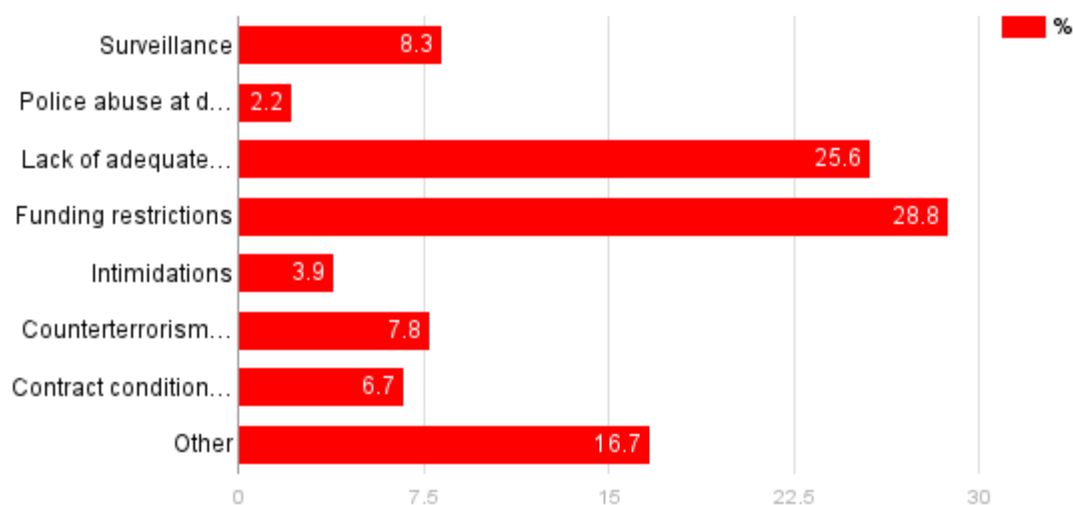
From the respondents (Qu. 6), across Europe it seems that there is greater confidence in civic space at the local level than national or regional: around 50% of respondents consider that dialogue at local level is above average; while at the regional and national level the situation worsens with 48% and 46% of the respective respondents considering such dialogue below average.

However several respondents point out that such dialogue is not accompanied by a structured process and that the added value of civil society in addressing key societal issues is not adequately taken into account. “NGOs are invited, involved and are able to participate in many legislative processes, social or political structures. However at the end of the day, their expertise and recommendations on implementation of human rights standards are quite often ignored”

CSOs stress that there is “a large gap between decision-makers and civil society”. Some even point out to an increasing mistrust between government officials and NGOs. According to a respondent this is also due to the fact that “...the public sector is overwhelmed with bureaucracy and with processing of all kinds of strategic documents, and is becoming more and more ineffective in actually envisioning the future, responding to crises, collaborating with stakeholders ...”.

A number of respondents also highlighted how local and regional levels of government tend to provide most support for civil society but have faced serious reductions in spending, such as in the UK, the Netherlands, in Austria, and in France, and this has led to a real drop in support to maintaining the enabling environment. In Romania: “The Norwegian and Swiss Funds were important sources of funds for the NGOs in the past years, but most funding lines are currently closing. The European Structural Funds are very difficult to access - they are highly bureaucratic and pose important problems when it comes to funding liquidity and co-financing. Direct state funding for civil society is very scarce and highly nontransparent”. In the UK “Infrastructure bodies used to be well funded under the previous government but have all but disappeared. Local government has seen its resources slashed and disproportionately so in the poorest areas. This has meant severe funding cuts for local infrastructure bodies and for charities which formerly received grants”.

Top issues of concern

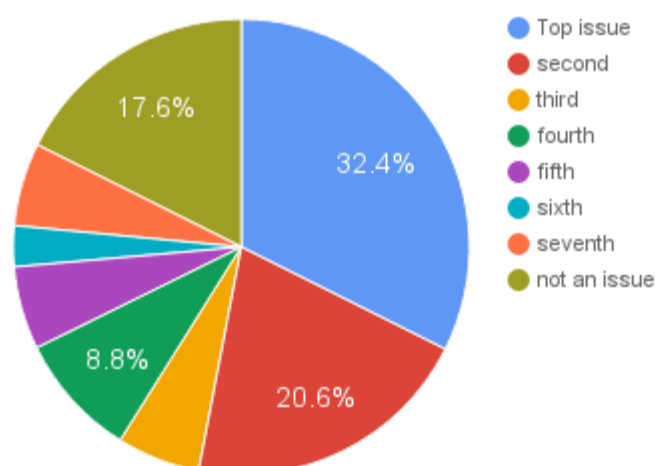


The greatest issue of concern (Qu 11) for almost a third of respondents is funding restrictions. In Hungary, for example, access to funding from foreign donors¹ has in some cases been blocked and there is an issue in terms of transparency in the allocation of public funds to NGOs. The need for reviewing calls for proposals or tender procedures open to NGOs has also been raised by respondents from Romania and Hungary. “Lots of NGOs struggle for financial survival as distribution of grants is maintained by authorities with strong governmental influence, ensuring that NGOs critical of the government do not or scarcely receive financial support for their projects. NGOs responsible for administering the Norwegian Civic Fund were raided in 2014 by the police as Hungarian authorities accused grant distribution politically biased. The authorities started allegations and tax-investigations against some recipient NGOs, some of which are still ongoing in 2016.”

A fifth of respondents are also mostly concerned by the lack of adequate consultation processes. This is the top concern for younger respondents that feel even more excluded from formal decision-making and civil dialogue.

¹ Norwegian State funds (European Economic Area Grants)

Lack of Adequate Consultation - Youth



The lack of adequate consultation is rated by all respondents irrespective of age as the second top concern. “The biggest problem - states an Estonian respondent - is the mistrust, misunderstandings and lack of collaboration between the public sector and the non-government organisations. There are tools and guidelines agreed upon for consultation processes, but they are not followed enough, there is no-one responsible (nor willing) to actually improve the situation on state level - the Government Office should take care of that, but there is no competence for that”.

Surveillance and counter-terrorism measures also feature relatively high in the responses, suggesting that these practices have an increasing impact on CSOs and are often combined with funding restrictions against organisations that find themselves under scrutiny.

Contract conditionality was also rated as a relatively high concern. Restrictions within contracts can limit the capacity of associations to bring the voice of citizens into decision-making as well as providing their expertise based on access to key citizens. Contract conditionalities in certain countries, such as Finland² and the UK³, therefore also contribute to limiting the advocacy role of NGOs, by reducing the right to give voice to beneficiaries.- In Finland “During the past year there have been drastic cuts to financial support for CSOs (especially on development cooperation) and the trend is to have tighter guidance from the state/stricter funding criteria”, In Germany during the last year there were “some discussions about this “non-profit status” because there are NGOs doing “general political work” which were threatened by the government to lose this status”. “Restrictions of campaigning are always an issue for us. it is though connected to the funding question. Campaigns are not generally funded by the government, so private donors start to enter the scene, but they do of course set a certain impetus as well”.

Other concerns expressed by respondents include: lack of recognition of CSOs, increasing social exclusion and discrimination, lack of a structured process of consultation which should include follow up of discussions and decisions taken, Public authorities supporting certain favoured NGOs;

² See also 2016 Research on access to public funding to CSOs

³ Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014

and threats from extremists groups. However direct intimidation and heavy handed policing at demonstrations were not noted as a major concern by the majority of respondents.

Collaboration across Europe (Q 7 & 8)

Amongst the respondents, there was clear support for cross-border collaboration in Europe- an overwhelming majority of 89,5% considers that cross border European cooperation is important for effective operation of CSOs, and 34,1 % strongly agree with this.

According to many of the comments, this was due to a number of factors, such as a sense that many of the key issues to be faced require joint responses across Europe, as well as a desire to learn from other organisations in a similar situation in other countries or through establishing transnational CSO Platforms. For example “The situation of migrants shows the importance of civil society and the need for a cross-border collaboration. We have a similar feeling toward protection of human rights in general and in specific fields” says a respondent from Portugal. “It's important - for a Romanian respondent - especially when it comes to best practices exchange and influencing the European policies; at the same time, unless there will be increased possibilities for NGO lobby and advocacy at national level and increased funding to support their long term development, such efforts may deem ineffective”. According to several respondents “the exchange of experiences on good practices, empowers the CSOs in all countries in means of capacity building, advocacy and effectiveness”: “It gives perspectives on what is the situation in one country compared to other European countries, helps to spread the word about good and bad practices, and helps to influence the conditions on broader scale”, and “ this is creating space for multi-cultural exchange, or it is happening in border areas - where better communication between the people is needed”

As one respondent noted: “In today's world, risks seldom respect national borders (financial markets, data security, nuclear safety asf.), i.e. CSO's cooperate - or fail”.

Support for Civil Society (Q 9)

In terms of perception of how public support may change for CSOs themselves over coming year, it was interesting to note a very wide variation in terms of responses, indicating a fragmented picture. Within this, there seem to be some real social challenges in many places, that may lead either to an increase in support in terms of donations and volunteers but may also lead to a drop in support due to potential changes in perception from the media. In Western & North Western Europe, the average expecting improvements was slightly higher at approximately 60%, whereas in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe it was approximately 50%.

“The continuous austerity measures in addition with the huge number of refugees and the complexity of the political conditions to neighbourhood countries, are factors that may affect the freedom of actions of organized CSOs and may help the increase of actions from extreme groups. (ie. neo-nazis, racists etc)” states a respondent from Greece.

For another commentator from Germany: “it is likely that the refugee crisis will reinforce the security narrative and as a result the freedom of association will be curtailed somewhat”.

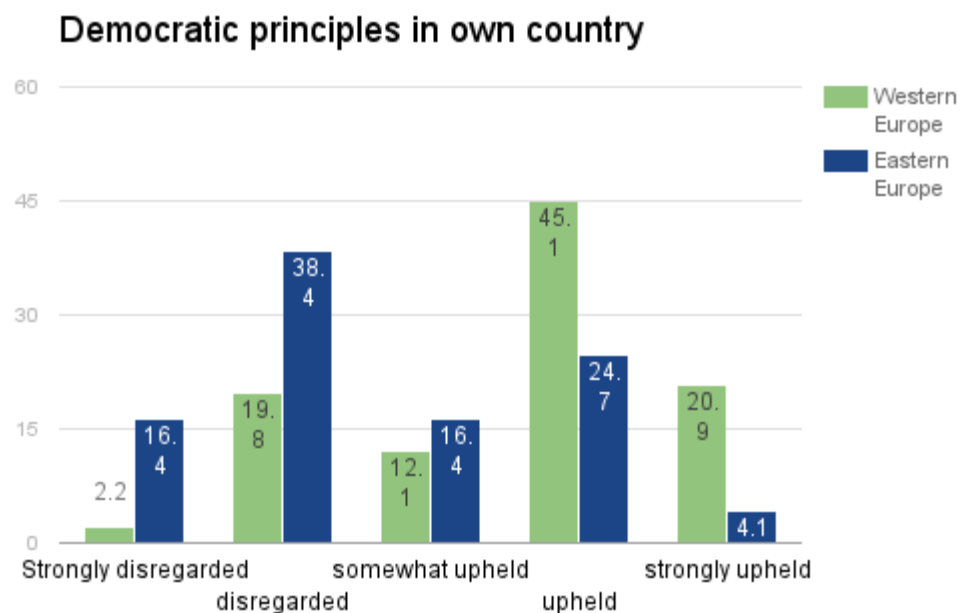
4. Broader political trends

Democratic principles (Q 10)

The question on democratic principles aimed to understand the views of the respondents on the overall democratic functioning of their country of operation and opened the second part on broader trends that may have an impact on civil society.

61,1% of the respondents consider that **democratic principles** are upheld in their country from somewhat to strongly. However, overall almost 40% consider respect of democratic principles to be insufficient. We can find quite the opposite perception from our Eastern Europe respondents that by 54,8% find upholding of democratic principles insufficient in their country.

In this question there was a clear difference of opinion between those in Western & North Western Europe, who continued to believe that the core democratic principles were functioning reasonably well in their countries; and those in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe where the averages were worryingly low.



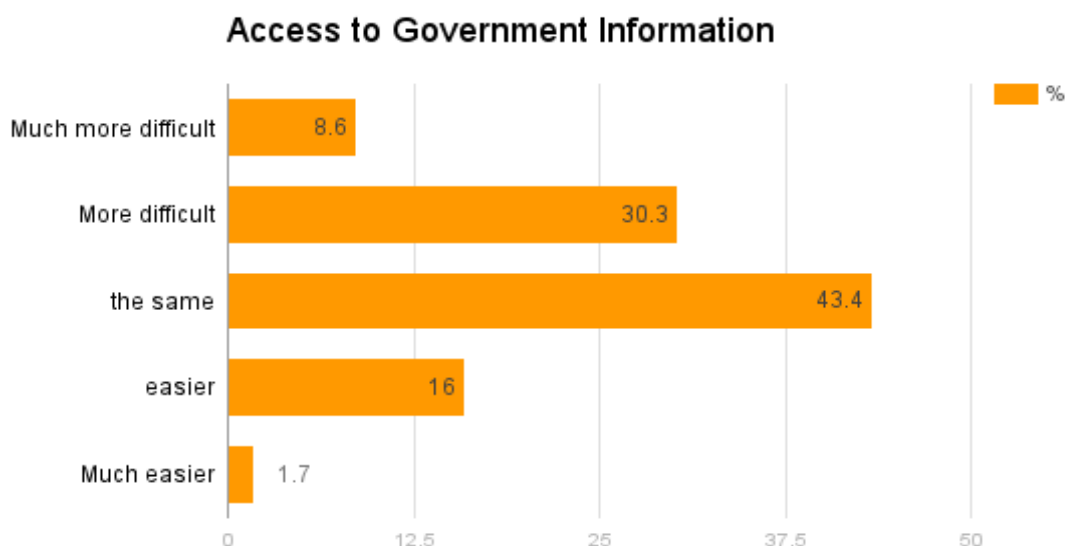
Concerns in the wider operating environment (Q 11 & 12)

During the last year CSOs 43,4% consider **access to government information** to be at the same level, but almost as many others (38,9%) see a worsening of the situation. Half of the Eastern European respondents see a declining trend.

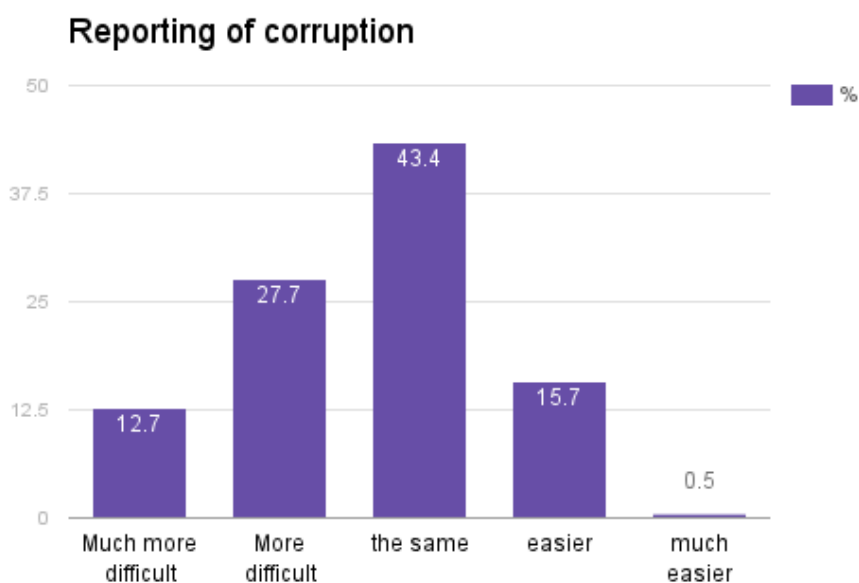
In Hungary “Over the past several years the government had made it harder to access public data, even modified the law as a reaction to particular data requests. A new law was introduced that puts the data of the national post off limits. Watchdogs are worried that it will spill over to other national institutions too.”

Respondents pointed to causes for such deterioration to increased security concerns and economic crisis as a cause for such deterioration.

On a positive note, new Spanish regional governments such as *Ahora Madrid* and *Barcelona en Comú*, were cited as having opened participatory spaces for citizens and applied effectively their commitments on transparency. Also comments from Lithuania highlighted an increased opening of authorities to disclose information.

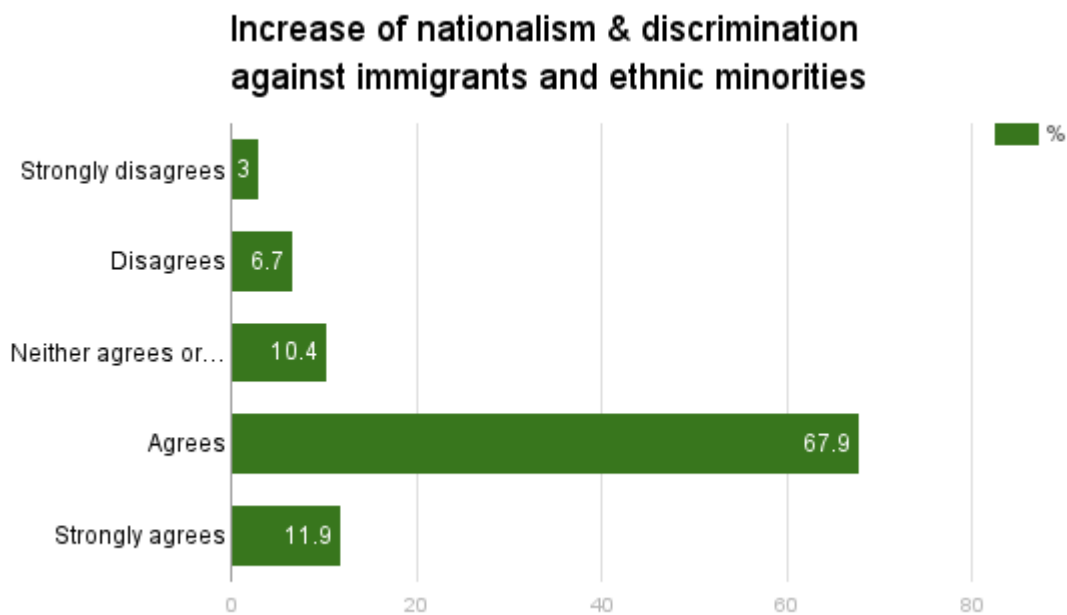


Identification and reporting of corruption has become more difficult for 43,4% of respondents (51,5% in Eastern Europe). In particular the need to improve reporting mechanisms is highlighted.



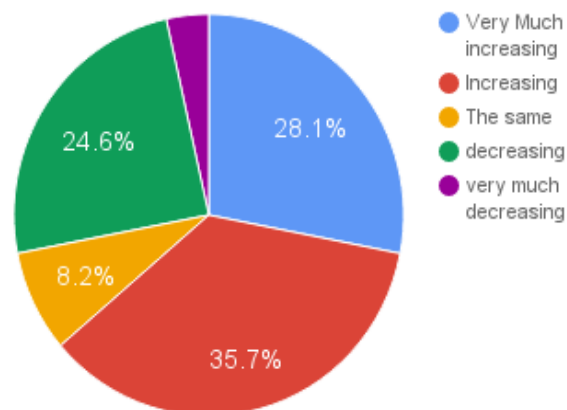
At the same time - highlights a respondent from Romania- major events, like the fire in the *Colectiv club*, where over 60 young people died and the subsequent protests, showed “the capacity of different society sectors to mobilize themselves and work together during disasters and take stronger attitude and act against corruption”.

An overwhelming majority (84%) sees an **increase of nationalism and discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities** in Europe.



Over 63% believe that recent political developments have **increased polarisation** between different sections of society.

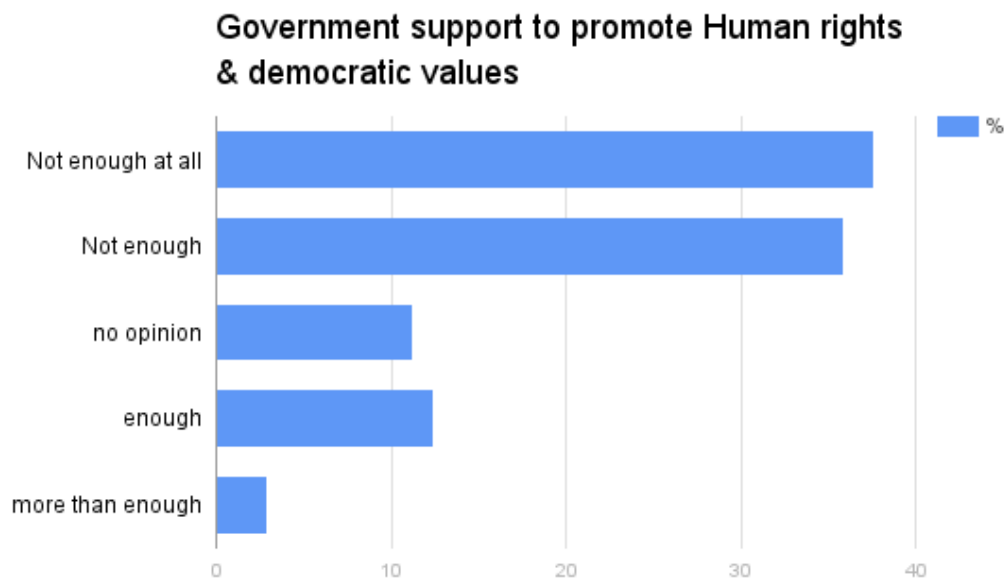
Polarisation among sections of society



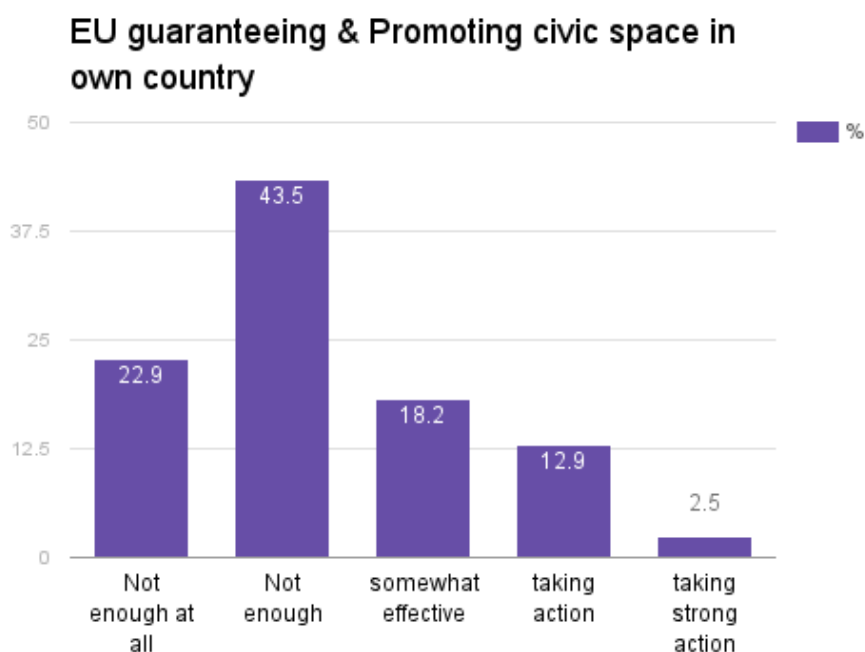
A respondent from Estonia noted that “over the last years there have been emerging new kinds of civic initiatives which play on emotions and generate fear in society”.

“The recent events in Europe have shown a high increase in extremist phenomena, while the recent law - in Romania - that allows the founding of political parties with only 3 members, have allowed extremist groups to organise themselves better” states a Romanian respondent..

For 73,6% **government support to civil society promotion of universal human rights and democratic values** is insufficient.



66,4% (69, 9 % in Eastern Europe) would like the EU to do more to guarantee and promote civic space in their country. This is for instance the case of the great majority of the Hungarian respondents.



Comments point to a lack of clarity, and visibility of EU action in guaranteeing and promoting civic space, in particular as regards addressing breaches of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights in Member States. There does not seem to be a systematic approach to addressing violations of Article 2 of the Treaties. Furthermore access to EU funding of grassroots organisations is pointed out as an issue. Others are more skeptical about EU intervention since they feel that “The EU institutions are largely absent and no longer considered as being able to solve problems by an increasing part of the ...citizens”. According to another comment “The EU institutions and the Embassies of the Western countries still represent an engine when it comes to the promotion of democracy and human rights in Romania”.

5. Organisational profiles and feed-back on the process

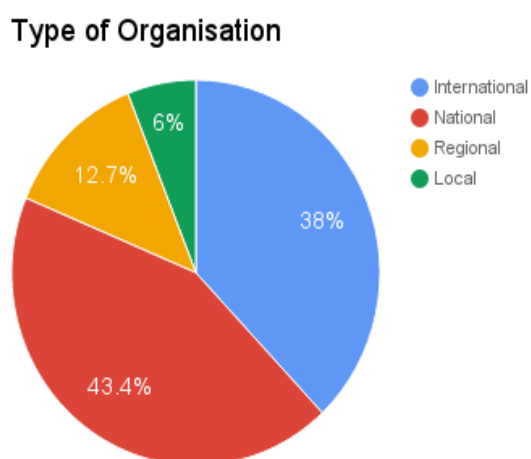
a) Interest in the process and desire to engage

Overall it was clear that many respondents were interested in the process and felt it was important to share their views; a number of emails were received from respondents who were grateful for the survey and for the renewed joint work with European partners. There was also real interest in further regular surveys and a desire to understand how the European context may also compare with other global regions.

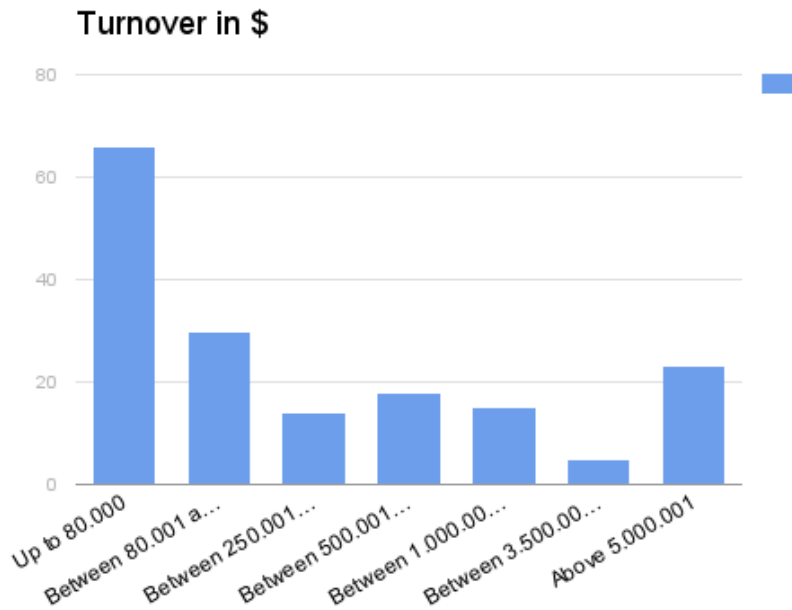
b) Organisational profiles

Respondents included Civil Society Organisations active in a variety of different areas such as in culture, social policy and employment, health, education, environment, human rights, non discrimination, and sport.

A majority of the organisations that responded operates at national (43,4%), regional (12,7%) and local (6%) levels; while the remaining 38% operate at international level. Most of the younger participants (41,2%) are active in an organisation working at international level.



38,6% of the respondents have a turnover below 80.000 \$, 25,7% between 80.000 and 500.000\$. Overall three quarters of the organisations declared a turnover below one million.



c) Mixed geographic response

The response rate was considerably higher in certain countries than others. In some cases it is likely that these responses were due to a sense of greater challenge in certain countries, eg. Hungary; however it is also likely that the highest response rates were related to the presence of a strong local partner, such as in Slovenia, France and Austria. On the other hand the response rate was quite limited in some well-established democracies, such as Belgium, Denmark and Finland. Furthermore in two countries: Luxembourg and Malta only one respondent completed the questionnaire. Clearly it will be very important for any future survey to build strongly from local partners and ensure that they are able to share and feedback on the survey design.

d) Significant variation in perceptions between different parts of Europe

In Western Europe there remains a higher overall confidence in the current situation for civil society but there has been a real drop in confidence over past year, and while confidence in North Western Europe remains higher, on average the decline is about 20% lower than the current situation. In Central & Eastern Europe we can see a lower level of confidence in the current situation and a further major drop in confidence over past year, down to only 30% in total.

6. Conclusions & Next Steps

Civic space freedoms

The survey shows a general confidence of CSOs in Europe in the freedom of association, assembly and of expression. However there is a trend for deterioration in key civic space freedoms, which is more significant in Eastern and Central Europe. Particularly problematic is the fulfillment of the State's duty to protect which is considered sufficient by only 30% of the respondents. Also in Western Europe there is evidence of regression in these rights as a result of measures countering terrorism.

National Governments and EU institutions must pay attention to this issue and also assess the possible adverse impact of certain measures notably in the area of counter terrorism.

Another key issue of concern is the lack or limited recognition of civil society, which is also raised in many comments to the answers.

A public debate both at EU and national level is needed in order to address this negative trend and it should aim at the adoption of policy recommendations and concrete measures enabling civic space.

This is particularly relevant as a great majority of respondents would like the EU to take an effective and clear stand to guarantee and promote civic space at national level.

National Governments must guarantee that **democratic citizenship and human rights education** is included in the national education systems at all stages

EU institutions should **promote knowledge of the universal values contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, as well as international human rights treaties to which it adheres including **through awareness campaigns**.

Both national governments and EU institutions can play an important role in promoting enabling measures for civil society organisations that contribute to citizen's empowerment and the promotion of active citizenship.

Cultural diversity and combating negative stereotyping of vulnerable, marginalised and excluded groups should be promoted.

Civic space must be included as an important indicator of the assessment of fundamental rights within the EU fundamental rights report and should also be a central aspect of the European Parliament's proposed monitoring mechanism of EU countries on the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights. It should also become a higher priority in any enlargement negotiations.

Access to funding

The **declining public financial support for civil society activity** is a major area of concern for associations, and particularly for minority groups. **Advocacy activities are also endangered by the development of contract conditionality measures.**

National Governments and EU institutions should support including through adequate resources the independent functioning and sustainability of civil society organisations, especially in this period of crisis recognising their important role in bridging the gap between Government and their citizens and fostering active citizenship through people's empowerment.

The EU also has an important role to play in order to making its funding opportunities accessible and available for civil society, this should include adequate information and support also in the application stage. The EU can also play a key role with regards to ensuring access to funding opportunities that should - also in practice - be open to civil society to applications at national level, such as EU Structural Funds, as part of supporting an enabling civic space in every Member State.

A discussion between public authorities and civil society should take place on the organisation of funding in order to improve its transparency and access.

Civil dialogue

The CSOs who responded suggest that there is satisfactory civil dialogue at local level, while things become more problematic at regional and national level. However the lack of adequate mechanisms for consultation is an issue for many of the respondents, and in particular for young people. Civil society organisations should be able to engage with decision-makers at the highest level.

A dialogue between relevant institutions at EU and national level and CSOs on the adoption and evaluation of the impact of counter-terrorism measures on civic rights should also be established with due consideration of the positive role that civil society can play in combating extremism.

Principles for consultation and participatory dialogue should be adopted and enacted at all levels in order to rebuild trust in the decision-making process.

National Governments should set up the necessary mechanisms and bodies to ensure effective involvement of citizens and their representative associations.

Finally a **clear and structured framework should be established for a regular dialogue between EU bodies and citizens in line with Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty.**

Transparency and access to information

Almost 40% of respondents consider that transparency and access to information has worsened compared to the previous year and even more are concerned about the increased difficulty in reporting and addressing corruption.

All proposals for change in legislation should be publicly available and allow for feedback. All Government institutions at all levels should be equally transparent, and responsive to citizen's queries. This implies investing more in effective interaction and not just in communication measures.

Respect for democratic principles

The respondents feel broadly confident that democratic principles are upheld in their countries, but almost 40% (more than half in Eastern Europe) consider that respect for democratic principles is insufficient. Furthermore they feel that Governments are not supporting them enough in their work to promote human rights and democratic principles.

Moreover, the great majority of respondents are concerned about the increase of nationalism as well as discrimination against ethnic minorities in Europe, and sees increased polarisation between different sections of society.

Measurement and regular evaluation of core democratic principles should also be included in the European Parliament's proposed monitoring mechanism of EU countries on the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights.

Annex - Survey questions

Civic space

Q 1 Which European country would you like to tell us about? (Please only select one, but, you can take the survey multiple times and include other countries)

Q 2 How would you rate the conditions for civil society and citizens' action in your country?

Q 3 In your opinion, do you think the conditions for civil society have got better or worse in your country over the last year?

Q 4 How would you assess the current situation in your country, in the following areas:

- the Freedom of association (registration for CSOs)
- the freedom of assembly
- the freedom of expression
- the state's duty to protect (ability/willingness to the state to investigate abuses against the sector)
- financial support for civil society

Q 5 Please help us understand your answers above, citing examples if necessary

Q 6 How would you rate civic space, or the conditions for civil society and citizen action at the following levels:

- local
- national
- regional

Collaboration and support for civil society in Europe

Q 7 Do you feel cross-border European cooperation is important for the effective operation of CSOs?

Q 8 Please help us understand why you selected the answer above

Q 9 Given the reading of the current trends, do you think that CSOs like yours will gather more public support (a base in society, critical mass and strong constituencies), in your country over the coming year?

Trends in European politics

Q 10 In your opinion, how well do you think democratic principles are upheld in your country of operations?

Q 11 What of the following issues is your organisation most concerned about (please rank in order of priority with #1 being the most important)?

- surveillance of your CSO
- heavy handed policing during protests
- lack of appropriate consultation processes by public sector
- funding restrictions on civil society
- threat of violence from non state actors (intimidation)
- security counter-terrorism legislation stifling the operations of civil society

- introduction of restrictions to campaigning through contract conditionality

Q 12 Please help us understand your answers above, or please tell us about any other issues you are worried about

Q 13 Over the 12 past months, has it become easier or harder for civil society and citizens to:

- access government information
- identify and expose corruption

Q 14 In your opinion, do you think conditions for civil society will improve, decline or stay the same over the next 12 months?

Q 15 Please help us understand why you selected the answer above

Political trends in Europe

Q 16 Given recent events in Europe (such as the refugee crisis), do you think that nationalism and discrimination against immigrants/nationals of foreign origin or ethnic minorities are gathering traction, in your country of operation?

Q 17 In your opinion, do you think that recent political developments have increased or decreased polarisation between sections of society, in your country of operation?

Q 18 Do you think enough is being done by your government to support independent civil society in its promotion of democratic values and universal human rights in your country of operation?

Q 19 Do you think the European institutions are taking appropriate action to guarantee civic space in your country of operations?