



Fundația pentru  
Dezvoltarea  
Societății  
Civile



fundația pentru  
parteneriat



Centrul de  
Resurse pentru  
Comunitățile  
de Romi



## Civil Society Forum in Central and Eastern Europe

### **Organizer: Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF)**

**Objectives of the Forum:** The Civil Society Forum in CEE will provide the opportunities for NGOs from CEE countries to come together, share experiences and discuss the future – working on solutions, ideas and strategies. The first edition of the Forum will start through a broader introduction on the political and economic context of the CEE societies. Findings of recent comparative policy research carried out in ten post-communist countries will be presented and the participants will be invited to reflect on a series of essential questions.

In addition, the participants will share their own reflections on the development and impact of the economic crisis in Central and Eastern Europe, advancing hypotheses as to its effect on civil society infrastructure, governmental policy and philanthropy in general.

**Date:** November 27<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**Venue:** Bucharest, Romania

**Format:** 3 Types of sessions. Recommended length: 1 ½ hrs

D = Debate (talk-show Q&A)

R = Roundtable discussion (Facilitated free-to-all discussion)

W = Workshop (Lecture Q&A)

[Interactive side events]

## Background

*"Civil society activities are essential for a mature democracy, the respect for human rights and the rule of law. Such activities enhance political accountability, stimulate and expand the space for discourse on societal choices and strengthen the consensus for a pluralistic society. By contributing to a more open, participatory and dynamic democracy, a lively and vibrant civil society is also conducive to tolerance and reconciliation. The involvement of civil society organisations in the pre-accession process contributes to the quality of and public support for accession-related reforms.*

*A culture of acceptance and appreciation of the role played by civil society need to be in place to allow civil society organisations to engage in an effective policy dialogue. Public consultation on policy initiatives and draft laws should become the general principle. The access of civil society to government support is frequently hindered by a lack of transparency and poorly developed allocation criteria."*

***(Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council COM(2010) 660 final. Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011)***

The development of a strong and active civil society was not included among the official criteria for accession (political criteria). Nonetheless in time the European Union came to emphasize the role of civil society (in particular of a strong and democratic NGO sector) in building stable and healthy democratic societies prior to the accession of CEE countries to the EU. This element has become visible both in various official documents (i.e. progress reports) and in actual policies (through the various funding programmes dedicated to or involving CSOs/NGOs).<sup>1</sup> While the approach remains visible in the relation of the EU to third countries (particularly prospective new member states), it is rather absent from the European domestic sphere. The assumption that EU member states are stable democracies with long(er) tradition of civil society participation and checks and balances of power is at present more fragile, with younger democracies (such as CEE member states) in a worse context. It seems rather strange that, given the emphasis on the political conditionality in relation to third countries, there is no Community competence in

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<sup>1</sup> Eline De Ridder, Civil Society Development during Accession: On the Necessity of Domestic Support to EU Incentives, Sociología 2011, Vol. 43 (No. 6: 623-656)

the field of civil society as “democracy and democratisation remain largely outside EU-level responsibilities” and are not covered by the *acquis communautaire*.<sup>2</sup>

Although, particularly more recently, the role of civil society has been recognized in the process of EU policy formulation (for instance the European Economic and Social Committee includes CSOs as full consultative entities, not only in the traditional role of social partners as employers’ associations and trade unions, but also under a specific third group “Various Interests” where a wide range of NGOs are included), it does not appear in the extensive legislative body of the European Union. EU is interested more in this consultative function of civil society than on the role or the development of the third sector in a member state. While this approach is in line with the essential features of civil society (independence, freedom of association, subsidiarity), EU has not attempted to provide benchmarks or standards for the role of CSOs in a modern liberal democracy (not even for prospective member states). “As a result, there are no binding Community rules on civil society and no *acquis communautaire* on the third sector”.<sup>3</sup> While that omission does not seem to pose serious challenges to civil society in “older” democracies, the case can be made that it leaves CSOs in new member states vulnerable to negative influence from the political sphere and, consequently, that it actually weakens the democratization processes still underway in most of the post-communist countries.

The economic crisis and its various effects have a considerable impact on EU societies. Old weaknesses are resurfacing and new challenges are coming out of the crisis. Democracy (under its various older and newer historical models) is under pressure as citizens demand change. Civil Society Organizations are themselves affected by the economic, political and societal transformations. It is an excellent time to discuss and revisit the role and mission of civil society organisations.

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<sup>2</sup> idem

<sup>3</sup> idem

**AGENDA**  
**Bucharest, November 27<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**National Library of Romania**

**Thursday, November 27, 2014**

**Until 9:00 AM**            **Arrival of Participants and Registration**

**9.30 – 11.00 AM**        **Opening session: EU's diverse Civil Societies (D)** *(on the record, open to press)*

*Guiding Questions: 25 years after the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe which are the essential transformations at the level of civil society in the region? Are there different types/models of civil society within the EU, just as there are various forms of democracy? Is there an ideal type of civil society and how close/far from this model are "civil societies" in CEE? To what degree is civil society still a relevant actor in the promotion of democratic values in Europe?*

Speakers: **Andrei Plesu**, Philosopher, essayist, journalist, literary and art critic (RO), **Adam Michnik**, Historian, essayist, former dissident, public intellectual, and the editor-in-chief of Poland's largest newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza (PL)

**11.00 – 11.30 AM**        **Coffee Break**

**11.30 – 13.00**            **Democratisation in Europe: mission accomplished? (D)** *(on the record, open to press)* Translation to be provided from Polish into English

*Guiding Questions: Is the transition to democracy over or is there still unfinished business to be done? Who should take the lead? To what degree is civil society still a relevant actor in the promotion of democratic values in Europe?*

Discussants: **Ingrid Schulerud**, Ambassador for the EEA and Norway Grants (NO), **Karen Fogg**, Former Head of EC Delegation in Bucharest (1993-1998) (EU), **Alina Mungiu-Pippidi**, Professor of Democracy Studies, Hertie School of Governance (RO), **Conny Reuter**, Secretary General, Solidar (EU), **Kuba Wygnański**, Director of Klon/Jawor

Association (PL)

Moderator: **Ionut Sibian**, Civil Society Development Foundation (RO)

**1.00 – 2.00 PM          Lunch**

**2.30 – 4.00 PM          How will European democracies survive the economic crisis?**  
**(4 R) (on the record, open to press)**

The economic crisis brought along uninvited effects, many of them reminders of a past deemed to never happen again. The rise of populism, extremism and xenophobia is now a constant presence in most of the EU countries, fuelled by employment insecurity and eroded social security systems. Particularly in CEE there is a mounting discontent of the citizens against inefficient and corrupt public authorities which add a further burden to the long and difficult economic crisis. All over Europe critics of the democratic deficit raise their voices, either as the “Indignados” movement in Spain, or as the myriad of extremist parties all across the continent, including in the race for the European Parliament. The economic crisis offers new opportunities for business and Governments alike to push for untapped natural resources (ore mining, shale gas, sea oil reserves etc.) in spite of local citizens’ concerns about the dangerous environmental impact of such actions.

*The 4 parallel roundtable discussions will explore all these issues, with a particular attention paid to the role of civil society organizations and to its potential joint response:*

**a) The new wave of intolerance and extremism in Europe**

Speakers: **Bridget O’Loughlin**, Coordinator of the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign, Council of Europe, **Evelyne Paradis**, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe (tbc), **Julia Kovalenko**, ENAR/Tallin Centre for Legal Information (EE), **Waltraud Heller**, Media and Public Awareness Manager, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU)  
Moderator: **Dovilė Šakalienė**, Executive Director Human Rights Monitoring Institute (LT)

**b) Discontent against bad governance and corruption**

Speakers: **Zuzana Wienk**, Executive Director Fair Play Alliance (SK), **Laura Ștefan**, Anti-corruption expert (RO), **Nele Leosk**, Program Director at e-Governance Academy (EE),

**Grzegorz Makowski**, Director of the Anticorruption Programme at Batory Foundation (PL)

Moderator: **Cristian Ghinea**, Romanian Center or European Policies (RO)

**c) Democratic deficit and new civic movements**

Speakers: **Amana Ferro**, Senior Policy Officer of the European Anti Poverty Network (EU), **Guðjón Már Guðjónsson**, The Ministry of Ideas (IS) (tbc)

Moderator: **Ioana Avadani**, Executive Director of the Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

**d) Economic recovery vs. new environmental concerns**

Speakers: **Bogdan Olteanu**, Deputy-Governor of the National Bank of Romania, Honorary Ambassador of the World Wide Fund for Nature (RO), **Steffen Stierle**, Attac Germany Coordination Committee (DE), **Lavinia Andrei**, President TERRA Mileniul III (RO), **Otilia Nutu**, Policy analyst - energy and infrastructure with Expert Forum (RO)

Moderator: **Toni Vidan**, Friends of the Earth Croatia (HR)

**4.00 – 4.30 PM**      **Coffee Break**

**4.30 – 6.00 PM**      **A conversation about the shadow of “illiberal new states”**

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit**, Former Member of the European Parliament (DE) (tbc), **Ognyan Minchev**, Executive Director, Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS) (BG), **Alina Inayah**, Director of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (RO)

Moderator: **Luca Niculescu**, journalist RFI Romania (RO)(tbc)

**8.00 – 9.30 PM**      **Reception***(off the record, closed to press)*

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**Friday, November 28**

**9.30 – 11.00 AM**     **Supporting democracy at home and in the EU. What policy agenda for the next 5 years for CEE Civil Society? (D followed by R)** *(on the record, open to press)*

Speakers: **Pawel Krzeczunowicz**, civil society expert (PL), **Oli Henman**, CIVICUS European Representative (UK), **Codru Vrabie**, Civil Society activist, Funky Citizens (RO)  
Moderator: **Mariana Milosheva-Krushe**, Civil society activist and expert (BG)

**11.00 – 11.30 AM**     **Coffee Break**

**11.30 – 13.00**        **Supporting democracy at home and in the EU. What policy agenda for the next 5 years for CEE Civil Society? (3 R)** *(on the record, open to press)*

**A) Citizens reborn. From a new culture of protest to a new culture of participation? (R)**

Over the past years, in various European countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Spain, Italy (Turkey)...), citizens have taken to the streets to show their discontent. A new culture of protest fed by the use of social networks and finding inspiration in other countries has spread over Europe. Protests are not lead by well-established organizations, but are (self)coordinated in a very open and horizontal fashion. A new civic enthusiasm appears to have been born in places where citizens are usually absent from the public sphere.

*Guiding Questions: How do (traditional) civil society organizations respond to this revival of citizenship? Can this culture of protests lead to a culture of participation and civic engagement beyond the protests itself? What actions should CSOs take to keep the momentum? Do politicians take these transformations seriously? What are the main (common) demands of protesters and what are the policy changes that CSOs should advocate for in order to respond to the voices in the streets?*

Speakers: **Sorin Moisă**, Member of the European Parliament (RO) (tbc), **Daniel Smilov**, Programme Director at the Centre for Liberal Strategies (BG) (tbc), **Kuba Wygnański**, Director of Klon/Jawor Association (PL)  
Moderator: **Oana Preda**, Executive Director of Resource Center for Public Participation (RO)

## B) Checks and balances: the EU leverage (R)

While political conditionalities prior to the accession of new member states to the EU have produced major reform steps, for many observers it has become clear that progress is reversible. Once in, many political establishments lost the incentive/pressure to continue reforms in key areas particularly in the fields of justice and rule of law. Domestic checks and balances are still weak while the resistance of the system is increasing. The only review of the rule of law is conducted of new EU member states in the context of the cooperation and verification mechanisms, on the basis of the Copenhagen criterion. Since this criterion does not apply to countries that are already EU member states, there is no mechanism available to increase progresses after member states accession to EU.

*Guiding Questions: Can the EU layer of governance provide the needed leverage to balance the reversal of the democratization process in its member states? Which are those mechanisms with the highest impact for which CSOs should advocate? What is the role and potential of European political families?*

Speakers: **Renate Weber**, Member of the European Parliament (RO), **Angela Filote** Head of the Representation Office of the European Commission in Romania, **Veronika Mora**, Director of Ökotárs Foundation (HU), *Representative of DEMOS (UK) (tbd/tbc)*  
Moderator: **Tina Divjak**, Head of Advocacy at Center for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs CNVOS (SI)

## C) Civil Society for all (R)

Although developing a strong and active civil society was not part of the official (democratic) criteria for accession, at various occasions the European Union pointed to the democratic value of the third sector and indicated its preference for the development of a vigorous civil society before the CEECs joined the Union. ([Eline De Ridder, Civil Society Development during Accession: On the Necessity of Domestic Support to EU Incentives, Sociológia 2011, Vol. 43 \(No. 6: 623-656\)](#)). EU together with other foreign donors, the US Government in particular, were key in the (re)creation and diversification of civil society in post-communist Europe. While CSOs providers of social and educational services have found quicker a relatively good domestic support, civic organizations and watchdogs have been struggling without the financial support of the foreign donors. While there is a clear need for democratic scrutiny and civic participation all over Europe, but particularly in

new EU member states, existing EU programs are not well adapted to allow for the survival and development of civic organizations.

*Guiding Questions: What role should EU play in supporting civic organizations, monitoring of public policies and advocacy work, civic education and citizen participation? What instruments are available and what else should be added? At policy level, can the EU do more to ensure that civil society remains at the core of the EU member states' democratic structure?*

Speakers: **Luben Panov**, Bulgarian Center for Not-for-profit Law (BG) (tbc), **Dolores Neagoie**, Civil society expert (RO) (tbc), **Pavĺina Kalousová**, Civil society expert (CZ) (tbc)  
Moderator: **Valentin Burada**, Civil Society Development Foundation (RO)

**1.00 – 2.00 PM 5 projects that will rock the future** *(on the record, open to press)*

*Presentations and know-how transfer of CSO case studies/good practices in the following fields:*

- a) **Anti-corruption**
- b) **Good governance/Transparency**
- c) **Public participation PL**
- d) **Hate Speech SK**
- e) **New civic movements RO**

**2.00 – 2.30 PM**      **Closing session. [Final remarks]** *(on the record, open to press)*

**2.30 – 3.30 PM**      **Lunch**