

EN
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Answer given by Mr McGrath
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.2.2025)

The Commission supports the key role that independent civil society organisations (CSOs) play for the well-functioning of democracies, by upholding the common values on which the EU is founded, including the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights¹.

The Commission is working to ensure that CSOs can carry out their activities without undue interference, in an environment where they are protected, supported and empowered. The Commission has a dedicated policy work strand on a thriving civic space², which includes the 2023 Recommendation to Member States on civic engagement³. Under the Citizen Equality Rights and Values programme⁴, it has supported almost 1 500 civil society organisations in all 27 Member States with a budget of EUR 1.55 billion for the 2021–2027 financial programming period – the biggest amount ever allocated for this purpose.

The Commission will strengthen the engagement and protection of CSOs with all the necessary tools, including with a dedicated Civil Society Strategy, as announced in the 2025 Commission Work Programme. In this context, the Commission will come forward with a dedicated Civil Society Platform to support more systematic civil dialogue and with actions to enhance the protection of CSOs and human rights defenders under attacks.

The Commission has adopted a Directive⁵ and a Recommendation⁶ on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings (‘Strategic lawsuits against public participation’). The Directive entered into force on 6 May 2024 and Member States shall transpose it into national law by 7 May 2026. The Commission is closely following their implementation in the Member States.

¹ See the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM/2022/716 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0716>

² https://commission.europa.eu/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-fundamental-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights/application-charter/thriving-civic-space-protect-fundamental-rights_en?prefLang=es

³ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836 of 12 December 2023 on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes, C/2023/8627.

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv>

⁵ Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings (‘Strategic lawsuits against public participation’), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj/eng>

⁶ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/758 of 27 April 2022 on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings (‘Strategic lawsuits against public participation’), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2022/758/oj/eng>