



Eastern Neighbours' Platforms Civil Society Day

Joint meeting of EU civil society platforms with Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Civil society is an experienced and valuable partner. Civil society across Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia has gained extensive expertise and knowledge on a diverse range of topics, such as human rights, social dialogue and sustainable development. This valuable expertise needs to be put to full use to boost the development of countries and enhance the well-being of their citizens. Over the past decades, civil society across the region has played a key role in bringing these four countries closer to the European Union (EU) and in fortifying their democracy and institutions. Furthermore, they have often acted as first responder to crises, be it on political, social, health or security front, thus increasing the overall resilience of their societies.

Civil society platforms are instrumental in monitoring the implementation of agreements concluded with the EU, as well as in making recommendations to the Parties on implementation shortcomings.

Civil society's health can be measured. A key role of civil society is to give a voice to the voiceless, to act as a watchdog holding governments accountable, and to build bridges between authorities and citizens. To contribute meaningfully to policy-making and to fulfil its core tasks, civil society needs sustainable funding and recognition from both the government and the public. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are a natural channel heralding the importance of reforms to citizens. Through their advocacy, they contribute to enhancing public trust in reforms, which is key for such reforms to be sustainable and successful. They help to support challenging reform procedures, in particular in those countries where security and safety are not in place.

Civil society platforms have a huge potential and impulse to share expertise and to contribute to reforms of the justice system and the rule of law, fight against corruption, and fundamental rights. However, despite their institutional role and clear added value, ***civil society platforms*** do not benefit from structural funding and their recommendations are rarely followed up in practice.

Civil society is an ally in fighting disinformation. Fight against fake news and disinformation has become a global challenge and involving all actors is key. Disinformation uses sophisticated tools and targets vulnerable communities and societal weaknesses. The more a society is educated and resilient, the more difficult it is to spread fake news. Therefore, disinformation needs to be tackled through education and innovation, as well as by enhancing the combined efforts of the media landscape, CSOs, government agencies, the business sector and international organisations.

Civil society platforms are committed to exchanging best practices to build up the resilience of countries and their societies against fake news and disinformation by involving businesses, workers' organisations and CSOs.

Civil society contributes to the Skills Agenda. Due to its complexity, the Skills Agenda requires engagement of institutions and actors at national, regional and local level in order to be inclusive, meaningful and sustainable. In order to bridge existing skill gaps, communities need to be mobilised through the involvement of the private sector, trade unions and other civil society organisations. In times when manual work is being increasingly superseded by technology, society needs to focus on skills that only humans possess such as strategic thinking, leadership, and creativity. These are all skills in which civil society excels. Moreover, civil society is key to overcome resistance to change. Being digitally-skilled and environmentally sensitive, young people have the potential to be catalysts of the green and digital transitions.

Thanks to their representative and balanced structure involving social partners and other CSOs, ***civil society platforms*** can significantly contribute to the successful implementation of the Skills Agenda.