



Civil Society Week

4-7 March 2024

**RISE UP
FOR DEMOCRACY**

EARLY INSIGHTS



Civil Society Week

EARLY INSIGHTS

RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES

1. **STOPPING MANIPULATION:** civil society is fed up with constant attempts to manipulate citizens with false information. Europe needs to step up its fight against disinformation through targeted grassroots actions for citizens, civil society and policymakers.
2. **EDUCATION IS THE ANTIDOTE:** Europe needs a new generation of active citizens – ‘Gen EU’ – who are well-informed, engaged and who know that change starts with them. Both formal and informal education from early childhood and in all settings is key in this respect.

On 4-7 March, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) brought together people of all ages and backgrounds from civil society for a vibrant debate on the upcoming 2024 European elections and on Europe’s future. Throughout the week we gauged the opinions of civil society on issues that truly matter to EU citizens. This summary is an early insight into civil society’s expectations for the future leaders of the EU.

YOUTH

1. **POWER TO YOUNG PEOPLE:** tomorrow’s future starts today. Youth must be given a seat at the decision-making table.
2. **STARTING AT GRASSROOTS:** young people that are responsibly engaged ensure the future of the EU. They should be consulted not only in the final stages of the decision-making process but more importantly at the beginning, so that their hopes, needs and aspirations can shape policies from the start.

CIVIC SPACE AND CIVIL DIALOGUE

1. **CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE:** there should be no question that Europe is a safe, cross-border and enabling space for civil society and for philanthropy. Structured civil dialogue on all government levels should be the new gold standard in all EU countries.
2. **NO TIME TO WASTE:** we need to start working with EU candidate countries now, through capacity building and a structured civil dialogue, to strengthen their civil societies and ultimately their democracies.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

1. **YOUR VOICE MATTERS:** EU citizens have never spoken so loudly about what they want. Their voices need to be included when decisions are taken in the EU, through participatory and e-democracy tools such as the European Citizens’ Initiative and crowdsourcing citizens’ policy ideas. This should be accompanied by a thorough follow-up and civic engagement activities, such as volunteering.
2. **LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND:** too many Europeans feel left behind. Whether it’s the digital or green transitions, economic policy or the future water management strategy, citizens must be the main consideration in all EU decisions.

AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE

1. **OUR PLANET HAS LIMITS:** civil society agrees that it is time to shift away from growth-centric economic models and give more weight to well-being and prosperity within planetary boundaries, while taking into consideration the impact of the ongoing transition on people and businesses.
2. **PEOPLE AND DEMOCRACY:** the European Semester must be reformed to broadly involve civil society and citizens in a meaningful and structured way.



#CivSocWeek

