



Report

Held during Civil Society Week 2026, the workshop entitled *Civil Society Strategy and Platform – What is next* brought together EU institutions, civil society representatives and other key actors to provide a space for exchange on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Civil Society and the establishment of the Civil Society Platform. The session was facilitated by **Estelle Massé (DG JUST)** and **June Bedaton (EESC)**.

The workshop opened with a presentation of the Informal Steering Group of the Civil Society Platform and the priorities for the period ahead. The speakers shared the following key messages:

Cinzia del Rio (President of the EESC Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship) stressed that the strategy was a crucial and long-awaited tool to reinforce civic space amid growing pressures on civil society. She underlined the EESC's commitment to ensuring that the strategy and the platform would become effective instruments for strengthening civil society.

Irena Moozová (Deputy Director General, European Commission, DG JUST) highlighted that the platform would operate on principles of partnership and a bottom-up approach that keeps civil society voices at the centre. She stressed three key objectives: strengthening civil society's role in governance, ensuring an open and safe civic space and securing sustainable and transparent funding.

Friso Roscam Abbing (Head of the Liaison Office of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)) spoke about the importance of aligning the FRA's long-established civil society platform with the new EU platform to ensure coherent support for civil society and stronger protection of EU values.

Gabriella Civico (President of Civil Society Europe) stressed that the platform should reflect the diversity of civil society, both geographically and thematically. She emphasised the need to prioritise equality, anti-racism, disability rights and the inclusion of Roma communities.



An input session and panel discussion then followed on the principles that should guide the development and functioning of the Civil Society Platform. The speakers shared the following key messages:

Rosalba Striani (Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission, DG JUST) emphasised that transparency, inclusivity and strong representativeness would be essential foundations for the platform's work.

Christa Schweng (Rapporteur of the EESC opinion on the Civil Society Strategy) highlighted that the platform's work should be grounded in openness, cooperation and complementarity to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of efforts.

Pietro Barbieri (Rapporteur of the EESC opinion on the Civil Society Strategy) stressed that the platform must be results-oriented, participatory and built on structured, well-coordinated processes.

Waltraud Heller (Lead on civic space and human rights defenders, FRA) stressed that the platform must remain a manageable size to enable meaningful in-person dialogue, guided by clear membership criteria and a code of conduct.

Carlotta Besozzi (Director of Civil Society Europe) underlined that the platform must deliver tangible results and prioritise inclusion, representation and diversity, ensuring that civil society in all its variety can engage meaningfully.

In the public discussion, **CSO representatives** emphasised that the platforms should act as a high-level forum for dialogue, built on a strong sense of ownership among civil society, and remain grounded in accountability, partnership, transparency and openness. They stressed that its work must be regular and continuous. The participants also highlighted the added value of involving CSOs from EU candidate countries, noting that their participation would enrich exchanges and strengthen mutual learning within the platform. It was suggested that the platform could facilitate dialogue with philanthropic organisations and private donors, as it could improve information sharing, coordination and collaboration across different stakeholders.



In the final address, **José Antonio Moreno Díaz** (President of the Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law Group of the EESC) noted that the exchanges throughout the meeting showed a shared commitment to building a meaningful, inclusive platform grounded in trust and transparency, and that these insights would guide the next steps in its development.