

**BETWEEN:**

The European Economic and Social Committee

**AND**

Civil Society Alliance UK

**1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this MoU is to identify and set out the areas of common interest for cooperation between two parties within the framework of maintaining and strengthening relations between civil society organisations in the European Union and the United Kingdom.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The **EU-UK Follow-up Committee** was set up by the EESC in 2021 to continue the work of the EESC's Brexit Follow-Group, particularly by fostering relations with UK civil society. The Committee's overarching objectives are the following:

- Building and fostering strong relations with key actors of the EU-UK relations, most importantly re-building bridges with UK civil society organisations, using outreach and strong communication.
- Liaising with the main EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council) as well as with UK institutional actors (UK Mission in Brussels, Houses of Parliament, Devolved Administrations).
- Monitoring the implementation of the most relevant EU-UK agreements, notably the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- Monitoring other agreements and potential areas of cooperation.
- Monitoring any element of the new EU-UK relationship with particular importance for civil society.
- Centralising EESC feedback on relevant EU-UK issues.

**Civil Society Alliance UK** is a new project set up to empower civil society organisations from across the UK to scrutinise and influence constitutional, administrative and legal changes in the complex, multidimensional regulatory landscape following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. The aims of Civil Society Alliance UK are:

- Open and accountable law-making: Legislating must respect the democratic processes, including the devolved nature of the UK constitution. There must be clear limits and safeguards on executive power. There must be robust parliamentary scrutiny at all levels with appropriate transparency and debate.
- A high standards UK: Standards within the UK should not be diminished or undermined, with best practice for rights and standards being maintained or developed and associated policies and funding provided to underpin them. Constitutional or legislative change should not mean weaker standards, fewer rights, or loss of funding. This includes the protection of standards and ensuring that no governance gaps are created following the UK's exit from the EU.
- A strong civil society voice: The civic space for civil society organisations to be active advocates in the public sphere should be protected and advanced. A culture of government engagement with civil society should be enabled which is collaborative, consistent, open, effective, and accountable. Civil society bridges the gap between citizens and the state and ensures that views, interests, and evidence from the population are heard by government.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING

The two parties mutually understand and agree that they both endeavour for a strong civil society voice in both the EU and the UK, and for maintaining and building relationships between civil society organisations in the EU and the UK. Being aware that many EU-UK issues are covered by the EU Domestic Advisory Group under the EU-UK TCA<sup>1</sup> and UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Domestic Advisory Group<sup>2</sup>, and that there is therefore a need to avoid unnecessary duplications, they undertake to identify, monitor and share information on potential areas for cooperation around any element of the new EU-UK relationship of particular importance for civil society, for example in the following areas of common interest:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/sections-other-bodies/other/eu-domestic-advisory-group-under-eu-uk-tca#:~:text=The%20EU%20DAG%20under%20the,economic%2C%20social%20and%20environmental%20stakeholders>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-eu-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-domestic-advisory-group>

- Pursuing cooperation on issues arising from the implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement<sup>3</sup>, particularly;
  - the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland<sup>4</sup>, particularly via collecting views directly from the ground;
  - the state of play of the rights of both EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU<sup>5</sup>;
  - post-Brexit mobility issues;
  - Monitoring other issues arising from the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement.
- Monitoring other EU-UK agreements, as mutually agreed between the two parties;

#### 4. WORKING METHODS

- To be able to pursue effectively their cooperation in the above areas of mutual interest, the two parties agree that there is a need for an exercise of mapping existing relationships, which could then serve as a basis for setting out the forms of cooperation to be pursued.
- To ensure regular and effective cooperation, the two parties agree to invite regularly representatives of their respective bodies to each other's meetings. They also agree to also hold informal meeting between their representatives, as required.
- This Memorandum of Understanding does not create any kind of partnership or association between the signatories and does not provide for any exclusivity in cooperation.

#### 5. FINANCING

- The cooperation between the EESC and Civil Society Alliance UK will not imply the allocation of any additional funds or financial resources to support and implement activities arising from the present memorandum, each party shall cover the full costs of its participation in any aspect of the above cooperation in accordance with its own policies, rules and regulations.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement/protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement/protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland_en)

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_22\\_1260](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_1260)

## 6. ENTRY INTO FORCE, AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

- This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on the date when the last of the two Parties signs.
- Any proposal for amendment of this Memorandum of Understanding shall be submitted to the competent authorities of both parties for approval.
- Either party may terminate this Memorandum of Understanding by giving no less than three months' written notice to the other party. Any such termination will be without prejudice to the orderly completion of any ongoing activity pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding as of the time of such notice.

Signed in duplicate in Brussels on 28 March 2023

For the EESC

For Civil Society Alliance UK



Jack O'Connor

Chair of the EU-UK Follow-up Committee



Rosalind Stevens

Project Manager at Civil Society Alliance UK