



Civic Space Report 2024

ROMANIA





About the author

Civil Society Development Foundation (FDSC) is an independent, non-governmental organisation founded in 1994 at the initiative of the European Commission. FDSC promotes a strong and sustainable civil society that contributes to defending democratic values by supporting civil society actors, mobilising resources, fostering an enabling environment, and strengthening co-operation with other sectors. Thus far, FDSC managed over 2600 grants in its funding programs for CSOs as well as played a key role in building CSO capacity in Romania, being one of the most important training providers and promoters of the interests of the sector.

About this report

This analysis was published as part of the European Civic Forum's Civic Space Report 2024. The full report contains chapters written by its secretariat, by member organisations, or by partner organisations and individuals. Much of the content originally appeared as part of ECF's submission to the European Commission's Rule of Law consultation. Each chapter reflects the views and analysis of its respective author. For more information about the European Civic Forum, please visit www.civic-forum.eu

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Key trends

- 🔍 **Smear campaigns and SLAPPs against journalists and civil society organisations.**
- 🔍 **Media independence under pressure and political influence.**
- 🔍 **Civil society challenged due to bureaucratic practices, lack of adequate funding and inconsistent legislation.**

Summary

Civic space in Romania is rated as narrowed in 2023.¹ In its 2023 Rule of Law report, the European Commission recommended that the government of Romania step up to ensure effective public consultations before the adoption of legislation. While the government has taken some steps in this regard, civil society states that there has been no improvement or concrete progress in implementing this recommendation systematically.

In 2023 civil society organisations (CSOs) continued to call for coherent and appropriate legislation to protect the freedom of association. The current legislative framework is unclear and inconsistent, and results in significant administrative burdens for CSOs. While the Ministry of Justice proposed a draft law that would simplify and digitise existing legal procedures and bureaucratic requirements for CSOs, a new law which limits CSOs right to appeal to a court and environmental organisations' ability to challenge development projects, was also adopted.

Policymaking remains unpredictable and untransparent, as the Romanian legal framework continued to change very fast, in particular, a fiscal package proposed made it very difficult for civil society to observe and follow the legislative process. The government continued to legislate through

¹ <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/romania/>

emergency ordinances, offering very little opportunity for stakeholders to be comprehensively consulted.

Journalists continued to face SLAPPs and smear campaigns, while civil society organisations remained targeted by SLAPPs brought by real estate developers in an attempt to force the organisations to cease their activities. There were significant challenges to media independence with major media outlets succumbing to political influence and pressure from private actors. This is expected to have a negative impact during 2024 when Romania will hold four rounds of elections.

Institutional, political and socio-economic landscape

The justice system in Romania continued to be affected by turmoil in 2023. The legal system continued to be affected, with increased workload, understaffing, underfunding which led to longer trials and impacted on public trust in the judicial system.

Renewed discussions about changing the pension system for magistrates sparked widespread discontent among judges and prosecutors who organised a series of protests in response to these law proposals. This resulted in courts around the country suspending their activity in June-August 2023.² Protests ended in August 2023 after the proposed legislation was found to be unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court³ However, this added to an already strained justice system which is affected by severe staff shortages. Official data shows that 20 percent of positions for judges and 27 per cent of prosecutor positions are already vacant, with the percentage expected to reach 40 per

²An overview of decisions issued by court to initiative protest is available in Romanian at

<https://www.unbr.ro/protestul-magistratilor-ultimele-informatii-pentru-avocati/> information last updated on 06 September 2023

³ Romanian Constitutional Court Decision no. 467 from 2 august 2023, available in Romanian at:

<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/273594>

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cent and 45 per cent respectively by the end of 2025. This would lead to the collapse of Romania's judicial system.⁴ In addition, widespread protests organised by lawyers took place on October 4 in opposition to irregularities in the justice system coupled with a proposal to increase taxes.⁵ These protests were followed by demonstrations organised in December 2023 by court clerks who raised concerns about their working conditions and unpaid salaries.⁶ Some courts recommenced protests in December 2023 because of underfunding.⁷

A study on the LGBTIQ+ community in Romania shows that: 41 per cent of Romanians have a supportive or neutral attitude towards legalising civil union, and 38 per cent support same sex marriage; 49 per cent think LGBTIQ+ people are discriminated against in Romania; one in five Romanians know someone who identifies as LGBTIQ+, whilst 56 per cent would ban LGBTIQ+ parades.⁸

In addition to the 2022 law proposal⁹ which would basically ban any information or communication about gender transition or homosexuality, a new legislative initiative¹⁰ seeking to prohibit any visual, audio, or video materials related to LGBTIQ+ identities was proposed and criticised by LGBTIQ+ rights organisations. The draft proposal put forward by the initiators serves to protect children.¹¹ Both proposals are pending in the Chamber of Deputies, which is responsible for a decision in these cases.

On 23 May, ECHR ruled in favour of the 42 petitioners in the case of Buhuceanu and others versus Romania¹² confirming that Romania violated Article 8 of the Convention, which protects family life. As a result of this decision, Romania must adopt a legal form of recognition of families made up of

⁴ According to an official press-release issued by the Superior Council of Magistrates on 13 June 2023, available in Romanian at: <https://www.csm1909.ro/PageDetails.aspx?Type=Title&FolderId=10473>

⁵ <https://www.unbr.ro/o-zi-fara-avocati-o-zi-in-care-statul-de-drept-nu-exista-campanie-de-constientizare-a-rolului-si-importantei-avocatului-in-apararea-drepturilor-si-libertatilor-cetatenesti/>

⁶ <https://grefajudiciara.ro/ample-forme-de-protest-in-instante-si-parchete-pentru-neplata-integrala-a-salariilor-si-a-altor-drepturi/>

⁷ <https://tribunalulbucuresti.ro/index.php/informatii/anunturi/95-ag-14-12-2023>

⁸ <https://www.mozaiqlgbt.ro/barometru-2023/>

⁹ https://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck2015.proiect?nr=243&an=2022

¹⁰ https://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck2015.proiect?cam=2&idp=20906

¹¹ <https://www.mozaiqlgbt.ro/2023/02/comunicat-de-presa-ideologiile-putiniste-isi-fac-loc-in-parlamentul-romaniei/>

¹² [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-224774%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-224774%22]})

same-sex persons.¹³ 35 civil society organisations (CSOs) joined a campaign asking for this decision to be applied and called for the legalisation of same-sex marriage.¹⁴

Gender-based violence continues to be a prevailing problem, whilst victims continue to face prejudice and reduced access to services. High rates of teenage pregnancies also continue to be an issue in 2022, with 409 births registered to mothers between the ages 10 to 14.¹⁵

In 2023 one of the most severe human rights violations took place after an official investigation in residential centres for older persons and persons with disabilities found inhumane treatment, grave human rights violations and exploitation of residents.¹⁶ The official investigation began after the CSO Centrul de Resurse Juridice (Centre for Legal Resources) sent several repeated alerts to the authorities who ignored these for more than six months.

¹³ <https://acceptromania.ro/aritcol-test/>

¹⁴ <https://acceptromania.ro/35-de-ong-uri-din-romania-sustin-adoptarea-instrumentelor-adequate-de-protectie-si-recunoastere-legala-a-tutoror-familiilor/>

¹⁵ https://centrulfilia.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Raport-monitorizare-VIF_2023_Centrul-FILIA.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.crj.ro/en/international-organisations-raise-concern-over-abuses-in-ilfov/>

Civic freedoms: regulatory environment and implementation

Freedom of association

The main law on associations and foundations is Government Ordinance no 26/2000 which prescribes how a non-governmental organisation is set up, how it functions and what its main rights and obligations are.¹⁷

The procedures governing the establishment and operation of CSOs are perceived by most representatives of the civil society sector as rigid, cumbersome, bureaucratic, and time-consuming. CSOs have raised concerns over unclear laws and non-uniform judicial practices, lengthy procedures, as well as lack of centralised data and communication between various state institutions.¹⁸

There are calls to modify the law and civil society has consistently asked for less bureaucracy needed to set up, run and dissolve a CSO.¹⁹ Although legislation has improved, it is still difficult, particularly for smaller CSOs to comply with bureaucratic needs because there is a lot of uncertainty and inconsistencies in existing procedures. The law itself was modified 14 times already and there are wide discrepancies in how it is applied across the country.

The Romanian Ministry of Justice proposed a draft bill, pending before Parliament, in consultation with CSOs, which would bring several modifications to existing legislation including limiting bureaucracy, simplifying judicial procedures relating to the organisation of CSOs and digitalising existing procedures, including the National Register of Non-Profit Legal Entities, managed by the Ministry of Justice and the unification of NGO registers.²⁰

¹⁷ <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/20740>

¹⁸ <https://clnr.ro/raport-de-cercetare-privind-barierile-administrative-in-organizarea-si-functionarea-ong-urilor-din-romania/>

¹⁹ http://www.fdsc.ro/library/files/pozitie_pre_consultare_og_26_2000_iulie_2020.pdf

²⁰ <https://clnr.ro/proiectul-de-modificare-a-og-26-2000-a-fost-depus-la-parlament/>

Concerns remain about a 2022 legislative proposal which sought to impose severe restrictions on CSOs including limiting their right to appeal to the court and in particular the ability of environmental CSOs to challenge development projects.²¹ 108 CSOs called on the President to not pass this law.²² Despite these criticisms and the severe consequences for CSOs to pursue their mission for public interest, the law was adopted in April 2023. It includes provisions to minimise the possibility to challenge administrative decisions and initiate public interest litigations.

The Centre for Legal Resources (CLR), the human rights organisation, which exposed grave human rights violations in social care homes in Romania, claimed that instead of addressing the violations it raised following monitoring visits in the centres, the Ministry of Labour decided to unilaterally terminate the cooperation agreement with CLR for its unannounced visits to social care homes. This means that the organisation is no longer allowed to continue its work of investigating and reporting on human rights abuses.²³

These incidents of abuses, publicly disclosed by the CLR and a team of investigative journalists, finally forced the authorities to respond. The government ordered a series of inspections of public and private residence centres across the country. The inspections took place hastily, without respect to the residents in the centre (e.g. persons with disabilities witnessed the raid by the inspection authorities and police officers who carried guns during their discussions with the centres' personnel). The authorities intimidated the staff, who were visited simultaneously by several control bodies, and created the impression that the aim was to issue (sometimes) disproportionate fines rather than propose remedies (see more in the Federation of NGOs Social Services Providers analysis²⁴).

Freedom of peaceful assembly

A legislative proposal from February 2023 raised concerns among civil society organisations, prompting 50 of them to write an open letter in which they criticised the proposal. They argued that the proposal threatened to severely restrict the right to protest by introducing a prison sentence of up to five years, a shift from the previous provisions which prescribed a sentence of up to two years

²¹ https://senat.ro/legis/lista.aspx?nr_cls=b758&an_cls=2022

²² <https://www.stiri.org/ong/drepturile-tutoror/108-organizatii-neguvernamentale-cer-presedintele-klaus-iohannis-sa-nu-promulge-o-lege-care-incalca-cel-putin-patru-articole-din-constitutie>

²³ <https://www.crj.ro/en/crj-urges-the-labour-minister-marius-constantin-budai-to-resign/>

²⁴ https://fonss.ro/inchideti-amendati-si-dati-masuri-de-indeplinit-dar-cu-beneficiarii-ce-facem/?fbclid=IwAR1CVorRIm-M1RITaTVsOSQX3cPQ2RtXswd584h-pKR-2Zuo2n1P_vqmqJQ

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or a fine.²⁵ The Parliament took into account the criticism it received and amended the proposal accordingly.²⁶

Following the escalating violence in Israel and Palestine, protesters showing solidarity with Palestine have claimed that they were abusively called into police questioning for alleged anti-Semitism, advised not to participate in protests or to discuss the developments unfolding in Israel and Palestine.²⁷ Other activists reported abusive searches and being repeatedly identified and taken to the police station and questioned, in what they perceived as an attempt to intimidate them.²⁸

A report monitoring antisemitism in Romania, published in July 2023, before the violence in Israel-Palestine escalated, showed a decrease in antisemitic attacks but continues to show a tendency of re-evaluating history with increased appreciation of fascist historical figures.²⁹

Freedom of expression

During the last decade, in an information ecosystem disrupted by technology-empowered propaganda, many experienced journalists have shifted to operate independently, outside the mainstream media, as have CSOs with new organisational and finance models. This development is the result of the rapidly deteriorating media landscape and the rise of disinformation and extremist tendencies in Romania. With four rounds of elections in 2024, the public need to be able to rely on accurate and unbiased information to participate in these elections, which is why a strong independent media is crucial.

One of the main online publications from Romania, Libertatea, has been marked by controversy after the owner of the publication announced that 20 percent of all staff will be laid off. This included several high-profile journalists such as the editor in chief Cătălin Tolontan, and other senior staff.

²⁵ <https://www.stareademocratiei.ro/2023/03/27/libertatea-de-exprimare-si-dreptul-la-protest-trebuie-din-nou-aparate-senatorii-vor-discuta-propunerea-de-inasprire-a-pedepselor-pentru-tulburarea-ordinii-si-linistii-publice/>

²⁶ <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/272347>

²⁷ <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/exclusiv-politia-romana-ii-cheama-pe-palestinieni-si-pe-sustinatori-la-sediu-mi-au-cerut-sa-nu-ma-duc-la-miting-sa-nu-vorbesc-despre-razboi-si-sa-nu-postez-pe-facebook-cei-mai-mu-4705572>

²⁸ https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/dusi-la-sectia-de-politie-pentru-un-slogan-participantii-la-mitingurile-pro-palestina-acuza-un-abuz-din-partea-fortelor-de-ordine-4748462?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=tolo-page-post&fbclid=IwAR1K09ZAJYXB78xnWDtAKuTSUAVeL6ZoSOVIACiGUSBBMJT1GtueagCMXa0

²⁹ <https://www.inshr-ew.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Raport-monitorizare-20-IULIE-2023.pdf>

Civil society groups have criticised this move and argued that the decision comes as a result of alleged pressure from the gambling industry to not publish critical articles.³⁰ Other journalists claim that the pressure also comes from real estate developers, who are accused of buying favourable media coverage.³¹

Separately, Romanian prosecutors decided to close the investigation into the smear campaign against a well-known Romanian investigative journalist, Emilia Sercan, without pressing any charges. The investigation came after several of her intimate pictures were posted without her consent on adult websites.³² The journalist protested against this decision and on December 18 around 50 other journalists and activists joined her daily protest held in front of the Prosecutor General's office.³³

An analysis shows that, at times, Romanian journalists face pressure to breach the confidentiality and protection of their anonymous sources. They face pressure from individuals, lawyers, police, prosecutors and even by the court to disclose their sources. However, according to reports, Romanian journalists are also able to oppose and resist such pressure.³⁴

Romanian media continues to receive large sums of financing from political parties, which spend large sums of money on favourable media reports and coverage, mostly through various intermediaries.³⁵ According to a report by an anti-corruption organisation, political parties receive large sums of money from the state and there is lack of transparency regarding what the money is spent on³⁶ as the contracts for the Romanian media remain opaque and very few publications cover this subject.³⁷ A mainstream news website received one million euros a year from the governing party to publish favourable articles that were not clearly labelled as paid advertising. On the other hand, when news agencies publish critical articles, they run the risk of losing significant amounts of

³⁰ <https://www.stareademocratiei.ro/2023/12/14/80-de-semnatari-ai-scrisorii-de-solidaritate-cu-jurnalistele-si-jurnalistii-de-la-ziarul-libertatea/>

³¹

<https://www.facebook.com/victor.g.ilie/posts/pfbid0scdvQQzTAD59HTyN3BUFxkroyaFN4ZZzeorUH8HV5CwZxB2ofvpb9xkV1QhnCpCrI>

³² <https://pressone.ro/parchetul-claseaza-abrupt-dosarul-de-kompromat-fapta-de-scurgere-a-unei-probe-din-politia-romana-nu-este-prevazuta-de-legea-penala/>

³³ <https://pressone.ro/parchetul-claseaza-abrupt-dosarul-de-kompromat-fapta-de-scurgere-a-unei-probe-din-politia-romana-nu-este-prevazuta-de-legea-penala/>

³⁴ <https://activewatch.ro/articole/presiuni-pentru-expunerea-surselor-norme-etice-si-legale/>

³⁵ <https://recorder.ro/pretul-tacerii-o-investigatie-in-contabilitatea-presei-de-partid/>

³⁶ <https://expertforum.ro/raport-finantarea-partidelor-2021/>

³⁷ <https://expertforum.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PB-160-subventii-2023-1.pdf>

money.³⁸ This sort of financing distorts the local media landscape and threatens the access to information of the public who rely on these outlets for information.³⁹

Safe space

An analysis published in December 2023 shows that strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) continue to be a concern in Romania. These consist of mostly of civil defamation cases, brought either under the general provisions on tort (*răspundere civilă delictuală*) or under the special provisions of the Civil Code on the protection of non-pecuniary subjective rights (the right to private life, the right to personal dignity, the right to one's image, the right to protection of personal data). Such proceedings can be on the merits and/or for temporary measures and are aimed at obtaining moral or material damages and/or putting an end to the alleged violations of the non-pecuniary subjective rights. In practice, in many cases the claimants specifically aim to silence those subjected to the lawsuit by asking the courts to forbid them from making further public statements in their respect.⁴⁰

As reported in our previous submission to the Commission, the worrying trend of real estate developers targeting civic actors with SLAPP cases, in an attempt to force them to cease their activities, continues. In December 2023, another court ruled against an NGO, forcing its closure because it could not pay the exorbitant legal expenses, of approximately €12,000, after already paying approximately €10,000, sought by the developer.⁴¹ The decision prompted large support from civil society who came together to raise the remaining funds and in the hopes that this may overturn the decision on appeal.⁴²

³⁸ https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/investigatie-un-milion-de-euro-de-la-pnl-pentru-site-ul-digi24-articolele-nu-au-fost-marcate-cu-semnul-p-publicitate-dar-au-fost-trimise-pentru-plata-la-partid-4745569?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=tolo-page-post&fbclid=IwAR3fbCTMj0tEgbwOfB01wnnBwCKP9rViF_npLvS-rc3Qyt4QiskuCKRfr8s

³⁹ <https://activewatch.ro/articole/partidele-banii-si-presa-o-relatie-toxica-freeex-digest-nr-4/>

⁴⁰ <https://cji.ro/en/slapp-in-romania-case-study/>

⁴¹ https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=771622698339174&set=a.554200323414747&type=3&ref=embed_post

⁴² https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02idbS92cSdq9GQ9sSTufcuuN D57ABSt8saNba59FrrHNCD3ufUFKcbWogpwKaM64jl&id=100064743517221

Although the Whistle-blower law was passed in December 2022⁴³ challenges with its implementation still exist. One challenge is the access to legal aid for whistle-blowers, and although the right is prescribed by law, irrespective of the income of the person in need of it, in practice, petitioners do not have access to legal representation.⁴⁴

Funding for civil society

After years of protest and mobilisation the local civil society sector is facing fatigue and acute lack of resources, operating in a constantly changing environment and mounting pressure. Funding for the sector in Romania remains limited, creating financial precarity and unsustainable conditions.

In August 2023, a group of leading CSOs mobilised in the defence of the fiscal facilities related to sponsorship and the three and a half percent funding mechanism for CSOs. This comes after a draft law for the adjustment of the Fiscal code, leaked to the media in early August, included the government's intention to change and limit the benefits for both mechanisms, with extensive negative effects on the civil society sector's funding sources. In a public letter⁴⁵ signed by over 1,300 CSOs and addressed to the government, CSOs called for the withdrawal of the proposals. Following a consultation meeting with the Prime Minister and his office in September 2023⁴⁶, the proposed changes to the Fiscal Code amendments were dropped.

However, the proposed changes were announced again in December 2023 when the government issued an Emergency Ordinance that introduced significant changes to the Fiscal Code. CSOs mobilisation and discussions with the Government⁴⁷ only partially managed to safeguard the sponsorship mechanism as self-employed, independent professionals and microenterprises⁴⁸ can no longer make sponsorships.

⁴³ <https://apador.org/cronologia-adoptarii-legii-de-protectie-a-avertizorilor-de-integritate/>

⁴⁴ <https://apador.org/tara-in-care-nici-barourile-de-avocati-nu-respecta-legea/>

⁴⁵ The letter is available at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LjDHjXjBwAlXkFnB7k4bl3dbWODHWY/edit?pli=1#heading=h.lsraxses2630> and one media article on the topic here: <https://www.presshub.ro/peste-1-000-de-ong-uri-cer-premierului-sa-nu-anuleze-mecanismele-de-sponsorizare-281201/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/guv.ro/posts/pfbid02MnWiaMdikXMRyQ9BhbsDVSJcZeKxW4Pp txv1Rv4QdLy3LigPGwCaugafpSxeSZV4I>

⁴⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/AsociatiaPentruRelatiiComunitare/posts/pfbid0sMZst9krZYyB QnMM9QA3v6PBrtjA3V6ttvsa9UfwEPX9U3AyKmFWbu7gJuUjMx7ol>

⁴⁸ Companies with a turnover up to 60.000 Euro that are taxed 1% on the revenues or up to 500.000 euro that are taxed with 3% on the revenues instead of on their profit.

The Emergency Ordinance of December 2023 introduced obligations for CSOs that receive money through sponsorship and other similar mechanisms to conduct a compulsory procedure that would generate a new declaration submitted along the annual financial statements. The technical details on this additional financial reporting procedure are to be defined in the secondary legislation issued by the Ministry of Finance in 2024. Several concerns are yet to be addressed in the secondary legislation, such as the need for external verification entailing costs, whether income thresholds are required for the additional reporting, the technical details related to the purpose, scope and costs of the procedure, the methodology used by the fiscal authorities to analyse these declarations and the conditions for the storage, processing and disclosure of the information received.

Civil dialogue and the right to participation

As the following examples illustrate, the right to participation was violated on several occasions during 2023. A local NGO from the municipality of Radauti, which was excluded from town hall meetings, launched a petition with over 1,000 signatures from the locals opposing the decision. It delivered the petition to the city council but was ignored by the local elected officials.⁴⁹

The human rights organisation APADOR-CH criticised the fact that although Law 52/2003 on decision-making transparency sets a minimum time limit of ten days for consultation, in practice, public authorities provide a maximum of ten days for consultations, regardless of the workload required to examine a legislative package. This was the case for three legislative proposals which would modify seven legal texts and for which civil society organisations had only ten days to share their input.⁵⁰

A report from Open Spending EU shows that, out of ten counties analysed, Romania is at the bottom of this ranking when it comes to transparency on how the funds received through the European

⁴⁹ <https://www.stareademocratiei.ro/2023/06/21/autoritatile-din-radauti-au-interzis-accesul-asociatiei-radautiul-civic-la-sedinta-de-consiliu-local/>

⁵⁰ <https://apador.org/cum-se-mimeaza-dezbaterea-publica-pe-repede-inainte/>

Union's Recovery and Resilience Mechanism are spent. Romania published only 28 percent of recommended information and only 36 percent of it is user-friendly.⁵¹

Civil society resilience

Romania's general public attitude toward civil society is complex and evolving. Surveys show that:⁵²

- 🔍 75 per cent of Romanians believe CSOs are essential in promoting democracy and human rights.
- 🔍 44 per cent of respondents considered CSOs to be effective in achieving their goals while only 19 per cent believed them to be ineffective.
- 🔍 37 per cent of Romanians reported trusting CSOs, a rate that is significantly lower than the European average of 53 per cent.
- 🔍 only 26.8 per cent of respondents had a favourable opinion of CSOs, while 37.5 per cent had an unfavourable opinion, and 35.7 per cent were neutral.

The European Implementation Network and Democracy Reporting International, made a comparison on how EU countries are doing in the execution of ECHR and CJEU judgements and found that the state with the largest number of judicial decisions not implemented is Romania, with 113 such decisions.⁵³

⁵¹ <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/RRF-transparency-report.pdf>

⁵² https://funky.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/TechSoup_Disinformation-and-Civil-Society-Regional-Mapping-Report_Black_Sea-1.pdf

⁵³ <https://apador.org/romania-pe-primul-loc-la-neimplementarea-hotararilor-cedo-si-in-2023/>

Recommendations

Targeted recommendation:

🔍 Refrain from abusing laws, legislative proposals, norms and practices to diminish the capacity of civil society and journalists carrying out their public interest missions.

- 🔍 Remove the severe restrictions which limit the right of CSOs to appeal to a court and in particular would limit the ability of environmental CSOs in particular to challenge development projects.
- 🔍 Ensure and protect an enabling environment for independent media outlets and the access to public information.
- 🔍 Restore the cooperation agreement with the Centre for Legal Resources and ensure the access of human rights monitoring organisations into the premises of residential homes for vulnerable persons.
- 🔍 Take urgent measures to protect journalists, civic actors and human rights defenders targeted by SLAPPs.
- 🔍 Ensure sustainable and predictable funding for civil society sector.
- 🔍 Fully implement the Whistleblower Law by ensuring access to legal aid.



About European Civic Forum

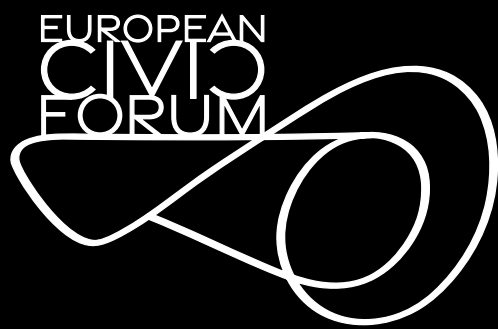
European Civic Forum (ECF) is a pan-European network of more than 100 associations and NGOs across 30 European countries,

Founded in 2005 by our member organisations, we have spent nearly two decades working to protect civic space, enable civic participation and build civil dialogue for more equality, solidarity and democracy in Europe.



About Civic Space Watch

Civic Space Watch collects findings and analyses from actors in Europe on the conditions for civil society to operate, capturing national and trans-European trends in civic space. Through ongoing monitoring of social media and regular contact and interviews with a strong network of members and partners on the ground, we strive to provide easy access to resources and improve information sharing within civil society across Europe.



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