

# The new Brussels effect: Why the EU increasingly shapes the space for civil society, and how to respond

## Unpacking the ECF Civic Space Report

WEDNESDAY 13 MAY 14:30-18:00  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS

Europe is witnessing a dangerous and unprecedented rollback of fundamental rights, with civil society regularly targeted. Increasingly, these attacks are being “Europeanised” at the EU level. At the same time, positive developments like the Civil Society Strategy show that there is an increasing recognition of the democratic value of civil society. How should we respond to this new “Brussels effect”?

Join us for the launch of the European Civic Forum’s annual Civic Space Report where civil society actors, human rights defenders, MEPs, and UN officials will explore this question and the wider state of civic space in 2026.

**RVSP here!**

## Programme

13:30-14:30 REGISTRATION AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ACCREDITATION

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14:30-14:40 OPENING REMARKS  
by ECF Co-Presidents

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14:45-15:45 PRESENTATION OF THE CIVIC SPACE REPORT – 8 KEY TRENDS IN CIVIC SPACE  
by Aarti Narsee, Senior Policy Officer & Lead for Rule of Law Advocacy, European Civic Forum

Followed by interventions from

- **Gina Romero**, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association
  - **MEP Tineke Strik** (Greens/EFA)
  - **MEP Fabienne Keller** (Renew)
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15:45-16:00 COFFEE BREAK

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16:00-17:30 MANUFACTURING SUSPICION – FROM FRINGE SMEAR CAMPAIGNS TO INSTITUTIONALISED HARASSMENT OF NGOS. HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Moderated by **Natacha Kazatchkine**, Secretary General, European Civic Forum

- **Julie Pascoet**, European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
  - **Patrizia Heidegger**, European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
  - **Dana Mareková**, Climate Coalition, Slovakia
  - **Sedra Arab**, Dokustelle, Austria
  - **MEP Rasmus Nordqvist** (Greens/EFA)
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17:30-18:00 CLOSING REFLECTIONS

- **ECF Co-Presidents**
- **MEP Ana Catarina Mendes** (S&D)
- **MEP Raquel García Hermida-van der Walle** (Renew)

