

Symposium
**The Civic Space in Europe – Shrinking, Growing,
Enhancing?**

July 10/11, 2023, in Berlin

Venue

Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Einsteinsaal, Jägerstrasse 22-23, 10117 Berlin

In recent years, the European Union has suffered from democratic backsliding and the erosion of the rule of law as well as from a weakening of other fundamental values such as institutional trust. This democratic decline is intertwined with the shrinking civic space - the growing tendency to restrict of civil society action - in Europe, that was focus of a three-year project at Maecenata Institute.

While there are alarming signs of repression and mistrust towards Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), there is also the observation that civil societies are responding to this by forming new coalitions and attempting to push back, which has also led to the emergence of new CSOs. In order to achieve a comprehensive systemic overview, a European perspective must necessarily take into account the specific peculiarities of the nations that are part of the European project. The perspective of the European Civic Space Observatory (ESCO), which encompasses European countries that are all members of the Council of Europe but not necessarily members of the European Union, includes both long-term stable democracies and countries where the democratic transformation took place only a generation ago. The ESCO attempted to combine both holistic and specific approaches in order to compare the different situations across Europe.

As we mark the end of our three-year project exploring the critical issues of the changing civic space in Europe, we cordially invite you to attend to the upcoming conference: “The Civic Space in Europe – Shrinking, Growing, Enhancing?”.

Registration:

There is no registration fee.

Please register under till 3 July latest [here](#)

Programme

Monday, 10th of July: 2-7 pm

2:00 - 2.45 pm Welcome address and introduction
Siri Hummel and Rupert Graf Strachwitz (Maecenata Institute)
2.45 – 3.45 pm Section I: Country Perspective: The authoritarian dribble down Chair: Ulla Pape (Free University of Berlin) (confirmed)
Ruth Simsa (Vienna University of Economics and Business): Civil Society Capture in Austria (confirmed)
Boris Strečanský (Comenius University, Bratislava): Dancing on a Thin Ice: Civil Society in Slovakia(confirmed)
Melanie Hien (University Regensburg): Hungary at a turning Point (confirmed)
3.45pm Break
4:00 – 5:00pm Section II: Open Section
Chair: Siri Hummel (Maecenata Institute)
Kerstin Giese (Bread for the World): Civil Society under pressure – increasing criminalization of civil society engagement. (confirmed)
Gerry Salole (European Foundation Centre): Foundations under pressure? (confirmed)
Deniz Devrim (OECD): Findings of the OECD global report on the protection and promotion of civic space
5 -6- pm Break
6:00 – 7:00pm Politics meets Civil Society: How to protect the civic space
Chair: Siri Hummel
Sergey Lagodinsky (MEP) (confirmed)
Aarti Narsee (European Civic Forum) (confirmed)
Gerry Salole (European Foundation Centre) (confirmed)
Rupert Graf Strachwitz (Maecenata Foundation)
7:00pm Dinner reception

Tuesday, 11th of July 9:00am till 1:00pm

9:00 - 10.00am Section III: Country Perspectives: Defining the space and policy Chair: Ruth Simsa (Vienna University of Economics and Business)
Gojko Bežovan (University of Zagreb): Shrinking Space for Civil Society development in Croatia (confirmed)

Asif Afridi (brap Birmingham): Civil Society in England: Current challenges and future opportunities (confirmed)
Ulla Pape Free University of Berlin): From a privileged partnership to policy neglect: Civil Society in the Netherlands (confirmed)
10:00 - 11:00 am Section IV: Country Perspectives Chair: Rupert Strachwitz
Stefan Cibian (Făgăraş Research Institute): vulnerabilities of a consolidating sector (confirmed)
Vasilios N. Makrides (University of Erfurt): Civil Society in 21st Century Greece: Challenges, Opportunities, Developments (confirmed)
Siri Hummel (Maecenata Institut): Germany`s shrinking civic spaces?
11:00 am Break
11:15 – 12:30am Section V: World Cafe: Where to go from here?
12:30 - 1:00pm Roundup