

## 4th MEETING OF THE TASKFORCE ON THE MONITORING OF THE CIVIC SPACE OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs (STRASBOURG, 14 APRIL 2026)

### Minutes

This 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Taskforce, attended by around 70 people (in person or online), took place against a backdrop where the role of associations and civil society, in its various forms, is regularly called into question.

It was noted that, alongside the Expert Council on NGO Law—whose expertise is recognised and whose reports are indispensable—the Taskforce has set itself the following mission:

- to serve as a platform for mobilising civil society organisations
- to act as a think tank
- to serve as a forum for exchange and knowledge-sharing between associations and, above all, between associations and European institutions.

Thus, as a ‘think tank’, the presentation by Martin Bobel, Adviser to the French EESC, focused on: ‘Associations and civil society: legislative and regulatory responses at European level. What legislation do we need to ensure the protection and development of associations and civil society?’

In the second part of the ‘Forum’ meeting, the following were presented:

- the work carried out within the OECD on civic space and citizen participation (Karine Badr)
- the early warning system developed as part of the MACS (Monitoring Action for Civic Space) project, presented by Kerttu Willamo (European Civic Forum) and Marianna Belalba Barreto (European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law), developed in collaboration with the European Commission (Directorate-General for Justice)
- the work carried out by the Commission (Elena Haig, DG Justice), European strategy adopted by the EU for civil society (engagement, protection and support), involvement in the MACS project, recent establishment, at EU level, of a ‘European Civil Society Platform’ in which the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) are also stakeholders (Christian Moos and Waltraud Heller were present at the meeting).

With regard to future work, whilst leaving the door open to suggestions from participating associations, the following was agreed:

1) the continuation of the ongoing work on the possibilities for drafting legislative and regulatory texts at EU level, as well as at the Council of Europe, with particular attention to the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe,

2) the launch of a discussion on the feasibility of establishing a link between the MACS mechanism (civil society organisations interacting with the European Commission’s DG Justice and the Conference of INGOs/Taskforce) in order to broaden and strengthen the monitoring and early warning system. This approach reflects the recommendations of the “Recommendation on threats to civil society” adopted unanimously by the Conference a year ago,

3) closer ties with the Group of Friends of Civil Society, which now comprises 15 ambassadors with whom we are in contact and who are expected to attend one of our forthcoming meetings to report on their initiatives.