



**European
Movement
International**

Policy Position

The involvement of civil society in the EU enlargement process

The European Movement International unequivocally supports the EU enlargement process. In order for citizens in the candidate countries to benefit from enlargement, both a credible membership perspective and a credible negotiation process are needed. The proper involvement of civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey in the accession process can help ensure citizens' stake in and support for the negotiations, which will directly impact their lives.



Belgrade, February 2016

More and better structured involvement of CSOs in the negotiation process

There is a need for more focus on civil society, NGOs, and independent media as drivers of the reforms. The biggest problem civil society faces these days when it comes to providing real input to the negotiation process is a lack of transparency, openness and inclusiveness in the way the negotiations are conducted.

Actual participation and input through a structured dialogue with governments should become a formal part of the negotiation process. The Serbian 'National Convention on the EU' and similar projects in other candidate countries set positive examples in this regard. Such initiatives show that the provision of structured, valuable civil society input is possible, if a culture of dialogue can be constructed. However, Civil Society Or-

ganisations (CSOs) should not be 'instrumentalised' by the government, but should remain independent and treated as equivalent partners. The goal is to build an equal-terms exchange amongst all partners.

Support for CSO capacity building

Capacity-building for CSOs by the EU and candidate countries is needed so that they can develop knowledge about the *acquis communautaire* and chapters under negotiation, as well as monitoring and evaluation skills.

The EU needs to share more information on the process, organise a sufficient number of meetings with CSOs, encourage civil society involvement in the dialogue with national governments, and avoid discrepancy in the different negotiations processes. These actions will enable CSOs to play a larger role in the negotiation process and to anticipate the problems



or issues that might arise.

Moreover, the establishment of support structures for CSOs for networking and advocacy in Brussels and other EU capitals, as well as simple procedures for exchanges within the region and Member States, will enable networking and partnership building.

Mechanisms to support cooperation between CSOs

Existing mechanisms and facilities for CSOs in the Western Balkans and Turkey could be simplified, made more transparent and have clearer CSO criteria. They could provide sustainable – and transparent - financial support for CSO cooperation and thus ensure more partnership building in the region.

There is a need to revise the project-based priorities of the existing mechanisms, which do not reflect the needs of civil society in the region. Instead, thematic, inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches should be introduced to enable the creation of networks on different levels. At the same time, CSOs need more flexible and less hierarchical structures and space, and encouragement to come up with new ideas to generate fruitful cooperation between CSOs in the region.

This policy position is based on the outcome of the European Movement Congress on Enlargement (Belgrade, February 2016) and consultation with European Movement members in the European Union and (potential) candidate countries in the spring of 2016.

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The European Movement seeks to provide a platform to encourage and facilitate the active participation of citizens and stakeholders in the development of European solutions to our common challenges. We offer thought leadership on the issues that affect Europe and we give the opportunity to representatives from European associations, political parties, enterprises, trade unions, NGOs and other stakeholders, through our 39 National Councils and 34 International Associations, to work together, towards improving the way that Europe works.

To see this and other European Movement International policies, please take a look at our website: www.europeanmovement.eu/policies



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