EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

Resolution of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum 2026

Preamble

We, the delegates of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF), voting in favour of this Resolution, representing civil society organisations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union, gathered at the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Summit in Chișinău, the Republic of Moldova, on 24-26 November 2026,

Reaffirming the positions and recommendations made in the previous EaP CSF resolutions, in particular the Resolution of 2 December 2025, where they remain applicable, on Reinvigorating the Eastern Partnership Policy; Strengthening Support for Ukraine; Protecting Civil Society amid Shrinking Space; Defending Political Prisoners; Fostering Progress in the Normalisation Process in the South Caucasus; Standing with the People of Belarus: Supporting Civil Society and Democratic Forces; Supporting EU Enlargement and European Aspirations; and Cross-cutting Priorities of our Working Groups,

Emphasising the integral role of civil society and recognising the resilience, courage and commitment that civil society across the Eastern Partnership demonstrates every day in continuing to support citizens, democratic institutions and societal cohesion despite increasingly complex operating environments,

Underlining the need to ensure the continuous engagement of civil society in dialogue and structured consultations on all policy initiatives directly affecting its work, while recognising that its in-depth knowledge of local realities and practical experience are essential to shaping EU strategies towards Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries,

Positioning civil society actors as proactive co-architects of EU regional policies, recognising their pivotal role in advancing democratic resilience, regional integration and European values, and fostering collaborative frameworks to co-create innovative and adaptable solutions to current geopolitical uncertainties and rapidly evolving national and regional challenges,

Condemning in the strongest possible terms Russia's continued full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, including intensified attacks on civilian and critical, particularly energy infrastructure, its incursions into the airspace of Eastern Partnership countries and EU Member States, its ongoing hybrid attacks against democratic institutions, independent media and civil society, its continued occupation of parts of Ukraine and Georgia, and the continued presence of Russian troops in Moldova's Transnistria region,

Recognising that democracy is under growing attack globally, and that the international infrastructure of democratic defence has been weakened by the adoption of restrictive legislation and a growing number of different measures contributing to the shrinking of civic space, spread of Russian propaganda aimed at inciting social unrest and fueling interethnic hostility in different countries,

Noting with concern the significant reduction in international funding available to civil society, including the widespread termination of USAID-funded programmes and broader cuts in humanitarian and development assistance, as well as the limited capacity of other donors to compensate for the resulting funding shortfalls, undermining the resilience, security, independence and operational continuity of civil society organisations across the region,

Warning that, without urgent transitional support, further funding reductions in 2027 may lead to the closure of independent civil society organisations and networks, particularly those operating in exile, or those representing the most marginalised communities,

Stressing the insufficiency of funding alone where civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent media face legal restrictions, intimidation, surveillance, prosecution or barriers to receiving international support,

Also stressing, the limited progress in localising funding and ensuring that a greater share of resources reaches local organisations directly,

Reemphasising the diversity of political trajectories of EaP countries, levels of engagement with the EU, and operational and institutional environments for civil society across the EaP region, including the varying constraints faced by organisations operating domestically or from exile, and *recognising* that these different circumstances and aspirations require flexible rather than one-size-fits-all approaches,

Underscoring that, despite the increasingly divergent trajectories, the Eastern Partnership remains an important policy framework for fostering regional cooperation, solidarity and exchanges, while preserving ties among partner countries, their civil societies, and with the European Union and its Member States,

Recognising that the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 and the Global Europe instrument, together with the implementation of the EU Strategy for Civil Society and the European Democracy Shield, offer a unique strategic opportunity to rethink EU support for independent civil society,

Underlining the need for sustained EU support for democracy across the Eastern Partnership, including through predictable and flexible funding for independent civil society organisations and media, and support for meaningful citizen participation in public decision-making and democratic reform processes,

Role of Civil Society

Stressing that independent civil society remains a vital part of the social, democratic and economic fabric of Eastern Partnership societies, contributing to public debate, civic participation and the resilience and development of their countries, even where its ability to operate freely, engage with citizens or influence decision-making is severely constrained,

Underscoring that civil society is not merely an implementing partner of governments or donors, but an independent actor rooted in society, whose legitimacy derives from its work with and for citizens,

Recognising the diverse contributions of civil society organisations, independent experts, think tanks, grassroots and community initiatives, organisations representing youth, women, older persons, and vulnerable and marginalised groups, as well as professional and business associations, trade unions and academic institutions, to the well-being of citizens and the quality of public policy by:

- providing democratic oversight, often as the only independent source of evidence, of elections, public spending, and reforms;
- contributing to EU enlargement by supporting reforms, providing expertise, monitoring commitments and strengthening citizens' understanding of and connection to the EU;

- defending human rights, documenting violations and war crimes, and supporting access to justice;
- facilitating dialogue processes, often acting as a neutral mediator to bridge divides;
- contributing to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and reconciliation, as well as recovery and reconstruction, including through dialogue, social cohesion and support to conflict-affected communities;
- supporting education, youth participation, civic engagement, media literacy, culture and people-to-people contacts, including at local and community level;
- countering hybrid threats and disinformation, domestic and foreign information manipulation and interference, as well as providing access to digital literacy;
- promoting gender equality and the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in political, economic and social life;
- contributing to environmental protection, climate action, energy security and a fair green transition;
- strengthening social dialogue, labour rights, entrepreneurship, economic development and the capacity of citizens and businesses to benefit from closer economic integration and trade with the European Union and neighbouring countries;
- contributing to research, education and knowledge exchange by producing independent analysis and evidence, supporting academic and professional networks, promoting critical thinking and lifelong learning, and strengthening cooperation between researchers, educators, civil society and public institutions;
- providing services, support and representation to, as well as supporting the agency of minorities, refugees, internally displaced persons, veterans, persons with disabilities, socially and economically vulnerable persons, children, women and girls, and other groups whose needs are not always adequately addressed by public institutions;
- initiating and maintaining regional and cross-border cooperation, professional networks and solidarity where intergovernmental dialogue is weak or absent.

Stressing the important role of the EaP CSF National Platforms, their member organisations and the wider network of EaP CSF delegates and members in advancing the above contributions by bringing together diverse civil society actors and expertise, strengthening cooperation across sectors and between national and regional levels, facilitating dialogue and structured consultations with EU Delegations, relevant national institutions and European partners, contributing to the development, implementation and monitoring of EU bilateral cooperation frameworks, Partnership Priorities and regional programmes, and sustaining peer learning across the Eastern Partnership and EU Member States,

Highlighting in this context the strong interest and readiness of the EaP CSF, its National Platforms, Working Groups, members and delegates to contribute to the implementation of the European Democracy Shield and the EU Strategy for Civil Society, including through coordination with the newly established Civil Society Platform (CSP), drawing on their first-hand experience in identifying and responding to restrictive legislation, including “foreign agent” laws; countering hybrid threats, foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), domestic information manipulations and interference (DIMI) and other types of information manipulations; strengthening war-time resilience and crisis response; and developing practical approaches to protecting civil society organisations, activists and democratic space in times of crisis and heightened security threats,

Multiple Crises and a Weakened Support Model

Noting the pressures facing civil society across the region which increasingly take different forms, from direct political repression and legal restrictions in some countries to financial fragility, staff and

institutional overload, unequal access to funding and policymaking, and growing demands on civil society expertise and capacity in others,

Highlighting the extraordinary resilience and indispensable role of Ukrainian civil society in sustaining the country's societal and democratic resilience amid Russia's ongoing war of aggression, including through humanitarian assistance, support for displaced persons, mobilisation of communities and volunteers, work with veterans documentation of war crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and pursuit of accountability, while simultaneously safeguarding democratic oversight, advancing reforms, and contributing to Ukraine's inclusive recovery, reconstruction and EU accession, despite immense security, financial and operational pressures,

Drawing urgent attention to the systemic damage inflicted on Ukraine's energy system, critical infrastructure, environment, and social fabric by Russia's continuous attacks, which requires immediate international assistance focused on civilian protection, decentralised green energy solutions, ecological remediation, mental health and psychosocial support,

Recognising that in the Republic of Moldova, civil society is operating under recurrent and rapidly adapting Russian disinformation, hybrid attacks, and aggressive attempts to undermine EU accession-related reforms and broader efforts towards closer integration with the EU, while facing uneven access to stable funding and institutional capacity,

Recognising the contribution of Armenian civil society to democratic, social and economic reforms and to strengthening cooperation with the EU and European partners, while acknowledging the challenges posed by Russian disinformation campaigns and hybrid attacks aimed at undermining Armenia's democratic development and closer cooperation with the EU, as well as the growing expectations placed on civil society and its uneven access to long-term and flexible resources,

Alarmed that, in Georgia, civil society and independent media continue their work in an increasingly restrictive environment marked by "foreign agent" legislation, the freezing of organisational bank accounts, criminal investigations and demands for sensitive data, the jailing of opposition leaders, restricting abilities for election monitoring, and restrictions on freedom of assembly, including through the use of disproportionate force,

Strongly condemning the constitutional and legal initiatives launched by the Georgian authorities aimed at banning and deregistering opposition political parties, which constitutes a direct assault on democratic principles, political pluralism, and the free choice of citizens,

Expressing concern about the challenges faced by independent civil society organisations, human rights defenders and journalists in Azerbaijan, including members of the EaP CSF Azerbaijani National Platform (AZNP), particularly legal, institutional and operational restrictions, and emphasising the importance of ensuring a safe and enabling environment for their continued activities and meaningful participation in public dialogue, while reiterating the call for the release of detained AZNP members, including Anar Mammadli, Hafiz Babali, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev and Bashir Suleymanli,

Highlighting that Belarusian civil society, largely forced to operate from exile, continues to preserve independent expertise, support communities inside the country and maintain educational, cultural and professional networks, despite sustained pressure from the Lukashenko regime, including surveillance, intimidation and, reprisals against activists and their families, and the designation of independent organisations and media as "extremist formations" with criminal liability for

participation in and donations to them, while facing the growing challenge of sustaining organisations and staff due to the reduction of funding in recent years,

Expressing deep concern over Belarus's continued failure to fulfil its international obligations regarding freedom of association, trade union independence and workers' rights, and stressing the need for effective follow-up by the EU and its Member States to the measures recommended under Article 33 of the ILO Constitution, including through the alignment of relevant policies and restrictive measures,

Welcoming the release of 290 political prisoners in Belarus this year, while remaining deeply concerned that over 800 political prisoners remain behind bars in Belarus; demanding their immediate and unconditional release, including that of civil society activists and independent trade unionists, an end to politically motivated persecution, their full legal rehabilitation and the restoration of their civil, social and labour rights, as well as effective protection against forced exile, renewed persecution and transnational repression,

Expressing concern about reported cases of transnational repression originating from certain Eastern Partnership countries, and affecting civil society activists and journalists, including through surveillance, intimidation, harassment of family members and misuse of legal mechanisms, and emphasising the need for appropriate protection measures,

Stressing that these different pressures in the region are compounded by a support model, still largely centred on short-term project grants, limited access to core and flexible funding, complex administrative requirements and insufficient coverage of the costs increasingly necessary for organisations to operate safely, independently and effectively,

Drawing attention to the increasing costs related to security, legal defence, physical and digital protection, emergency assistance and institutional development, which often remain difficult to cover through standard project-based funding,

Recognising that overdependence on short-term project grants and the scarcity of core funding leave many organisations unable to plan, retain staff, maintain independent agendas or respond to changing political conditions,

Concerned that smaller, regional and grassroots organisations, as well as those working on gender equality, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable and under-represented groups, remain particularly exposed to funding cuts and restrictions,

Acknowledging the growing efforts of civil society in the EaP region to diversify their resources through local philanthropy, diaspora, membership contributions and crowdfunding, and *recognising* that such efforts can strengthen local ownership, while *emphasising* that they cannot, at this stage, replace sustained international support, particularly where domestic fundraising capacity is limited,

Welcoming the measures taken by the EU and its Member States to mitigate these cuts, while recognising that they cannot fully cover a structural funding gap,

Highlighting that challenges to civic space, democratic participation and the information environment increasingly cut across the boundaries between the Eastern Partnership and the European Union, and that closer exchange between civil society actors across Europe can strengthen common responses,

Call for Action

In this context, we, the delegates of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, call on all actors committed to supporting independent civil society in the region, particularly EU Member States, EU institutions, supportive Eastern Partnership governments and international partners, to act within their respective responsibilities and mandates to advance the following priorities:

Protect independent civil society and those who defend it

Respond to the adoption and enforcement of "foreign agent" and similar legislation, as well as other legislative and administrative measures that unduly restrict civil society, through coordinated diplomatic action and, where appropriate, clear and targeted conditionality in EU and Member State support to the governments concerned, while ensuring that such measures do not adversely affect civil society organisations, their access to international support or opportunities for meaningful participation and cooperation.

Ensure appropriate and complementary support for Eastern Partnership civil society organisations and independent media operating both domestically and from exile, reflecting their different security, legal, financial and operational needs, including access to funding, capacity development and international partnerships, as well as targeted measures for those in exile, such as visa facilitation, legal status, banking access and protection against transnational repression, including abusive extradition requests and Interpol notices.

Apply consistently a strict "do no harm" approach when supporting those still working inside restrictive countries, ensuring that funding, reporting and visibility requirements do not expose them, their staff, partners or beneficiaries to additional risks.

Address coordinated smear campaigns, vilification and so-called "blackening" targeting independent media, journalists and civil society actors, including through disinformation, manipulated narratives and reputational attacks. Strengthen mechanisms to identify, monitor and respond to such practices, while safeguarding freedom of expression, media independence, civic space and fundamental rights.

Secure predictable and sustainable funding

Establish within the Global Europe instrument, as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034, a dedicated and protected allocation for civil society, independent media, human rights and democracy, including a clearly identifiable and adequately resourced share for the Eastern Neighbourhood, protected from reallocation to other external-policy priorities.

Expand flexible, multiannual core funding for independent civil society organisations, including trade unions, and independent media, both within the Eastern Partnership countries and in exile, to strengthen their institutional resilience, preserve their independence, sustain advocacy and support individuals facing political persecution and their families. Ensure that security, physical and digital protection, legal defence, psychological support and emergency relocation are recognised as eligible core costs.

Institutionalise gender-sensitive conflict analysis and risk assessments as a standard requirement for all EU external action, including programmes and investments under Global Gateway and European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), and establish mechanisms to monitor and mitigate potential unintended harm and escalation of conflict.

Engage diverse civil society organisations in the design process of funding instruments, including calls for proposals, eligibility criteria, and reporting frameworks, to ensure accessibility, relevance and conflict-sensitivity.

Adapt urgent and rapid response funding models to ensure predictable and flexible support in times of crisis and conflict, including simplified funding mechanisms that enable local actors, including those from marginalised communities, to respond quickly and effectively in fragile contexts.

Simplify funding application, monitoring and reporting requirements and expand re-granting through trusted intermediaries to improve access for smaller, regional and grassroots organisations, including those working with and led by vulnerable and under-represented groups.

Preserve regional cooperation as a distinct funding objective, ensuring that support for bilateral country priorities does not come at the expense of cross-border networks and regional platforms that sustain professional cooperation, projects, knowledge exchange and solidarity actions where intergovernmental relations are weak or absent.

Strengthen cross-border and inter-regional peer-to-peer cooperation among civil society actors from the Eastern Partnership, the European Union, the Western Balkans and, where relevant, Central Asia, including through dedicated funding for established networks with a demonstrated track record, as well as exchanges, joint initiatives, mentoring and mutual support between organisations facing comparable challenge, connecting these efforts to ensuring a human component within and civil society oversight of the EU's Connectivity Agenda and the Global Gateway investments.

Help to strengthen the role of diverse and independent civil society across all six Eastern Partnership countries, including the EaP CSF Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian National Platforms, as essential partners in EU political dialogue and Eastern Partnership cooperation, ensuring their continued, meaningful and systematic participation in relevant European initiatives, policy processes and consultation mechanisms.

Coordinate support from the European Commission, EU Member States, European and international foundations and private philanthropy through regular mapping of country- and sector-specific funding gaps, with particular attention to gaps created by withdrawing donors and to organisations and areas of work at risk of losing support, in order to ensure funds localisation, prevent critical gaps and excessive concentration of funding among a limited number of organisations, sectors or geographic areas.

Provide transitional funding in 2027 to safeguard independent civil society organisations and networks affected by major reductions in international assistance ahead of the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

Strengthen civil society's role in reform and EU accession

Ensure that evidence and recommendations from independent civil society systematically inform the design, implementation and monitoring of EU accession-related reforms, where applicable, through structured dialogue with EU Delegations, relevant national authorities and civil society representatives, while promoting similar opportunities for civil society participation in broader EU cooperation frameworks across the Eastern Partnership.

Strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations to contribute effectively to the EU accession process, including through dedicated funding, technical assistance, training and access to expertise,

enabling them to monitor reforms, provide independent analysis and policy recommendations, engage in accession-related consultations and hold public authorities accountable for the implementation of commitments.

Ensure that the enabling environment for independent civil society is consistently reflected in accession monitoring, including through clear and measurable benchmarks on freedom of association, access to domestic and international funding, meaningful public consultation and protection from undue state interference.

Support civil society organisations in countries where EU accession is not currently on the agenda, including those operating in exile, in developing reform agendas for future democratic transitions and European integration.

Build a shared democracy protection infrastructure

Extend the EU's emerging democracy and civil society infrastructure to independent civil society from the Eastern Partnership, enabling organisations from the region to participate in dialogue, peer learning, protection mechanisms and networks alongside their EU counterparts, including but not limited to the Civil Society Platform and the Online Knowledge Hub on Civic Space established under the EU Strategy for Civil Society.

Include Eastern Partnership civil society, independent media, fact-checkers and researchers in EU networks on FIMI, electoral integrity and democratic resilience, including in the European Centre for Democratic Resilience.

Expand access for civil society from the Eastern Partnership to EU programmes supporting democracy, fundamental rights and civic participation, and facilitate their participation in transnational projects, networks and partnerships with organisations from EU Member States and candidate countries.

Promote sustained cooperation between civil society in the Eastern Partnership, candidate countries and EU Member States through peer learning, exchange of expertise, joint initiatives and regional networks, ensuring that experience and knowledge flow in all directions and contribute to common responses to shared democratic challenges.

Stand with Ukraine

As Ukraine enters another winter of Russia's full-scale war of aggression, amid intensifying attacks on civilian and critical energy infrastructure, aimed at making Ukrainian cities uninhabitable and undermining resilience, we, the delegates of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, stress the urgency of sustained, decisive and coordinated European action and call for the following priorities:

Ensure rapid emergency assistance to maintain essential services, including energy, heating, water, communications and transport, through pre-positioned equipment, rapid deployment mechanisms and expedited decision-making.

Make full use of immobilised Russian sovereign assets to support Ukraine without further delay, through a mechanism that ensures these funds ultimately serve to compensate Ukraine for the damage caused by Russia's war of aggression.

Safeguard European unity and decision-making capacity to ensure timely and effective support for Ukraine, making full use of available legal mechanisms, including emergency Treaty provisions and qualified majority voting where permitted, to prevent obstruction of EU decisions.

Maintain and strengthen restrictive measures against Russia until it ends its war of aggression against Ukraine and provides full compensation for the losses and damage caused.

Open all negotiating clusters in the EU accession negotiations with Ukraine without further delay.

Expand Ukraine's gradual integration into EU decision-making processes by enabling Ukrainian representatives to participate, with observer status, in relevant EU expert groups, committees, agencies and advisory bodies, particularly in areas linked to accession reforms. Ensure the systematic involvement of Ukrainian civil society in relevant consultations, policy discussions and advisory mechanisms, building on existing participation frameworks.

Ensure sufficient, predictable and long-term financial support for Ukraine's EU accession process, including through dedicated and adequately resourced funding mechanisms under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, recognising that existing financial instruments and proposed allocations may be insufficient to meet Ukraine's enlargement-related needs, while providing dedicated support to Ukrainian civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity to monitor and meaningfully contribute to accession negotiations.

Support Ukrainian civil society networks documenting war crimes, including CRSV, crimes against humanity, and ecocide, integrating their findings into international accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, the Register of Damage for Ukraine, and tribunals for the crime of aggression, while ensuring that confiscated Russian state assets are directed toward Ukraine's recovery.

Support the integration of environmental protection, climate resilience, biodiversity restoration and circular economy principles into Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. Ensure independent monitoring and documentation of war-related environmental damage, transparent environmental impact assessments and meaningful participation of Ukrainian civil society and affected communities in reconstruction decisions. Promote decentralised clean energy systems, sustainable reconstruction practices and international accountability for serious environmental harm caused by Russia's war of aggression.

Ensure meaningful and systematic participation of independent Ukrainian civil society organisations in the EU accession process, including monitoring accession negotiations and the implementation of related reforms, particularly in education, youth, culture, science, research and innovation. Support Ukraine's integration into the European Education Area and the European Research Area through academic cooperation, research partnerships, professional mobility and access to relevant EU programmes. Advance alignment with EU standards and good practices in education, youth policy and children's rights, ensuring the meaningful participation of young people and children in decisions affecting their lives.

Prioritise the protection, preservation and restoration of Ukraine's cultural heritage, alongside investment in educational, scientific and digital infrastructure as essential components of recovery and reconstruction. Strengthen the institutional and operational capacities of Ukrainian civil society organisations working in these areas through accessible EU and donor funding, project development and management support, strategic partnerships, and exchanges of experience and good practices.

Specific thematic priorities

Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability

Promote and support meaningful citizen participation in public decision-making at national and local levels, including through institutionalised mechanisms for public consultation, participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies and other deliberative processes. Ensure that these mechanisms are inclusive, accessible and transparent, and that public authorities are accountable for considering and responding to citizens' recommendations.

Strengthen democratic accountability, transparency and independent oversight of public institutions, including intelligence and security services, policies and reforms through effective parliamentary scrutiny, independent oversight bodies, civil society monitoring, and access to public information. Ensure meaningful implementation of good governance, anti-corruption and democratic reforms, including transparent public spending, effective mechanisms for reporting corruption and institutional accountability for decisions and reform outcomes.

Uphold the rule of law, judicial independence and fundamental human rights by ensuring impartial justice, fair-trial guarantees, effective remedies and protection against political interference and discrimination. Integrate human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination across legislative, institutional and democratic reforms.

Ensure free, fair, inclusive and credible elections by strengthening the independence and accountability of electoral institutions, transparent campaign and political financing, impartial election observation and effective mechanisms for addressing electoral violations. Promote inclusive electoral participation, particularly among women, young people, persons with disabilities and underrepresented communities, while protecting voters and electoral processes from intimidation, manipulation and undue interference.

Enhance regional cooperation and coordinated European responses to foreign interference, disinformation and hybrid threats through rapid information exchange, early-warning mechanisms, joint risk assessments and cooperation among public institutions, independent media, researchers and civil society. Strengthen the capacity of Eastern Partnership countries and societies to anticipate, prevent and respond to cross-border influence operations and emerging threats while protecting democratic institutions, fundamental rights and societal resilience.

Economic integration and convergence with EU policies

Call on Eastern Partnership Parliaments to establish or strengthen independent, permanent regulatory impact assessment mechanisms linked to relevant economic and budgetary committees, with a majority of governing board members drawn from relevant civil society organisations and business associations.

Require an SME Test before substantive parliamentary consideration of legislation materially affecting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (for example, by making such assessments mandatory for legislative proposals potentially affecting at least 10% of SMEs in the respective country). Ensure that significant impacts are assessed even below numerical thresholds, that findings are made public, and that expert capacities are sustainably co-financed by the EU and partner governments without compromising the independence of these mechanisms.

Call on the EU, its Member States and international partners to complement accessible, long-term institutional grants with appropriate, mission-aligned financing instruments, including interest-free loans and social investment, for civil society organisations working on economic integration and entrepreneurship. Enable these organisations, where permitted by national law and subject to transparent governance and safeguards against conflicts of interest, to establish social enterprises or commercial ventures that provide certification assistance, export facilitation, business advisory services and other support for integration into EU markets, thereby diversifying their income sources while preserving their independence and public-interest mission.

Connect and enhance existing business support programmes and digital tools through an accessible, multilingual common entry point that facilitates direct business-to-business contacts, partner matching and the exchange of commercial opportunities. Ensure these services are available in national languages and accessible to micro and small enterprises, regional producers and agricultural businesses. Complement digital matchmaking with co-financed B2B meetings, sectoral exhibitions and partnership events held at least quarterly, and assess their effectiveness based on lasting business connections, contracts and joint commercial initiatives rather than participation figures alone.

Environment, climate change, energy security and interconnectivity

Call on the European Union, its Member States and the governments of the Eastern Partnership countries to respect green rights, strengthen environmental democracy, accelerate a just green transition and place environmental protection, climate resilience, energy security and interconnectivity at the heart of regional cooperation and EU integration.

Guarantee access to environmental information, meaningful and timely public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, in line with the UNECE Aarhus Convention. Ensure that civil society organisations, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, vulnerable groups and independent experts can take part, without discrimination, intimidation or reprisals, in the development, implementation and monitoring of environmental, biodiversity and climate policies, environmental impact assessments (EIA), strategic environmental assessments (SEA) and major infrastructure and energy projects, in accordance with the Global Biodiversity Framework. Tighten the criteria for assessing the impact of activities that cause environmental damage.

Urgently reinforce the financial and political support for the Aarhus Convention, which faces unprecedented funding constraints that disrupt the work of its bodies and compliance mechanisms, by ensuring predictable, adequate and sustainable funding for its Secretariat, Compliance Committee and Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders. Strengthen accessible mechanisms for reporting environmental rights violations, protecting environmental defenders and monitoring restrictions on civic participation, and promote the implementation of the Guidelines on the Right to Peaceful Environmental Protest and Civil Disobedience.

End all forms of politically motivated persecution, intimidation, harassment, arbitrary detention and criminalisation of environmental activists, climate campaigners, independent experts, farmers, journalists and staff of environmental organisations. Release and fully rehabilitate those imprisoned for peacefully defending environmental rights, restore the rights of unlawfully restricted organisations and adopt anti-SLAPP legislation in line with EU directives. Provide EU and Member State legal, financial and emergency protection, including international protection where needed, to environmental defenders operating domestically and in exile, including against transnational repression.

Accelerate the drafting, adoption and effective enforcement of legislation aligned with the EU environmental acquis, including on sustainable waste management, the prevention of packaging waste, restrictions on single-use plastics and other zero-waste practices, while ensuring the meaningful, systematic and inclusive participation of civil society throughout EU integration processes. Ensure that regulatory simplification and accelerated alignment do not weaken existing environmental standards, EIA procedures, public participation or access to environmental justice. Systematically monitor the implementation of environmental reforms and strengthen the institutional capacity of environmental authorities and civil society watchdogs.

Advance the circular economy through waste prevention, reuse, repair, separate collection, recycling, sustainable production and reduced resource consumption, supporting local initiatives, social enterprises, environmental education and cooperation between municipalities, businesses and civil society. Promote green transport by creating the necessary legislative framework and economic opportunities. Strengthen independent monitoring of, and public access to data on, air, water and soil pollution, hazardous waste and emerging pollutants, including microplastics.

Prioritise the long-term sustainable development of communities and the responsible use of natural resources over policies aimed at quick profits. Promote nature-based and community-based solutions, biodiversity conservation, sustainable land and water management, and the restoration of wetlands, peatlands, forests, rivers and other degraded ecosystems, and ensure that agricultural, land-use and infrastructure policies account for long-term climate risks and ecosystem services.

Recognise the protection of the Dniester River Basin and water security as strategic priorities within the EU accession process and Eastern Partnership cooperation. Strengthen transboundary environmental cooperation across all six Eastern Partnership countries, covering shared river basins, wetlands, forests, the Black Sea and Baltic Sea ecosystems, and cross-border air and water pollution, through transparent and coordinated water governance, including of hydropower operations and environmental flows, joint monitoring, pollution prevention, climate adaptation and the protection of drinking water resources.

Go beyond formal commitments by translating the Paris Agreement, national adaptation strategies and the EU climate acquis into measurable action, backed by accessible, predictable and transparent climate finance. Prioritise resilience to droughts, floods, heatwaves and water insecurity, support community-based adaptation and cooperation among researchers, civil society and local authorities. Ensure transparency, effective monitoring of climate targets and meaningful civil society participation in climate, biodiversity and energy policies to achieve a just, inclusive and community-responsive green transition.

Strengthen energy security and reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels through a just and sustainable energy transition that diversifies energy sources, expands renewable energy, storage capacities and decentralised energy systems, prioritises energy efficiency and builds resilient cross-border energy interconnections. Support community energy initiatives, energy cooperatives and citizen participation in energy planning.

Ensure transparent and accountable governance of energy and connectivity infrastructure investments and public support schemes, with effective safeguards against corruption, conflicts of interest and misuse of public funds, as well as transparent environmental assessment, social safeguards and public consultation. Pay particular attention to energy affordability, the protection of vulnerable households and fair access to clean energy, so that energy security, decarbonisation and climate neutrality advance together without increasing social inequalities.

Contacts between people

Call on the European Union, its Member States, the governments of the Eastern Partnership countries and international donors to provide targeted and sustainable support to youth- and women-led civil society organisations, particularly those operating in rural, remote and underserved communities. Ensure access to flexible funding, institutional and organisational capacity-building, and initiatives promoting the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups, intergenerational dialogue, civic participation and community resilience. Prioritise investment in education, skills development, mental health and psychosocial support, and social cohesion as essential foundations for inclusive and sustainable development.

Recognise refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, migrants and diaspora communities from the Eastern Partnership countries as active contributors to their host societies and as important bridges between the EU and their countries of origin. Move beyond narratives portraying these communities solely as recipients of humanitarian assistance by acknowledging their social, cultural and economic contributions, amplifying their voices and ensuring their meaningful participation in public life and decision-making. *Counter* xenophobia, discrimination, hate speech and disinformation, and uphold the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced persons in line with international protection standards.

Support migrant- and diaspora-led civil society organisations, particularly women-led organisations, through accessible and sustainable funding, capacity-building and meaningful participation in EU consultation and policy-making mechanisms. *Remove* legal, administrative, economic and social barriers to the full social and economic participation of migrant, refugee and forcibly displaced women, including through the recognition of academic and professional qualifications, access to language learning, affordable childcare, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, social protection and effective safeguards against labour exploitation and gender-based violence.

Strengthen inclusive, accessible and high-quality education systems across the Eastern Partnership region through sustained professional development, mentoring and institutional support for teachers, educators and school leaders, particularly in rural, remote and underserved communities. Promote stronger partnerships between public authorities, educational institutions, civil society organisations and local communities, expand non-formal education and civic learning, and support youth-led educational and community initiatives. Ensure the meaningful participation of young people, particularly young women and those from marginalised and under-represented groups, in policy development, decision-making and local leadership. Promote accessible mechanisms for the validation and recognition of competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning, in line with relevant EU frameworks and practices.

Promote critical thinking, media and information literacy, digital skills and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI), equipping educators and learners to identify and counter disinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference, and to use digital technologies safely and responsibly, while safeguarding fundamental rights, data protection, privacy and equality.

Social dialogue, social and labour policies

Respect and promote freedom of association, collective bargaining and trade union independence, and to support genuine tripartite social dialogue in accordance with international labour standards.

Protect independent trade unions as essential civil society actors, safeguarding their freedom of association, organisational independence and collective bargaining rights against political

interference, restrictive legislation and repression, in accordance with international labour standards.

Promote coherent, evidence-based social and labor policy strategies across the Eastern Partnership, drawing on the European Pillar of Social Rights, relevant EU practices and international labor standards, adapted to national contexts. Establish measurable objectives and effective implementation, enforcement and evaluation mechanisms, with meaningful participation by social partners and civil society, so that policy commitments result in better social protection, fair working conditions and enforceable labor rights.

Strengthen coordinated, transparent and rights-based governance of labor migration flows, addressing social and economic vulnerabilities and changing labor-market needs in countries of origin and destination. Promote fair recruitment, prevent labor exploitation and trafficking in persons, and ensure decent working conditions, access to remedies and effective protection for migrant and local workers. Support targeted media and information literacy programs and access to reliable multilingual information for prospective and current migrant workers and vulnerable groups, including practical ways to verify job offers, identify deceptive recruitment, report abuse and seek safe assistance.

Integrate strategic, two-way and adaptive public communication into the design, implementation and evaluation of social and labour policies, beyond one-way information campaigns. Establish continuous feedback and meaningful response mechanisms among citizens, civil society, social partners and public institutions, using evidence from implementation to adjust measures to changing needs and conditions. Support cross-country pilot initiatives to develop, test and evaluate these approaches against measurable improvements in access to rights, social services and effective protection.

Institutionalise meaningful, continuous and inclusive tripartite social dialogue by ensuring the effective participation of independent trade unions, employers' organisations and governments in developing, implementing and monitoring policies and reforms affecting employment, labour rights and social protection. Establish transparent, adequately resourced and sustainable tripartite consultation and negotiation mechanisms at national and sectoral levels, ensuring genuine influence on decision-making and regular, substantive dialogue rather than merely formal consultations.

Ensure a just and inclusive transition for workers by integrating workers' rights, decent work, social protection and employment security into green, digital and economic transition policies. Guarantee meaningful participation of trade unions and workers in designing and implementing transition strategies, with adequate investment in reskilling and upskilling, lifelong learning, quality job creation and social protection measures, ensuring that workers and vulnerable groups are not left behind.