

Statement by Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on the introduction of the draft law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”, known as “Foreign Agent Law” in Georgia

Brussels, 7 March 2023

*The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum **calls** on the Parliament of Georgia to fully and immediately withdraw the proposed law on “transparency of foreign influence” from consideration.*

We [stand](#) in solidarity with the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in their call to the Georgian Parliament to immediately withdraw the controversial draft law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence” and uphold its commitment to maintaining an enabling environment for civil society organisation and ensuring media freedom.

If adopted, the bill, modelled after similar Russian legislation, would require all those who receive at least 20 percent of their funding from international sources - individuals, civil society organisations and media outlets - to register with the Georgian Justice Ministry as “agents of foreign influence”. This vague label carries stigma and a discriminatory meaning that fuels an environment of suspicion and self-censorship. The legislation clearly aims at circumscribing the mission and activities of the country’s most prominent activists and organisations and at limiting the ability of civil society to hold those in power accountable. In fact, independent civil society organisations, activists and media, will all be forced to give up not only on funding, but on their ability to exist, work and be the voice of society. They will enter into a survival mode that is only one step closer to a bleak outlook for Georgia.

The bill, even if not adopted yet, has a back-sliding effect on Georgia’s democracy and does not contribute to the country’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations, as enshrined in Georgia’s constitution.

We believe that this law is unjustified and is part of a worrying trend of governments’ crackdown on civil society organisations and independent voices in the Eastern Partnership region and beyond.

Joining the strong chorus of European stakeholders, international organisations, and [civil society in Georgia](#) and abroad, we call on the parliamentary majority of the ruling Georgian Dream party, and its political leadership in particular, to engage in a genuine dialogue with civil society and, withdraw the current unlawful bill “On Transparency of Foreign Influence” and, if truly needed, develop democratic alternative approaches to regulating the non-governmental sector.

We urge the international community, including the European Union and the United States, to speak up against the law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence” and continue to support the mission of civil society organisations, media and independent activists in Georgia.

We urge all civil society organisations to stand in solidarity with the Georgian people that are fighting to defend their fundamental freedoms of association and expression, and ultimately their democracy.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum