

# **Civic space in the EU: Mapping of national approaches to civic space monitoring, participation and protection**

Cyprus

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# 1. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE

## 1.1. Monitoring initiative from the side of the State

*Has there been any initiative from the side of the State (government/parliament) to observe/monitor the restrictions/challenges/threats for civic space actors in your country in the last three years?*

There have been no such initiatives in Cyprus in the past three years.<sup>1</sup> The publication of the European Commission's report on the rule of law in Cyprus<sup>2</sup> triggered reactions from the Cyprus Bar Association<sup>3</sup> and the Ministry of Justice,<sup>4</sup> however none of these commented on the concerns raised by the report regarding civil society and civic space. Despite the fact that the Commission's report cites extensively a number of CSOs consulted for the purposes of compiling the report, these CSOs were not invited to contribute to the discussion of the Commission's report at the parliament.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2. Other monitoring initiatives

*Has there been any other actor/body/mechanism that has observed/monitored civic space restrictions/challenges/threats in your country in the last three years?*

There is no other actor, body or mechanism mandated with monitoring problems regarding civic space.<sup>6</sup> There was no joint civil society document or other coordinated reaction to the European Commission's Rule of Law report. Discussions around this report focused on corruption and the dual role of the Attorney General rather than the report's comments on the operation of civic space in Cyprus.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2024), '[2024 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Cyprus](#)', Commission staff working document, Brussels 24 July 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprus Bar Association (2024), '[Έκθεση της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής του 2024 για το κράτος δικαίου](#)' (*European Commission's 2024 Report on the Rule of Law*), Press release, undated.

<sup>4</sup> Cyprus Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2024), '[Ανακοίνωση του Υπουργείου Δικαιοσύνης και Δημοσίας Τάξεως για την Έκθεση της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής για το Κράτος Δικαίου](#)' (*Announcement by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order on the European Commission's Rule of Law Report*), 26 July 2024.

<sup>5</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>6</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Politis (2024), '[Έκθεση Κομισιόν για Κύπρο: Μαστίγιο και καρότο για το Κράτος Δικαίου](#)' (*Commission report on Cyprus: Whip and carrot for the rule of law*), 25 July 2024.

A research EU funded project run by the University of Central Lancashire UCLan Cyprus on the European values conditionality in the EU better regulation has conducted seven surveys and two focus groups on the conditions of operation of CSOs; participatory democracy tools including alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, social justice tools, legal aid and civil courts; effective mechanisms to fight corruption; compliance with recommendations given by regional and international monitoring bodies on transparency; effective mechanisms to enable transparency; civic trust in the administration of justice; appointment, remuneration, promotion, and dismissal of judges and judicial independence in general; effective judicial protection and delays; media freedom and diversity; and responses to COVID-19. Both the surveys and the focus groups were conducted on line and were open to participation from persons residing in Cyprus, other EU and non-EU countries. The survey on civic space found that participants observed an overall weakening of NGOs over the last few years as a result of lack of funding, stigmatisation of NGOs by political actors and the police, lack of cooperation and consultation with government departments owing to a lack of political will and challenging procedures, a burdening bureaucracy related to the introduction of new laws, lengthy and burdensome procedures at District Offices, a general societal disregard towards CSOs, lack of funding, administrative and financial obligations and limited public outreach. Participants further reported increased governmental control over CSOs, horizontal obligations for all CSOs without proportionality, lack of a civic culture and absence of mechanisms to protect CSOs. The survey recorded perceptions of inconsistent and differential treatment of CSOs by the government depending on their size and the type of groups they represent: larger organisations are likely to receive preferential treatment, whilst organisations whose founders, board members or beneficiaries are persons with a migrant background or Turkish Cypriots are more likely to be treated poorly.

On the question of what measures could be taken to improve civic spaces, the participants recommended: that laws concerning civic participation and the operation of NGOs be subjected to consultation, at a minimum with the parties to which they apply; steps be taken to improve the state's understanding of the civil society and its needs, for example by systematically engaging with NGOs and collating their input; calls for consultations be adequately disseminated to relevant parties via the use of different communication methods; consultations become inclusive, transparent and require that officials respond to the feedback received from the public in a systematic manner; monitoring and accountability mechanisms be deployed to ensure the full implementation of laws concerning public consultations; the framework for public consultations be expanded so as to ensure that CSOs can participate effectively at all stages of the legislative or decision-making process; support and resources to forge collaborations between CSOs, local administrations and state agencies.

The desk top component of the project report states that Cyprus took some legislative steps to comply with the soft and hard instruments of the Council of Europe, the OECD and the EU, but despite some steps in the right direction, room for civil society and civic engagement

remains limited. The framework regulating access to information was flagged as containing a number of gaps and weaknesses at the levels of both legal regulation and implementation. Access to justice was also highlighted as suffering from long delays, high costs and little effectiveness, with restricted access to legal aid and court inefficiencies, contributing to perceptions of impunity particularly in the field of exercising judicial oversight of police misconduct.<sup>8</sup>

The NGO Oxygen for Democracy<sup>9</sup> published an article in response to the Commission's Rule of Law Report of 2023, setting out its own contribution to the Rule of Law report, including its assessment of the bill for the autonomy of the Attorney General's office<sup>10</sup> which does not sufficiently distinguish between the role of the Attorney General as director of public prosecution and as legal advisor for the government, pointing out that there is no institutional counterweight with regard to the review of the decisions of the Attorney General. The report adds that there are serious challenges in the effectiveness of the justice system, especially as regards delays and the process of hiring and evaluating judges. It highlights the fact that the most important issue raised in the Commission's report is the absence of a mechanism to monitor and check the Attorney General's office, adding that technical assistance must be sought from the European Commission and the Council of Europe.<sup>11</sup>

The Pancyprian Coordinating Council for Volunteerism, a body set up by law in 2006 to operate as an umbrella of CSOs,<sup>12</sup> is primarily concerned with promoting volunteering in the social welfare field and collaborates with the state to promote issues related to the voluntary sector and discuss with the state horizontal issues of concern to NGOs with the aim of improving the environment in which they operate.<sup>13</sup> It does not have any activity in

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<sup>8</sup> Laulhé Shaelou S., Marcou A., Manoli A., Kalaitzaki K. Uibariu A. (2025), '[CRoLEV Impact assessment and recommendations to policy makers](#)', 4 March 2025.

<sup>9</sup> For more details on this organisation, please see their website [here](#).

<sup>10</sup> Cyprus, Bill on the Legal Service of the Republic Law of 2023 ([Ο περί της Νομικής Υπηρεσίας της Δημοκρατίας Νόμος του 2023](#)), 27 April 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Kyriakides N, Isaias G. and Tsangarides M. for Oxygono (2023), 'Κράτος Δικαίου στην Κύπρο: Αναγκαία η αυτοκριτική και εποικοδομητική διάθεση' ([Rule of Law in Cyprus: Self-criticism and a constructive attitude are necessary](#)). Undated.

<sup>12</sup> Cyprus, The 2006 Law on the Pancyprian Coordinating Council for Volunteerism ([Ο περί του Παγκύπριου Συντονιστικού Συμβουλίου Εθελοντισμού Νόμος του 2006](#))

<sup>13</sup> For more details on this body, see their webpage [here](#).

the field of participation and consultation in public decision making or in legislative development.<sup>14</sup>

The Citizen's Commissioner is another body dedicated to promoting democratic participation, with a mandate to coordinate actions on promoting citizens' participation in decision making and public accountability. The focus of the institution as regards participation and accountability is the individual citizen rather than organised groups and has only a general function of supporting NGOs in 'managing the infrastructure created to support their work'.<sup>15</sup> Like the Pancyprian Coordinating Council on Volunteerism, this institution is not active in promoting structured participation and consultation of CSOs in legislative and policy development.<sup>16</sup>

The NGO Civil Society Advocates reported that previous attempts to complain to the Ombuds institution for the delay of the authorities to respond to requests from NGOs have not yielded results as there is tendency in government departments to delay their response even more if the Ombuds office is involved.<sup>17</sup> Civil Society Advocates run a EU funded project monitoring the implementation of the law regulating the operation of CSOs,<sup>18</sup> locating gaps and weaknesses and identifying good practices on structured cooperation between civil society and public authorities.<sup>19</sup> However the project is coming to its completion and no further source of funding was located to ensure its continuation. Civil Society Advocates believes the law regulating the operation of CSOs is acceptable but its interpretation and implementation by the authorities is problematic as there is no culture for dialogue.

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<sup>14</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>15</sup> For more details on this body, see their webpage [here](#).

<sup>16</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>17</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>18</sup> Cyprus, The Associations and Foundations Acts 1972 and 1997 ([Οι περί Σωματείων και Ιδρυμάτων Νόμοι του 1972 και 1997](#)).

<sup>19</sup> For more information see the webpage of Civil Society Advocates on [Dialogue, Consultation, Empowerment \(3D\) - Protecting and Strengthening Civic Space in Cyprus](#).

## 2. PARTICIPATION

### 2.1. Rules on participation

*Are there any binding rules in place in your country for the participation/consultation of civil society organisations for developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?*

There are no binding rules making participation and consultation with civil society mandatory. The e-consultation platform, a system set up by the Directorate General Growth of the Ministry of Finance that operates without a legal framework, provides the opportunity to any members of the public to post comments on governmental bills.<sup>20</sup> There is no system in place to inform interested parties about a bill that was posted for consultation and no obligation to take any comments into account. No report is issued to declare which comments were taken into account, which not and why and the members of parliament do not necessarily have the expertise to question the government on the consultation process that preceded the submission of the bill to parliament. A particular example of this practice is the process followed about a bill intended to regulate street protests which was subjected to public consultation in 2024, received several comments on line indicating that many of its provisions infringe the rights to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and privacy, but is nevertheless presented to Parliament by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order largely unchanged and without any justification as to the reasons why the comments were ignored.<sup>21</sup> The platform is only Greek and does not provide the opportunity for non-Greek speakers to read bills and submit comments. The e-consultation process is not available for draft laws submitted by MPs, comments for which can only be submitted by persons who are selected by MPs and invited to attend a parliamentary session with physical presence. There are no rules or procedures in place as to who is invited and invitations are extended a la carte. Cyprus does not follow the system of other countries, like that of Greece for example, where CSOs can register themselves on a database and receive a flash whenever something of relevance to their field is posted.<sup>22</sup>

A new law, adopted in 2022, designed to ensure transparency of the participation of lobbyists in public decision-making, provides a framework for the registration of representatives of interests in order to be able to participate in public decision-making. The monitoring was assigned to the newly set up Independent Authority against Corruption,<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For more details see the webpage of e-consultation [here](#).

<sup>21</sup> Nomoplatform (2025), Recommendation report - Bill entitled 'Law on public assembly and parades of 2025' (*Εισηγητική έκθεση - Νομοσχέδιο με τίτλο «Ο περί συγκεντρώσεων και παρελάσεων Νόμος του 2025»*), Y.D.D.T. 12.03.001.449, 7 February 2025.

<sup>22</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on this body, please see its website [here](#).

as it was conceptualised as a tool to address state corruption. The law covers private persons and organisations representing special interest groups who intend to engage in procedures of public decision making.<sup>24</sup> The scope of the law excludes workers' and employers' organisations, professional associations, communication in the context of parliamentary discussions and participation in public debates but does not explicitly exclude CSOs who want to contact public officials or MPs to submit their contribution over public decision making or legislative proposals. As a result, in order to be able to contact public officials or MPs, CSOs are now to register as lobbyists and to meet the law's prerequisites, which include having a clean criminal record and in the case of legal persons a clean criminal record for every ultimate beneficial owner, which costs 20 Euros to obtain. The registration process is lengthy and technical and already lawyers register as lobbyists in order to sell services to CSOs, who now find it impossible to see a public official or a member of parliament if they are not registered lobbyists. CSOs who manage to register as lobbyists are required to file a report on their lobbying activities every six months even if they have not met with any public official or MP. This new development places obstacles in the efforts of CSOs to contribute to policy and legislative development, which are increasingly finding the doors of policy makers closed with the justification that they must comply with the new framework for lobbyists. The implementation of this law has negatively affected CSOs which are now required to meet a number of stringent requirements in order to register and thereby be permitted to participate in processes, which used to be open prior to the adoption of the law. Along the same lines as with the measures adopted in order to comply with the Moneyval recommendations, which had framed all CSOs as potential money launderers and agents of terrorism instead of the targeted and proportionate measures recommended by Moneyval,<sup>25</sup> the new regulation frames CSOs as potential agents of corruption.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cyprus, The transparency in public decision-making and related matters law of 2022 ([\*Ο περί της Διαφάνειας στις Διαδικασίες Λήψης Δημόσιων Αποφάσεων και Συναφών Θεμάτων Νόμος του 2022\*](#)) N. 20(I)/2022

<sup>25</sup> For more information on the measures adopted following the Moneyval recommendations, see: Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2022), '[Legal environment and space of civil society organisations in supporting fundamental rights: Cyprus, January 2021](#)', Report for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in the framework of the FRANET project; Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2023), '[An update on developments regarding civic space in the EU and an overview of the possibilities for human rights defenders to enter EU territory: Cyprus Year: 2022](#)', Report for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in the context of the FRANET contract.

<sup>26</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

## 2.2. Consultative/participatory bodies

*Are there any consultative/participatory bodies in your country that ensure the participation of civil society in developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?*

There are no bodies at the national level to safeguard or facilitate the participation of civil society in the development or monitoring of the implementation of laws and policies.

The parliamentary committees examining bills and draft laws within their area of competency may, at their discretion, invite CSOs to participate in the debate but there is no assistance or facilitation to enable the CSOs to have a constructive contribution, nor any guarantee that their views will be taken on board. The e-consultation platform does not contain a function to inform CSOs whenever a bill is opened for consultation.<sup>27</sup>

In practice, parliamentary committees tend to exercise their discretion to invite to their debating sessions CSOs representing the groups affected by a draft law or a bill under discussion. These would include:

- a) Civil Society Advocates and the NGO Support Center<sup>28</sup> for general matters concerning the regulation of the operation of associations;
- b) There is no body specifically dealing with civil society funding and this is not usually a matter for the parliament but rather for the individual ministries that fund CSOs. There is no central fund for CSOs to cover their administration and structural costs, the only funding available is from EU projects financing specific activities or grants from the individual ministries in order for the CSOs to perform tasks contracted by the ministries, such as the operation of shelters for victims of trafficking or domestic violence or unaccompanied minors;
- c) The Pancyprrian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children, which encompasses district committees and will soon register as a federation.
- d) The Parliament of the Elderly, which includes representatives of trade unions of pensioners, which acts as a representative body of the elderly. They have a strong participation in debates as they are supported by professional trade unionists who are well informed on issues of policy and law;
- e) The religious minorities recognised by the Constitution, namely the Armenians, the Latins and the Maronites have their own MP in parliament albeit without the right to vote. The only ethnic community recognised by the Constitution is the Turkish Cypriot community which does not have any type of representation in

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<sup>27</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>28</sup> For more details on the NGO Support Center, please see their website [here](#).

Parliament since 1963. No other ethnic community is recognised by the state and none is represented in any debates;

- f) UNHCR, the Cyprus Refugee Council and KISA<sup>29</sup> are usually invited in debates concerning asylum and migration, alongside with academics, lawyers and experts;
- g) There is only one registered association for LGBTIQ rights which is usually invited in debates, although sometimes representatives from grassroots groups are also invited by individual MPs;
- h) The national federations and the confederation of disability organisations are always invited in debates. A law adopted in 2006 institutionalising the confederation of disability organisations KYSOA as a social partner, to be consulted on all matters pertaining to disability is the only example of obligatory consultation and participation in public decision making and legislative development, although, according to the confederation, its implementation has not been satisfactory.<sup>30</sup>
- i) There is no organisation representing victims of crime, except CSOs active on trafficking, who are not usually invited in parliamentary debates;
- j) The Anti-Poverty Network is occasionally invited in debates concerning poverty, however it has no funding, it is under-resourced and it comprises entirely of volunteers who have other professional activities.<sup>31</sup>

There is no structured process, rules or transparent criteria as to who will be invited and no selection criteria. In the absence of a structured process for identifying the CSOs to invite, individual organisations often request an invitation to participate and, if there are no objections, this is usually granted. At this level, the proceedings are mainly participatory although consultation also takes place in the sense that the participating CSOs can present their proposals or express their objections to existing proposals. The participation of CSOs alone, however, does not necessarily mean that their comments will be taken into account, as there is no process of accountability for MPs to publicise the results of the consultation and to justify their decision.<sup>32</sup>

In October 2024 the Pancyprian Coordinating Council on Volunteerism organised civil society summit in parliament which gathered public officials, parliamentarians and 56 representatives of volunteering organisations and NGOs. The summit discussed the operation of organised civil society and recorded 57 proposals and

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<sup>29</sup> For more details on the NGO KISA, please see their website [here](#).

<sup>30</sup> FRANET consultation with former president of KYSOA, 22 January 2025.

<sup>31</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>32</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

problems, 54% of which were brought forward from the previous summit and 46% were new proposals, which included the participation of NGOs and affected groups in the design of infrastructure projects to render them accessible to vulnerable groups, access of CSOs to European funds and exemption of NGOs from charges, and 15% of the demands discussed in the previous summit were classified as resolved. The summits organised by the Pancyprian Coordinating Council on Volunteerism serve as a dialogue forum highlighting issues of concern to the groups participating in the Pancyprian Coordinating Council on Volunteerism, which are based on volunteering work and social welfare issues. The Civil Society Advocates do not share the perception that civil society actors should be volunteers but that they should instead be professionals with expertise to meaningfully participate in decision making and legislative development in their own right.

### 2.3. Awareness raising and capacity building on participation

*Does your Member State fund or carry out meaningful awareness raising and/or capacity building to support participation in your country?*

The government neither funds nor conducts capacity building trainings to support participation. Most CSOs rely on the expertise available in EU level platforms in which they participate or on the expertise and experience of the large trade unions which participate in their federations or coalitions, in order to meaningfully participate in the policy making or legislative process.<sup>33</sup> The Citizens' Commissioner has undertaken a number of initiatives aiming at individuals rather than organisations,<sup>34</sup> which include:

- The setting up an internet platform entitled 'Voice for the citizen' in order for individuals to express their views by vote on bills and policies which the government intends to promote, which started its operation in March 2024;
- The submission of a bill giving the opportunity to citizens to collect a sufficient number of signatures in order to submit proposals to the government on changes in regulations, decisions, political acts, bills and others. The bill, pending since 2017 was revised and resubmitted in February 2025 to provide that any proposal backed with 500 signatures will give rise to a duty on the part of the competent Ministry to give a justified response regarding the measures it took or it intends to take or not take; and any proposal backed with 5 000 signatures will oblige the competent Ministry to examine the initiative through a wider public discussion involving

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<sup>33</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>34</sup> For more details on these initiatives, see the relevant webpage of the Citizen's Commissioner [here](#).

representatives of stakeholders, independent public officers and other legal or natural persons and to submit a justified action plan regarding the measures which the government is prepared to take.<sup>35</sup>

- The setting up of workshops in public education on structured democratic dialogue in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Youth;
- The creation of the youth platform Ekfracy in collaboration with the Cyprus Youth Board in order to activate young people in active citizenship and provide a forum of expression and communication with government officials. The platform operates under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic and is intended to give voice to young persons to express themselves by submitting comments on line.<sup>36</sup> Since its set up, the platform has carried out opinion polls, the results of which were transferred to the competent government official to address them. Young people under 35 can submit comments which are not visible to the public and there is no structured process on how they are handled.<sup>37</sup>
- The reactivation of the consultation mechanism with the Children's Parliament which had been interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>35</sup> Nomoplatform (2025), Bill on citizens' initiative of 2025 ([Ο περί της Πρωτοβουλίας Πολιτών Νόμος του 2025](#)). Pending at the time of writing.

<sup>36</sup> For more details see the website of this platform [here](#).

<sup>37</sup> FRANET consultation with the Efracy platform officer, 24 March 2025.

### 3. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION

#### 3.1. Civil society strategy

*Does your country have a general civil society strategy / civil society development strategy in place?*

In January 2023 the Council of Ministers approved a proposal for the setting up of a working group to compile a national strategy on active citizenship and participatory governance. The Council of Ministers designated the Citizens' Commissioner as coordinator for the implementation of the strategy and authorised him to set up a working group to compile action plans to implement the strategy, subject to approval from the Ministry of Finance. The working group was decided to consist of the Citizens' Commissioner, representatives from the offices of the Ombudsman, the Law Commissioner, the Union of Municipalities, the Pancyprian Coordinating Council for Volunteerism, the Cyprus Youth Board and two representatives from civil society to be determined following consultation with the other coordinating bodies.<sup>38</sup> The text of the strategy is still not in the public sphere, although the Citizens Commissioner made public statements about the pillars of the strategy which are based on strengthening the framework for citizens' participation, on public consultation, the promotion of a culture of active citizenship and participation with the aim of restoring the public's confidence in democratic structures and rendering governance more inclusive.<sup>39</sup>

No action plan was compiled by the time of writing, no budget was allocated and the strategy remained a mere document. In terms of content, the strategy takes a top-down approach addressing the individual rather than representative organisations. The office of the Citizens' Commissioner also operates without a budget and remains staffed with two officers seconded from another public office and a secretary.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Cyprus, Council of Ministers (2022), [Extracts from the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers dated 11 January 2023](#), Decision No. 94.222.

<sup>39</sup> Cyprus, Press and Information Office (2022), [Εθνική Στρατηγική για την Ενεργό Πολιτότητα και τη Συμμετοχική Διακυβέρνηση](#) (*National Strategy for Active Citizenship and Participatory Governance*), 30 November 2022.

<sup>40</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

### 3.2. Protecting an enabling environment

*Is there a dedicated policy/framework (or support measures) in place in your country to enhance and protect an enabling environment for civil society to work on fundamental rights?*

There is no policy or plan to safeguard an enabling environment for CSOs working fundamental rights. There is no funding at the national level except for advocacy activities, only for activities falling within the realm of state duties which are subcontracted to CSOs. The Ministry of Interior has put in place horizontal restrictions and impediments for NGOs rendering their operation extremely difficult,<sup>41</sup> instead of the Ministry of Finance addressing the financial issues and tax evasion of specific private organisations disguised as CSOs. The result was a general negative climate in society depicting CSOs as tax frauds and putting such an operational burden on them that leaves little room or capacity for other activity. Civil Society Advocates have launched an initiative with other CSOs to open a public dialogue on the role of CSOs and seek clarifications from the authorities whether there is space for the operation of CSOs beyond the charitable sector.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.3. Law on recognition and protection of defenders

*Is there a dedicated law (and/or guidelines) in your country dealing specifically with the recognition and/or protection of human rights defenders?*

There is no dedicated law or guidelines in Cyprus on the protection of human rights defenders.

The national NGO KISA working on the rights of migrants has complained about criminalisation of its activities from the authorities, with several criminal cases against them from the police, as well as physical attacks, threats, defamation and fake news, including a bomb attack at its offices in January 2024.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Civil Society Advocates (2023), '[Civil Society Organisations \(CSOs\): Challenges in relation to the legal operational framework and recommendations for creating an enabling environment for CSOs in Cyprus](#)', June 2023.

<sup>42</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (2024), '[Cyprus: defending migrants' human rights at one's own peril](#)', 12 December 2024.

### 3.4. Support and funding for protection of defenders

*Is there any dedicated support/funding by the State for the protection of (individual) human rights defenders in your country?*

There is no monetary or other support from the state to protect human rights defenders.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> FRANET consultation with Civil Society Advocates, 21 February 2025.

## 4. PROMISING PRACTICE (OPTIONAL)

*Please highlight one specific practice that you consider a promising practice on civic space in your country in the area of civic space - including monitoring, participation, enabling environment, and protection.*

For the past three years, the NGO Civil Society Advocates has been running a project monitoring the implementation of the law regulating the operation of CSOs,<sup>45</sup> for the purposes of identifying gaps and good practices in order to support dialogue, consultation, empowerment and protection of CSOs in Cyprus.<sup>46</sup> The project is dedicated on advocacy as a means of creating a better regulatory framework for CSOs and enhance their substantial participation in policy development processes. The project has met with several obstacles like the absence of systemic dialogue and collaboration between CSOs and public authorities, the non-systemic and superficial participation of CSOs in public decision making as well as obstacles placed by the regulatory framework for CSOs itself. Activities include a seminar on strategic design for coordinating actions aiming at better collaboration between the Interior Ministry and CSOs, translation of the law on associations and foundations in English to make it accessible to non-Greek speaking activists, an on line consultation with other CSOs on the challenges in the implementation of the regulatory framework and a conference on the implementation challenges of the law on CSOs, aiming at building trust between the government and civil society.<sup>47</sup> The project was co-funded by the EU, the Bodossaki Foundation and NGO Support Center and forms part of the program 'Building a robust and democratic civic space' (BUILD).

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<sup>45</sup> Cyprus, The Associations and Foundations Acts 1972 and 1997 ([Οι περί Σωματείων και Ιδρυμάτων Νόμοι του 1972 και 1997](#)).

<sup>46</sup> For more information see the webpage of Civil Society Advocates on [Dialogue, Consultation, Empowerment \(3D\) - Protecting and Strengthening Civic Space in Cyprus](#).

<sup>47</sup> Civil Society Advocates (2024), [Dialogue, Consultation, Empowerment \(3D\)- Newsletter October 2024](#).