



THE EU'S FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS VS. THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA*

Paula Mureşan¹

■ Introduction

■ In the European Union, civil society is crucial for the accession process of prospective member countries, as it significantly contributes to meeting EU membership criteria and is subject to ample monitoring as part of the annual reports in this regard (European Commission 2012). To reinforce this role, the EU offers substantial financial and strategic support through various funds, instruments, and guidelines designed to enhance civil society's engagement in policymaking and reform processes (DG NEAR Report 2022). A case in point is the Civil Society Facility, established in 2008, which is a key initiative aimed at providing financial assistance to strengthen civil society's involvement in the EU integration process (European Commission 2012).

In addition to civil society support, the core of the EU accession process, most notably chapters 23 and 24, addresses other critical areas, including the rule of law, freedom of expression, and the media, in addition to the more technical requirements germane to regional cooperation, economic governance, and SME performance. The EU has consistently supported civil society to develop active and resilient non-state organizations. The European Commission's 2012 report, entitled "The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations", highlights that a vibrant civil society is essential for fostering democracy, implementing effective policies, and achieving equitable and sustainable development. In addition to this, civil society organizations are helpful in promoting transparency, accountability, peace, and participatory democracy.

The development of civil society in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova has been shaped by a complex interaction of historical events – the Yugoslav Wars (1990s) / the Soviet Era (1940–1991), political climates, and shifting socio-economic conditions. In the Western Balkans, the legacy of conflict, rough democratic transitions, and economic disparities create a challenging environment for civil society, which is why the EU accession process provides significant support and incentives for the development thereof. (Kostovicova 2013) In the Republic of Moldova, the Soviet legacy, ongoing political polarization, and economic instability present major obstacles, yet civil society remains active and resilient, often relying on international support to drive reforms and address social issues. (Burkhardt 2020)

Literature review and methodology

Civil society has been thoroughly documented to play a vital and complex role in the process of democratization. “Civil society refers to the space for collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values, typically distinct from the government and the private sector” (World Health Organization 2007). As presented in the literature, the role civil society can assume in the reformation/democratization process of a country may be regarded from several angles. Each of these is equally important and has been the subject of attempts at conceptualization according to the functions it fulfills: advocacy for democratic values (Williamson and Rood 2016), citizen engagement and participation (Olimid 2014: 74), monitoring and accountability (Kaldor 2010), policy advocacy and reform (Tandon, 2003), civil society and human rights (Council of Europe 2021), minorities, accountability and civic space (Minority Groups Rights International, 2023), building social capital (Fukuyama, 2001: 7), peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Paffenholtz, 2015: 108), independent media and information dissemination (Golovchenko–Hartmann–Adler–Nissen 2018: 993–994), transitional justice and reconciliation (Duthie 2009: 19), interethnic and interreligious dialogue (Orhun 2007), as well as promoting and supporting the public (OECD 2012).

The role of civil society is key to the process of democratization/reform of the Western Balkans (Corpădean 2023: 46-47) and the Republic of Moldova by “holding the government accountable” (Putină–Brie 2023:95), especially in limiting and controlling the power of new post-communist states. Protecting citizens and freedoms, guaranteeing fair justice, and fighting against social exclusion and discrimination are merely some of the new aspirations that the citizens of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova have rediscovered after decades of dictatorship, albeit with limitations. As underlined by Kostovicova (2013: 103), “Civil society’s contribution to reconciliation in the Western Balkans exemplifies the ambiguous impact that the non-state sector has had on broader transitional processes, such as democratization and Europeanisation, in the region.”

A notable idea discussed by Costea and Melenciuc-Ioan (2023) regarding the Eastern Partnership (EaP) states, with a particular focus on the Republic of Moldova, is the dual role of civil society in the dynamic and complex process of European integration. They highlight that civil society's influence has been both progressive and regressive, specifically in the Republic of Moldova, where civil society initially played a leading role in the integration process from 2011 to 2014. However, over time, the government's approach to integration fluctuated due to the fragmentation of Moldovan society, which influenced the strategies of ruling parties and presidential platforms. This inconsistent behavior by authorities impacted the continuity and effectiveness of the country's European integration efforts.

Brie-Putină (2023) explored the role of Moldovan civil society within the Eastern Partnership framework, emphasizing its significance in the democratization process. By analyzing the EaP Index over an 11-year period, their research provides a detailed perspective on the Republic of Moldova's engagement and commitment to the framework but concludes that while civil society is crucial to the European integration process, its influence is not the most decisive within the context of the EaP.

The article entitled "The Effects of EU Conditionality on Patterns of Policy Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Candidate Countries" written by Vidačak (2021), reveals that beyond EU conditionality, the commitment of governmental actors to reform is of paramount importance. The cases of Serbia and Montenegro within this process are analyzed through EU mechanisms that can impact the participation and prominence of civil society organizations in national policymaking during the pre-accession phase.

Other features of the involvement of civil society in the process of a country's democratization include revealing acts of corruption, especially among state officials, encouraging political participation, sanctioning abuse of power on the part of national representatives, monitoring elections, lobbying for the demands of various professional entities, etc. In this regard, Gordon and Durst (2004) perform a scan of the societies in South-Eastern Europe after the fall of communism and analyze specific hurdles, from the functions of civil society in the post-communist transition to the strategies it develops. Their work provides valuable insights into the strategies that civil society organizations develop to navigate these challenges and contribute to the democratization process in South-Eastern Europe.

While Armstrong et al (2011) examine how civil society in Europe influences the democratization of public spaces, the creation of supra-national societies, and governance participation, our study focuses on evaluating the specific support areas for civil society across various EU pre-accession countries. By considering national contexts and needs, and identifying EU-anticipated outcomes, we provide a nuanced understanding of civil society's role and expectations, emphasizing both the shared and the divergent goals between the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova.

Case studies and findings

The EU's financial support for civil society in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova has been directed through several mechanisms: the Instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA) for the Western Balkans (DG NEAR 2023), micro-financial assistance (MFA) for the Republic of Moldova (DG NEAR 2023), the Civil Society Facility, and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (European Parliament 2015).

The programming documents under analysis provide insights into the state of civil society in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova, outlining specific benchmarks for each country. The benchmarks are similar, thus showing the unity of the documents and the use of the same standards in the evaluation process: synopsis, rationale, and description of the action. In what follows, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2021-2023 for the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies 2021–2022 for the Republic of Moldova. This analysis evaluates the EU budget allocated to each country, by comparing such allocations and support areas relevant to civil society actions based on national contexts and needs. It aims to identify expected outcomes from civil society as anticipated by the EU and to highlight both commonalities and differences in these expectations between the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova. Additionally, we will examine the 2020 Country Reports to establish a coherent starting point and ensure a thorough comparison between the countries envisaged in the light of the progress later attained.

The lack of progress in Albania's civil society environment, as highlighted in the 2020 Country Report, suggested that structural reforms, particularly in terms of legal and fiscal frameworks, were necessary to ensure CSOs' long-term financial sustainability beyond reliance on donor funding. The EU's allocation of €9.5 million reflected a targeted response to the gaps in Albania's civil society, particularly in areas such as gender, LGBTIQ rights, and media, but the effectiveness of this support hinged on overcoming the identified institutional barriers. The need for amendments to the Law on the National Council for Civil Society indicated deeper issues of representation and inclusivity, which limited the ability of civil society to meaningfully engage in Albania's policy reforms. By prioritizing transparency, public participation, and sustainable practices, the EU aimed to address Albania's persistent corruption and environmental issues, suggesting that these challenges were seen as critical obstacles to democratic consolidation. The heavy reliance on external funding, rather than robust public funding and tax incentives, reflected a vulnerability in Albania's civil society sector, thus implying that reforms in financial policy were crucial for ensuring the sector's independence and resilience.

Despite the alignment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's legal framework with EU standards, mentioned in the country Report, the persistent lack of progress in

creating an enabling environment for civil society revealed a significant disconnect between legislative conformity and practical implementation. The ongoing threats and attacks on activists addressing sensitive issues underscored the failure of the government to protect fundamental civil liberties, calling into question the effectiveness of the €8.8 million EU allocation if these security concerns were not addressed. The lack of transparency in public funding for civil society suggested deeper systemic issues, as financial opacity undermined both trust in governance and the long-term sustainability of CSOs. Although the EU's program emphasized civil society development and dialogue with the government, the insufficient consultations with CSOs indicated a lack of genuine political will to integrate civil society into decision-making processes. The immediate need for reform in media freedom and anti-corruption efforts highlighted critical areas of weakness, but without stronger enforcement mechanisms and legal protections, these initiatives risked being symbolic rather than transformative.

Although improvements in Kosovo's civil society environment were noted, according to the 2020 Country Report, the ongoing need for greater transparency in public funding suggested that government efforts remained insufficient to ensure accountability and financial sustainability for CSOs. The EU's €7.25 million allocation may not have been enough to fully address the structural weaknesses in Kosovo's civil society, particularly in areas such as harmonized procedures and a favorable tax regime, which were crucial for long-term viability. While the Law on Freedom of Association provided a solid foundation, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework for volunteering limited CSOs' ability to mobilize resources and expand their capacity to engage in community-driven initiatives. The focus on media freedom and content diversity was vital, but without stronger mechanisms to protect journalistic integrity from political influence or pressure, efforts to foster a transparent media environment failed to achieve a meaningful impact. Although the program aimed to boost citizen participation in decision-making, the effectiveness of these efforts depended on whether the government was willing to engage with CSOs in a thorough and sustained dialogue.

In spite of the improvements in Montenegro's legal and financial environment for CSOs, as they are presented in the 2020 Country Report, the persistent challenges regarding their meaningful inclusion in policymaking highlighted a gap between legal advancements and practical influence on governance. While state funding became more transparent, issues like uneven grant handling suggested that the allocation of resources was still subject to favoritism or inefficiency, limiting the effectiveness of the €6 million EU contribution. Strengthening CSO capacities was essential for their role in advocating reforms and supporting EU integration, but without comprehensive access to information and a more inclusive policy framework, their impact remained limited. The emphasis on fostering collaboration between CSOs and government entities was crucial for cooperative governance, yet the limited influence of CSOs in Montenegro's EU accession process reflected deeper structural barriers to their full integration into national decision-making.

Although the focus on local development and strategic partnerships held promise for driving social justice and sustainability, the success of these initiatives depended on how effectively CSOs could overcome funding inconsistencies and develop long-term financial independence.

While the 2018-2020 Strategy contributed to enhancing the civil society environment in North Macedonia, the need for more timely consultations highlighted ongoing issues with the responsiveness of the government to CSO inputs, limiting their role in shaping policy effectively. The focus on leadership training and skill development through the EU's €9 million contribution underscored the critical importance of capacity building for both CSOs and media in driving democratic reform, though the success of these efforts depended on the proper implementation of legal and financial frameworks. Enhancements in the legal setting to align with EU standards aimed to create a more conducive environment for CSOs and media; however, without addressing existing gaps in financial sustainability and access to resources, these changes did not lead to long-term improvements. The emphasis on transparency and accountability, particularly through improved communication outputs by CSOs, suggested a strategic push toward engaging citizens more effectively, though these efforts had to overcome the historic mistrust between the public and state institutions. While reforms in the intelligence sector and parliamentary oversight were underway, further strengthening these institutions was vital for ensuring that civil society could operate freely and that media freedom was protected, both essential for maintaining public trust in the democratic process.

The allocation of €17.2 million for Serbia's civil society and media reflected the EU's recognition of systemic issues, such as a lack of methodical cooperation and insufficient support for CSOs, which highlighted the broader challenges Serbia faced in consolidating democratic institutions. While training programs aimed to enhance the decision-making role of CSOs, the polarized political climate and frequent attacks on human rights defenders created a challenging environment for civil society to function effectively, potentially limiting the impact of these capacity-building efforts. The absence of a national strategy for CSOs and delays in establishing a cooperation council signified deeper governance issues in Serbia, where state-civil society relations remained strained, and the reform process lacked clear institutional support. Although the EU's focus on media pluralism and independent journalism was critical to fostering democratic discourse, the pressure from authorities and negative media portrayals of CSOs and activists risked undermining these efforts to create a more diverse and independent media landscape. The push for enhanced transparency and public consultations pointed to a key gap in Serbia's governance model, where improved implementation mechanisms were needed to ensure that civil society could meaningfully contribute to the policy-making process, especially in the context of EU integration.

The allocation of approximately €10 million to the Republic of Moldova from the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility underscored the EU's commitment to enhancing the capacity and sustainability of CSOs, recognizing their critical role in fostering democratic governance and local development. By prioritizing grassroots democracy and citizen participation, the initiative aimed not only to strengthen civic engagement but also to build resilience against external pressures that could have undermined democratic processes in the Republic of Moldova, particularly in the face of regional instability. The emphasis on CSOs and think tanks engaging in policymaking reflected a strategic approach to governance, suggesting that empowering these organizations could create a more inclusive political environment and improve the responsiveness of public institutions to local needs. The focus on promoting an open civic space was vital, as it encouraged dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, which helped mitigate societal divisions and foster a culture of mutual respect and understanding in the Republic of Moldova. Ultimately, the success of these initiatives depended on the effective implementation of capacity-building measures and the ability of CSOs to leverage their strengthened positions so as to advocate for systemic reforms that aligned with European democratic standards.

The EU's Civil Society Facility and Media Programmes for 2021–2023 targeted key areas for democratic strengthening and civil society support, but faced several challenges that impacted their effectiveness. Each program addressed specific issues unique to its region. For instance, Albania's program focused on civil society development and media freedom, whilst also including environmental issues. Bosnia and Herzegovina's program emphasized civil society development, freedom of expression, and anti-corruption efforts, whereas Kosovo's program aimed to improve media content diversity and citizen engagement. Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro all faced challenges in financial sustainability for CSOs, with heavy reliance on external funding and insufficient public financial support, while Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina dealt with financial opacity, reflecting deeper governance issues. Across Albania, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, institutional barriers limited the effectiveness of EU funding in promoting civil society development, particularly where there was a lack of representation, inclusivity, or support for CSOs from state institutions. Kosovo, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced significant challenges with media freedom, whereby pressures from political influence and the absence of protective mechanisms for journalists hindered efforts to foster a transparent media environment. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo faced ongoing threats to civil liberties and attacks on activists, which highlighted a failure in government protection of fundamental rights, hence raising concerns about the long-term effectiveness of EU support in these regions. Albania and North Macedonia both prioritized transparency and public participation as key strategies for addressing corruption and democratic consolidation, though both countries experienced difficulties with the suitable integration of CSO inputs into policymaking. Kosovo's lack of a comprehensive legal framework for

volunteering hampered its civil society's capacity-building initiatives, contrasting with Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, where legal frameworks focused more on inclusivity and financial reform for CSOs. While Serbia received the largest EU allocation (€17.2 million), the polarized political climate and systemic issues limited the impact of this funding. In addition, smaller allocations in Montenegro (€6 million) and Kosovo (€7.25 million) were similarly constrained by structural weaknesses in transparency and governance. Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina showed particularly strained relations between the government and civil society, marked by limited dialogue and the lack of a cooperative framework, whereas in Montenegro and North Macedonia, civil society was recognized, but not fully integrated into decision-making processes. Albania stood out with targeted EU support for gender and LGBTIQ rights, reflecting specific gaps in its civil society sector, whereas other countries like Serbia and Kosovo focused more broadly on general democratic reforms without specific reference to these areas. The Republic of Moldova's civil society programs were uniquely designed to build resilience against external pressures and regional instability, a contrast to Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro, where internal governance and structural reforms were the primary focus for strengthening civil society.

Conclusions

The EU's financial support for civil society in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova reveals a multifaceted approach aimed at strengthening democratic governance and fostering civic engagement. While the allocation of funds demonstrates a commitment to addressing specific regional needs, the effectiveness of these programs is often hindered by structural weaknesses and a lack of genuine political will. In many instances, heavy reliance on external funding undermines the long-term sustainability of civil society organizations, exposing vulnerabilities that can impede their independence and resilience. Furthermore, issues of transparency and financial opacity remain pervasive, further complicating the relationship between CSOs and governments.

The lack of adequate representation and inclusivity further exacerbates the challenges faced by civil society, limiting their capacity to influence policy and decision-making effectively. Despite some improvements noted in areas like media freedom and citizen participation, ongoing threats to fundamental rights and civil liberties present significant obstacles to meaningful engagement. The EU's targeted initiatives, while well-intended, often fall short of fostering genuine dialogue and collaboration between state institutions and civil society. Additionally, the need for comprehensive legal reforms and supportive frameworks is evident, particularly in countries where existing laws fail to adequately protect or empower CSOs.

Moreover, the comparative analysis of funding allocations highlights the disparities in priorities and challenges faced by different regions, with some receiving significantly larger sums to address systemic issues. As the EU continues to support civil society development, the emphasis on capacity building and promoting an open civic space will be crucial for ensuring the long-term impact of these initiatives. Ultimately, the success of these programs will depend on their ability to navigate complex political landscapes and foster genuine partnerships between civil society and government entities. Strengthening the resilience of civil society in the face of external pressures and regional instability will be key to achieving the broader goals of democratic consolidation and effective governance in the region, as a prerequisite to actual EU accession.

The impact of the programs on the democratic landscapes of the recipient countries will be revealed through the watchful monitoring of the EU Commission and the flexible strategies set together with the national governments, in order to overcome the aforementioned hurdles and achieve their planned objectives. The results of this monitoring process lie at the core of our future research endeavors, with the inherent limitation posed by our reliance on European Commission documents and national outputs that are available in English, and not exclusively in national languages (in the latter case), as it has occurred with numerous auxiliary documents germane to this topic.

Bibliography

- Armstrong, David–Bello, Valeria–Gilson, Julie–Spini, Debora (2011): *Civil Society and International Governance The role of non-state actors in global and regional regulatory frameworks*. Routledge. Available at: <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/34632/391030.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, Accessed 10.08.2024.
- Brie, Mircea–Putină, Natalia (2023): "The Development and Role of Civil Society in the Republic of Moldova in the Framework of the Eastern Partnership (2009–2021)". In: *Civil Szemle*, 4., pp. 167–185.
- Burkhardt, Fabian (2020): "Moldova – Key Challenges and Political Developments". In: *SSOAR*, Available at https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/70278/ssoar-som-2020-01-02-burkhardt-Moldova_-_Key_Challenges_and.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-som-2020-01-02-burkhardt-Moldova_-_Key_Challenges_and.pdf, Accessed 10.08.2024.
- Costea, Ana Maria; Melenciuc-Ioan, Ioana Roxana (2023): "Assessing the Involvement/ Development of Civil Society as Part of the European Integration Process of the Eastern Partnership States". In: *Civil Szemle*, pp.187–207.
- Corpădean, Adrian (2023): "Some considerations on the usefulness of the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III for fostering conflict resolution In: the Western Balkans". In: *Civil Szemle*, 2., pp. 39–51.
- Council of Europe (2021): *Civil society and human rights*. Available at: <https://edoc.coe.int/en/civil-society/10293-civil-society-and-human-rights.html>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.

- DG NEAR (2022): Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society In: the Enlargement Region 2021–2027, Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/EU-Guidelines-for-Support-to-Civil-Society-in-the-Enlargement-region-2021-2027.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- DG NEAR (2023): *Overview – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance*. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- DG NEAR (2023): *Moldova Membership status: candidate country*. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/moldova_en, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Duthie, Roger (2009): *Building Trust and Capacity: Civil Society and Transitional Justice from a Development Perspective*. Available at: <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Development-CivilSociety-FullPaper-2009-English.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2012): *Conditions for membership*. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership_en, Accessed: 10.08.2024.
- European Commission (2012): The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society In: *External relations*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52012DC0492>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2012): *Civil Society*. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/policy-highlights/civil-society_en, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2021): *Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme In: favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021–2023, Annex 2: “Action Document for “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of Albania 2021–2023”*, Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AD%2002%20AL%20CSF%20and%20Media%202021-2023.pdf>, Access-ed:10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2021): *Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme In: Favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021–2023, Annex 3: “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021-2023”*, Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AD%2003%20BiH%20CSF%20and%20Media%202021-2023.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2021): *Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme In: favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023, Annex 4: “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for Kosovo 2021-2023”*. Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AD%2004%20KS%20CSF%20and%20Media%202021-2023.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2021): *Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme In: favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023, Annex 5: “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for Montenegro 2021-2023”*. Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AD%2005%20ME%20CSF%20and%20Media%202021-2023.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.

- European Commission (2021): *Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme In: favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023, Annex 6: "EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2023"*. Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AD%2006%20MK%20CSF%20and%20Media%202021-2023.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2021): *Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme In: favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023, Annex 7: "EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of Serbia 2021-2023"*. Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AD%2007%20Serbia%20CSF%20and%20Media%202021-2023.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2022): *Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Eastern Neighbourhood, 2021-2027, Annex 7: "Action Document for Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility for Resilient and Inclusive Societies"*. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/C_2021_9719_7_EN_annexe_acte_autonome_nlw_part1_v1.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2020): *Albania Report 2020*. Available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2020_en, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2020): *Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2020*. Available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/bosnia_and_herzegovina_report_2020.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2020): *Kosovo Report 2020*. Available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/kosovo_report_2020.pdf, Accessed: 10.08.2024.
- European Commission (2020): *Montenegro Report 2020*. Available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/montenegro_report_2020.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2020): *North Macedonia Report 2020*. Available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Commission (2020): *Serbia Report 2020*. Available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/serbia_report_2020.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- European Parliament (2015): *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights*. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/568332/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)568332_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/568332/EPRS_BRI(2015)568332_EN.pdf), Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Fukuyama, Francis (2001): "Social capital, civil society and development" In: *Third World Quarterly*, 22., (1.), pp. 7-20, Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francis-Fukuyama-2/publication/44828808_Social_capital_civil_society_and_development/links/576bee6a08ae9bd70995dbe1/Social-capital-civil-society-and-development.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Golovchenko, Yevgeniy-Hartmann, Mareike-Adler-Nissen, Rebecca (2018): "State, media and civil society In: the information warfare over Ukraine: citizen curators of digital disinformation" In: *International Affairs*, 95., (5.), pp. 975-994. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/94/5/975/5092080?login=true>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.

- Gordon, Dane- Durst, David (2004): Civil Society. In: *Southeast Europe*, Amsterdam–New-York: Rodopi.
- Kaldor, Mary (2010): “Civil Society and Accountability” In: *Journal of Human Development*, 4., (1.), pp. 5–27, Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/1464988032000051469?needAccess=true>, Accessed: 10.08.2024.
- Kostovicova, Denisa (2013): “Civil society and reconciliation In: the Western Balkans: great expectations?” In: Prifti, Eviola, (Ed.): *The European future of the Western Balkans-Thessaloniki@10*. Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies. pp. 101–109, Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/16379709.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Minority Rights Group International (2003): *Minorities, Accountability and Civic Space (MACS)*, Available at: <https://minorityrights.org/what-we-do/macs/>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- OECD (2012): *Civil society the multitude of associations around which society voluntarily organises itself*. Available at: <https://web-archiv.oecd.org/2012-12-04/218750-12%20Lessons%20Partnering%20with%20Civil%20Society.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Olimid, Anca Parmena (2014): “Civic Engagement and Citizen Participation In: *Local Governance: Innovations*, In: *Civil Society Research*, In: *Revista de Științe Politice/ Revue des Sciences Politiques*, 44., pp. 73–84, Available at: http://193.231.40.249/revistades-tiintepolitice/files/revista_stiinte_politice_issue_44.pdf#page=73, Accessed:10.12. 2023.
- Orhun, Ömür (2007): “Promoting Inter-Cultural Dialogue: Issues and Perspectives of the Council of Europe”, In: *Lisbon Colloquy*, 22–24 June 2007, Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/4/27596.pdf>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Paffenholz, Thania (2015): Civil society and peacebuilding. *A Critical Assessment*, Available at: https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/DHF_DD63_p108-118.pdf, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Putină, Natalia; Brie Mircea (2023): “Civil Society Development and Democratization In: the Republic of Moldova”. In: *Civil Szemle*, 4., pp. 79–107.
- Tandon, Rajesh (2003): “Civil Society and Policy Reforms” In: *IDS Civil Society and Governance Policy Brief No. 9*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. Available at: <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/civil-society-and-policy-reforms/>, Accessed: 10.08.2024.
- Vidačak, Igor (2021): “*The effects of EU conditionality on patterns of policy engagement of civil society organizations In: candidate countries*” Available at: https://www.research-gate.net/publication/353954706_The_effects_of_EU_conditionality_on_patterns_of_policy_engagement_of_civil_society_organizations_in_candidate_countries, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- Williamson, Taylor–Rodd, Joshua (2016): “Civil society advocacy In: *Nigeria: promoting democratic norms or donor demands?*” In: *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 16., Available at: <https://bmcinthealthhumrights.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12914-016-0093-z>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.
- World Health Organization (2007): Commission on Social Determinants of Health. *Civil Society Report*, Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/commission-on-social-determinants-of-health-civil-society-report>, Accessed: 10. 08. 2024.

Note

¹ This study was supported by the European Union within the Erasmus+ programme, project 101085517-DREMS ERASMUS-JMO-2022-HEI-TCH-RSCH. The article reflects exclusively the opinions and points of view of the authors, the Commission not being responsible for any form of use of the information. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.