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Breakthrough as civil society organisations finally receive legal protection in operating across EU borders

Civil Society

Today, the European Commission has published its proposal giving legal protections to civil society organisations operating across borders in the EU. The publication follows Greens/EFA Rapporteur Sergey Lagodinsky's report on 'A statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations' that the European Parliament adopted with an overwhelming majority in February 2022. The proposal picks up long standing demands by civil society organisations to gain EU-wide protection.

Sergey Lagodinsky MEP, Greens/EFA rapporteur and Vice Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee, comments:

"Today's proposal is a breakthrough for all those who are fighting to support democracy across European borders, and a first step towards protecting civil society as a whole throughout the Union. Democracy does not end at a country's border. Civil society organisations are at the heart of every democracy. Making them strong and truly European is a safeguard for our European future."

"Right now there are 24 different regulatory regimes applicable to civil society organisations in the EU. This legal patchwork creates hurdles for cross-border civil engagement and ultimately restricts civic space."

"Ensuring legal protection is crucial today with civil society under attack in many EU countries. Restricting activities, discriminating against individual members and limiting access to funding are ways of pressuring NGOs. This EU-wide legal status will strengthen civil society organisations bringing together people from more than one member state."

"The Commission has taken a decisive step for strengthening civil society today building on the ideas of the European Parliament. We are willing to take that ambition forward, now the Council will also need to live up to those expectations."

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