

## CALL PARTNERSHIP

### **CERV Call 2023**

*CIVIC SPACES, PARTICIPATION, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY*

### **REFERENCE TO THE CALL**

The Call "[CERV-2023-CHAR-LITI](#)" focuses mainly on raising the awareness of civil society organisations about the content of the Charter and promoting activities aimed at its protection. In this respect, the Call will fund proposals aimed at enhancing the implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as strengthening the promotion and protection of rights recognised by the Union.

We are considering Priority no. 2 "**Promoting rights and values by empowering the civic space**". Projects under this priority should promote rights and values by empowering civil society actors to work together at the local, regional and national levels on the fields covered by the programme. The following activities can be covered:

#### **2. Promoting rights and values by empowering the civic space**

- Analytical activities and creation of a methodology to monitor the civic space in EU Member States;
- Mutual learning, exchange of good practices, including those that may be transferable to other countries;
- Communication activities, including dissemination of information and awareness raising about the state of play on civic space, including towards the EU level;
- Capacity building in civil society organisations on monitoring the civic space;
- Developments of tools and services for the support and the protection of CSOs, their members and other rights defenders working to protect and promote EU values, under attack;
- Development of synergies among the actors working to protect the civic space at local, regional, national and European level and between them and the national and European authorities.

**Envisaged duration of projects:** min 12 - max 24 months

**Project's budget:** min 75.000€

**Requisites for participation and eligibility:** Projects can be national or transnational. Transnational projects are particularly encouraged.

**Deadline:** May 25th, 2023 – 17:00 CET

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## **OUR PROPOSAL**

**PROVISIONAL TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL** : Better rights in better civic space. Understanding, developing and networking civic spaces for a better protection of rights

**ACRONYM:** B.RIGHT SPACES

**DURATION:** 24 months

### **CONTEXT, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES:**

Throughout history, civic spaces have served as strongholds for citizens' activism in Europe supporting democratic participation, the protection and promotion of civil and political rights, economic and social rights, in a perspective of recognition and expansion, rather than one of subtraction. This approach allows for growth and progress, while minimising any potential setbacks. However, as emphasised in the official documents of the European Parliament, of the Agency for Fundamental Rights (add references), certain rights are at risk, specifically those pertaining to equality and non-discrimination in the diverse manifestations envisaged by the legislation.

*"The general recognition [of rights] should not be regarded as a consolidated, non-revocable achievement. Throughout the world and even in our highly civilised Europe, obscurantist, totalitarian and racist impulses have not disappeared and have even grown stronger in recent years, mainly due to a defect of analysis of popular sentiment and an inability to exert hegemony on the part of the governing elites"<sup>1</sup>.*

The current 'health condition' of civic spaces varies greatly from country to country: in addition to different demographic, cultural, political and urbanisation situations, new challenges are posed to the democratic vitality of civic spaces:

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<sup>1</sup> Luciani, M. 'The principles of equality and non-discrimination, a comparative law perspective', 2020. EPRS - European Parliament Research Service, p. 54

- 1) **Challenge 1: access to rights** for different groups, defined on the basis of their social condition, employment, gender, age, ability/disability nationality, culture, etc.
- 2) **Challenge 2: access to decision-making processes and effective participation**, whereby civic spaces become arenas for citizens' voice.
- 3) **Challenge 3: digital migration** of civic spaces to web-based platforms, as a substitute or augmentation of physical on-site procedures.
- 4) **Challenge 4: multi-agency governance**, implying that a variety of stakeholders are engaged in the conceptualization, management, and promotion of civic spaces.
- 5) **Challenge 5: dynamism and intersectionality of citizens' rights**
- 6) **Challenge 6: citizens' and CSOs' trust** in public institutions.

### **PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES:**

1. To support widespread learning among promoters of formal and informal civic spaces, by updating the *cartography* of existing civic space categories dividing them into public/private - physical/virtual - regulated/non-regulated etc., making explicit the rules and methods for protecting civic space at local level.
2. To create opportunities for exchange and mutual learning among peers, on a transnational scale, involving members of the REVES network (local institutions and social economy actors) and other significant actors in EU countries.
3. To strengthen networking capacity on a European scale, by creating an ad hoc space (sort of "connecting platform") among existing civic platforms, supporting citizens' engagement in co-decision-making mechanisms.
4. To contribute to the debate on the promotion and protection of civic spaces by drafting the charter for civic spaces in European democracies.

### **ENVISAGED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS:**

- a) **[ANALYTICAL ACTIVITY] Updating the mapping of civic spaces / Analysis of experiences in EU countries**
  - **Taxonomy of civic spaces** (*criteria to be retrieved from literature*)
  - **Development of a (sort of) cartography / map of places, projects, initiatives, etc. that make the concept of *civic space* a reality**

#### *Outputs:*

- 1 updated map of civic spaces

- 1 analysis of the mechanisms that determine the creation, functioning and defence of civic spaces
- 1 study on the potential of civic spaces as a place for the appropriation and implementation of rights

**b) [MUTUAL LEARNING] [CAPACITY BUILDING] [DEVELOPMENT OF SYNERGIES]  
Methods and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of civic spaces**

- **Exchange and mutual learning events on a national and transnational scale.**

*Outputs:*

- 4 country-specific focus groups (one in each partner country) aimed at finalizzato all'approfondimento delle metodologie di aggiornamento e difesa degli spazi civici
- 4 European fora/seminars (one in each partner country), to address the key topics related to the good practices for the promotion and protection of civic spaces
- 1 European symposium (closing event) - development of the common charter for the "defenders" of civic spaces (plausibly, local authorities).

**c) [DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS AND SERVICES] [DEVELOPMENT OF SYNERGIES]  
The European platform and the Charter of civic spaces**

- **Creation of a European network of Civic Spaces and of civic spaces facilitators**
- **Elaboration of a European "charter of rights of civic spaces"**

*Outputs:*

- 1 network for European civic spaces (platform managed by REVES supporting shared knowledge, mutual learning and exchange of practices for promoting and protecting civic spaces)
- 1 capacity-building package co-constructed during the 4 seminars for early recognition of potential crisis situations of civic spaces.
- 1 European "charter of the rights of civic spaces"
- 1 set of policy recommendations for local, regional, national and European decision-makers for the promotion, support and maintenance of civic spaces