

# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society needs space to pro-actively play its democratic role as watchdog, partner in policy dialogue or provider of certain services to local populations. However, the phenomenon of “shrinking civil society space” advances steadily as part of a global trend towards illiberal democracy, electoral authoritarianism, or democratic backsliding. To counter this threat, the European Partnership for Democracy has developed a strategic partnership approach to a conducive environment for civil society (SPACE) that targets all relevant domestic stakeholders – from the grassroots level to high-level decision makers.

SPACE develops constructive relationships **between civil society and other key actors** in a political system strives to open democratic space rather than focusing solely on civil society space as a separate sphere in society. For this reason, SPACE engages a wider range of different actors and operates at various levels of society:

## Level 3 Democratic institutions

SPACE supports democratic institutions – the executive, legislature and the judiciary as well as academia and the media – to engage with citizens and civil society in policy dialogue and provides them with technical support to facilitate results-oriented discussions.

## Level 4 Regional and international fora

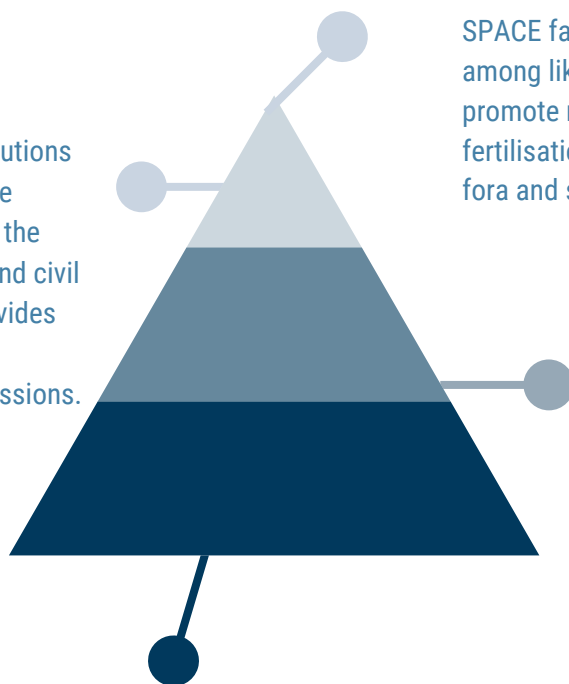
SPACE facilitates networking and exchange among like-minded civil society actors to promote mutual learning and cross-fertilisation of initiatives in international fora and supports joint advocacy initiatives.

## Level 2 Civil society

SPACE promotes a constructive engagement of civil society with democratic institutions, thereby contributing to home-grown solutions for creating a conducive environment for civil society.

## Level 1 Citizens

SPACE raises awareness and capacitates the general public to take an active part in political life.



SPACE follows a three-step approach:



1

SPACE starts out with a 'Democratic Institutions for a Conducive Environment' (DICE) assessment aimed at creating a better understanding of how democratic institutions drive or hinder the development of civil society space in a given country. DICE is tailored to the local context, as it uses tools for stakeholder mapping and Political Economy Analysis (PEA) to identify opportunities for influencing positive change.



2

Following discussions with the EU Delegation in a given country on the DICE assessment, SPACE organises workshops to bring together civil society with representatives of democratic institutions. Based on the DICE assessment and the multi-stakeholder discussions, EPD drafts an 'Action Plan for a Conducive Environment for Civil Society', to be reviewed and adopted by the stakeholders, thereby ensuring broad local ownership.



3

SPACE offers a wide range of activities to the EU Delegation aimed at implementing the Action Plan by targeting one or several of the four levels of intervention citizens: citizens, civil society, democratic institutions, regional and international fora.



The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is a non-profit organisation supporting democracy worldwide. It comprises fifteen European civil and political society organisations from Europe present in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

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