

# ACTIVIZENSHIP

The European Civic Forum's annual Review for Civil Society in Europe

## Call for Nominations

Activizanship #6 – Reclaiming European civic space

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### 1. What is Activizanship?

#### 1.1. Concept

Launched in 2014, Activizanship is edited by the European Civic Forum, a transnational network of over 100 associations and NGOs across Europe working to promote civic engagement, thus contributing to the emergence of a European public sphere where the role and influence of civil society are fully recognised.

Activizanship's aim is to explore the potential of various forms of civic, social and political activism to contribute to renewing, rethinking and reshaping the poetics of citizenship. It also attempts to capture current trends and transformations affecting civil society environment and associative life in Europe and worldwide, connect ideas and experiences about changing the world from the grassroots up, explore the role of citizens' movements, assemblies and organisations in revitalising civic and political space.

The European Civic Forum observes trends affecting civil society space in Europe through the Civic Space Watch, a platform collecting resources on threats to fundamental rights as well as positive initiatives aimed at countering these trends. The platform was launched in early 2018 and has so far gathered nearly 900 resources from a variety of local, national and European organisations active in 25 EU countries.

The Activizanship report illustrates the findings of the Civic Space Watch and brings into the spotlight outstanding positive stories of activists and organisations that are at the forefront acting for and reclaiming rights, freedoms and dignity for all.

See previous editions here: [Civic Space Watch | Our publications](#).

#### 1.2. An advocacy tool

The Activizanship report draws from a variety of resources, interviews and surveys to capture the complexity of civic space transformations in Europe. The general analysis of the trends is accompanied by interviews with leading activists narrating their experiences and case studies illustrating positive as well as threatening developments in specific countries or for specific groups.

The report feeds into the European Civic Forum and partners' advocacy at national and European level towards proactive and progressive actions for vibrant civic space. In particular, it will be used to respond to the annual European Commission's consultation on the rule of law and the Conference on the Future of Europe.

#### 1.3. A tool for Civic Pride

Activizanship wants to contribute to giving those who act at local, national, European and international levels, the confidence they need to pursue their invaluable work. This also means providing them with

arguments to louden their voice and ensuring it is heard by those they wish to convince. While the report showcases the many ways in which civic space is narrowing, it also aims to give visibility and multiply the voices of those that are resisting, reclaiming and expanding civic and democratic spaces for action and expression.

## 2. Activizanship #6

The work and space of civic organisations is increasingly under pressure in Europe today, due to democratic backsliding, shrinking of civil and social rights, but also as a consequence of policies that are not able to secure anymore, and often undermine the social contract of our societies. The COVID-19 pandemic further expanded and deepened these challenges. Nevertheless, civil society raised hands and stretched its capacities to mitigate these challenges; it has sometimes won fundamental victories against these trends.

While policies related to democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights are the competence of national authorities, the battle for vibrant civic space has an increasingly European dimension. This is also true for the civic wins achieved at local, national and European levels: a victory for rights for one is a victory for all!

With the Activizanship #6, the European Civic Forum aims to showcase civic actors' enabling actions (advocacy, campaigning, action and community organising) that:

- have positive impact on legislation, policies and enforcement practices (including through litigation and other forms of mobilisations)

and/or

- bring transformative change in their communities (for example by influencing narratives, bridging divided communities, building civic agency...).

In particular, we are looking for stories of concrete achievements for civic space (see our definition of civic space [here](#)) that have European dimension (for example, they can be replicated elsewhere in Europe or hold the potential to have positive repercussions for civic space at the European level as well as other positive developments obtained through European mobilisation and advocacy).

### 2.1. Selection and award

Through an open nomination process ([here](#)), we are looking for stories of activists, associations, movements or groups of citizens who successfully mobilised to defend and/or widen civic space at local, national and European levels.

Six of them will be selected by the European Civic Forum based on:

- 1) the positive impact of their action on their communities as well as on the political and public life;
- 2) the lessons learned for civic space at the European level;
- 3) the general state of civic space and fundamental rights in the environment in which they operate.

The selection will also try to ensure a fair territorial and thematic representation of various challenges and diverse rights related issues. It will prioritise stories in countries and fields of actions that have seen major civic space developments in the last year both in a positive or negative direction.

Selected activists will be invited to a reward ceremony in early 2022, and their stories will be collected for the Activizanship #6 magazine.

### 2.2. A Form Supporting Content

Each story will be collected in the form of an interview exploring considerations, strategies and impact of the initiative. The interviews will aim 1) to showcase the

positive impact of their actions; 2) to understand the potential implications at the European level; 3) to relate the human struggles behind such actions.

For each story, the ECF will rely on national and European watchdogs and resources from the Civic Space Watch to provide an analysis of the situation on the ground and a picture of the European landscape.

### **2.3. Dissemination**

The case studies of Activizenship #6 will also be at the centre of ECF's campaigning and advocacy efforts for 2022, including through a policy debate in Brussels and short videos to spread the word about winning stories. The magazine will be disseminated online as well as through local, national and European events and policy discussions, where the activists will be invited to share their stories. Additionally, the ECF will support the travel expenses of awarded organisations and activists to attend ECF advocacy and capacity building physical events throughout 2022.

### **2.4. Timeline**

Mid-May to mid-June 2021: Open nominations

Mid-June to mid-October 2021: Selection and collection of the stories and analyses

January 2022:

Award ceremony in Brussels

2022: Dissemination

## **3. Contacts**

For contributions, information, questions and other, please contact

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