



Central Europe Civic Forum

Time to Deliver: Advocacy and Accountability Outside the Election Cycle at the National and Local Levels

September 11-13, 2024
Warsaw, Poland

The Institute of Public Affairs and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) invite you to the second international Central Europe Civic Forum (CECF), an initiative of the Central Europe Civic Engagement Project (CECEP).

CECEP supports citizen engagement in public affairs through advocacy on issues of citizen concern. Using evidence gathering, opinion research, and collective action, civic coalitions supported through the program engage policymakers on citizen priorities and thereby foster inclusive participation in public affairs. CECEP is implemented through a partnership between NDI, DemNet in Hungary, and the Institute of Public Affairs in Poland.

CECF is a venue for civil society leaders from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to share their experiences leading organizing efforts in their communities, demanding responsive and accountable governance at the national and local levels, and effecting change. In its second edition, we meet to share know-how on countering democratic decline and rule of law violation in CEE countries. Through a mix of small group discussion, expert presentations, and facilitated peer learning, the 2024 Forum will explore strategies for actively holding authorities accountable and influencing the political agenda outside the election cycle through systemic/policy-oriented measures at the local and national levels. The event also addresses roadblocks in civic organizing in CEE, including countering online violence, SLAPPs, and burnout.





September 11, 2024 (Wednesday)

15:00 - Participant Arrival

Novotel Warszawa Centrum, Marszałkowska 94/98, 00-510 Warsaw

Arrival of participants and check-in at the hotel.

19:30 - Meet & Greet and Welcome Dinner

Location: Muzealna Restaurant, Al. Jerozolimskie 3, 00-495 Warsaw (entrance from Al. Jerozolimskie, through the main building of the National Museum in Warsaw)

September 12, 2024 (Thursday)

Mercure Warszawa Grand, Krucza 28, 00-522 Warsaw

09:00 - 9:30 - Welcome Coffee & Registration

OLIMP 1. 10th floor, Mercure Warszawa Grand

09:30 – 10:00 - Welcome and Introduction to the Forum

OLIMP 1. 10th floor

- Welcome address by Chris Abrams, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Jacek Kucharczyk, Institute of Public Affairs
- Zuzana Papazoski, National Democratic Institute

10:00 – 11:30 - Troubled Waters for Democracy? Experiences, Current Status and Ideas for the Future

OLIMP 1. 10th floor

Democracies in Central Europe have had their ups and downs over the past few years, and new challenges are already on the horizon. In this conversation designed to set the stage for further discussion during the Forum, we will look at current trends affecting the functioning of democracy and the rule of law in the region. We will also look at what hurdles may lie ahead, what role civic activists can play in countering them, and how they should prepare to do so.



Panel discussion:

- Daniel Hegedüs - German Marshall Fund, Hungary
- Elżbieta Korolczuk - Södertörn University, Poland
- Grigorij Mesežnikov - Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), Slovakia
- Cezara Grama - Expert Forum, Romania

Moderator: Filip Pazderski, Institute of Public Affairs

11:30 - 12:00 - Coffee Break

12:00 – 13:30 - Democracy in Crisis: Good Practices and New Tools to Address Corruption

OLIMP 1. 10th floor

From corrupt officials to systemic and grand corruption and state capture - examples of irregularities can be found all over Central Europe. However, in many cases, civil society organizations have been able to organize themselves, build broad coalitions of various actors, and counter these trends. In this panel, we will look at selected examples of such activities, with particular emphasis on those aimed at legislative changes and introducing specific mechanisms to combat corruption at different levels of government. At the same time, we will consider how these experiences can be applied in other countries - what to keep in mind and for which difficulties to prepare.

Flash stories and discussion:

- Miklos Merenyi - K-Monitor, Hungary
- Šárka Míková - Oživení, Czechia
- Grzegorz Makowski - Batory Foundation, Poland

Moderator: Aleksandra Kobylińska, Institute of Public Affairs

13:30 -14:30 - Lunch Break

Restaurant, ground floor, Mercure Warszawa Grand

14:30 - 17:15 Working Group Thematic Discussions: How to Hold Authorities Accountable and Influence the Political Agenda through Collective Action

*Ground floor, Wilanowska, Belwederska, Mazowiecka, Mokotowska;
Mercure Warszawa Grand*



Participants, divided in groups, will discuss concrete solutions to specific democracy problems and present strategies to strengthen the participation of various social groups in the public sphere. Discussions will kick off with short introductory presentations intended to initiate the exchange of experiences. All Forum participants have vast knowledge and interesting know-how, which they are strongly encouraged to share in working groups.

14:30 – 15:30 - First Discussion Session in Four Thematic Areas:

1. Promoting Women's Leadership in Civic Organizing - how to shift feminist power to CSOs management (Mazowiecka room)

Goal: To build common knowledge on the most effective strategies for enhancing women's participation in the public sphere, especially in leadership positions. The workshop will include tools for increasing and maintaining the visibility of women in public space and civic activities.

- Kata Keveházi, JOL-LET Foundation, Hungary
- Magdalena Pocheć, FemFund, Poland

Moderator: Sonia Horonziak, Institute of Public Affairs

2. Transparency in Public Life: Digital Governance and the Use of New Technologies Tailored to the 21st Century - solutions of a systemic nature (Mokotowska room)

Goal: To showcase examples of activities that monitor the use of public resources and anti-corruption practices that can be adopted to increase transparency in public life. The group will also discuss the use of new technologies and tools to achieve transparency goals.

- Zofia Lutkiewicz, Political Accountability Foundation, Poland
- Lukas Kraus, Lobbio/Reconstruction of the State, Czechia

Moderator: Genevieve Shea, National Democratic Institute

3. Civic Strength from a Younger Perspective: Reinforcing Youth Participation in Policymaking and Civic Activities (Belwederska room)





Goal: Young people have an important perspective that should be taken into account in shaping public policies. However, it is too rarely used. This discussion will be dedicated to sharing interesting practices for increasing participation of young people in the public sphere, including their inclusion in the preparation of public policy proposals.

- Alicja Pacewicz, SOS for Education, Poland
- Eva Mackevica, The Field of Dialogue Foundation, Poland
- Áron Csere, Dialogue Association, Hungary

Moderator: Filip Pazderski, Institute of Public Affairs

4. Cooperation and Deliberation at the Local Level: CSOs as Intermediaries with Citizens and Watchdogs of Those in Power (Wilanowska room)

Goal: To identify tools to increase the use of participatory mechanisms to engage local government and residents in active cooperation on pressing social issues. The focus will be on cases of importance to specific social groups.

- Ágnes Bardócz, Civil College Foundation, Hungary
- Katarzyna Sztop-Rutkowska, SocLab Foundation, Poland
- Maciej Fijak, Rescue Action for Krakow, Poland

Moderator: Aliz Pocsuvalszki, National Democratic Institute

15:30 – 15:45 - Coffee Break (*foyer in front of the Winestone restaurant*)

15:45 – 16:45 - Second Working Group Discussion Session

Ground floor, Wilanowska, Belwederska, Mazowiecka, Mokotowska, Mercure Warszawa Grand

1. Promoting Women's Leadership in Civic Organizing - systemic solutions (*Wilanowska room*)

- Bogna Czałczyńska, Congress of Women, Poland
- Maja Pietrusiewicz, Visible Foundation, Poland

Moderator: Anna Makówka-Kwapisiewicz, National Democratic Institute





2. Transparency in Public Life: Digital Governance and the Use of New Technologies Tailored to the 21st Century - specific tools (Mokotowska room)

- Csaba Madarasz, aHang, Hungary
- Maia Mazurkiewicz, Alliance4Europe, Poland

Moderator: Sonia Horonziak, Institute of Public Affairs

3. How to Amplify the Voices of Disfavored Groups: Inclusion of Migrants and Other Minority Groups in Advocacy Strategies and Public Policies (Belwederska room)

Goal: To identify strategies for local and central governments on how to effectively include minority group representatives in decision-making processes concerning minorities and showcasing methods of altering negative media discourse regarding migrants' situation.

- Sarian Jarosz, The Migration Consortium, Poland

Moderator: Aliz Pocsuvalszki, National Democratic Institute

4. Europe is Us: CSOs' Role in Shaping the European Agenda and Overseeing the Implementation of its Policies (Mazowiecka room)

Goal: To present possibilities of how CSOs can influence discussions within the EU Council Presidency, push member states to adopt a specific regulation at EU level and demonstrate how the civil sector can engage in European funds monitoring activities.

- Andrea Töplerné Szaszó, Göd-ÉRT Association, Hungary
- Anna Grudzińska, National Federation of Polish NGOs (OFOP), Poland
- Justyna Choroś, Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP)/Save the Rivers Coalition, Poland

Moderator: Filip Pazderski, Institute of Public Affairs

16:45 - 17:15 - How to Hold Government Accountable and Influence the Political Agenda: Summary and Exchange of Experiences

Ground floor. Mokotowska room.



Report out from group work and recommendations for further work to be undertaken by civil society.

17:15 – 19:30 - Leisure Time

19:30 - Dinner by the Vistula River

Location: BarKa, skwer Imienia Tadeusza Kahla, Warsaw (a barge on the Vistula River moored on the right side of the Warsaw Mermaid monument)

September 13, 2024 (Friday)

9.30 - 10:00 - Coffee and summary of the previous day

OLIMP 2, 10th floor, Mercure Warszawa Grand

10:00 – 11:30 - Daily Challenges of Activism and Effective Methods to Counteract Them

OLIMP 2 + 3, 10th floor, Mercure Warszawa Grand

Participants will confront the less bright sides of activist work, with an emphasis on identifying proven methods to counter challenges and considering how to transfer these methods to operating environments in different countries. While discussions will be inspired by pre-selected examples, all participants are strongly encouraged to present other practices from their own experiences of effectively countering attacks on activists or activist burnout. Participants will be divided in two thematic groups:

- **Activist protection against attacks and hate: Online violence, hate speech, and SLAPPs (OLIMP 2 room)**
 - Peter Čuroš, Via Iuris, Slovakia
 - Jarosław Jaruga, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
 - Marzena Błaszczyk, Citizens Network Watchdog, Poland

Moderator: Anna Makówka-Kwapisiewicz, National Democratic Institute

- **Better work environment: addressing activist burnout and promoting self-care practices within the organizations (OLIMP 3 room)**
 - Anna Tomaszewska, Bogumił Kolmasiak, Action Democracy, Poland
 - Ágnes Fernengel, School of Public Life Foundation, Hungary

Moderator: Sonia Horonziak, Institute of Public Affairs





11:30-12:00 - Coffee Break

12:00 - 13:00 - Donor Panel: Grant Management, Needs, and Recommendations for the Future

OLIMP 2, 10th floor, Mercure Warszawa Grand, Krucza 28, 00-522 Warsaw

Central to conducting activism work is how to fund it. There have been ongoing discussions, including in the donor community, about the possibility of more flexible support. These considerations include funding both formal organizations and informal groups, as well as providing grants that are not tied to a specific project, allowing the recipient to decide on an ongoing basis what it needs to fund at the moment. Another topic is the possibility of funding activities aimed at supporting the well-being of employees, defending them from attacks, or investing in more long-term development of the organization. During this moderated discussion, representatives of several important grant-making entities in the CEE region will talk about the possibilities of funding that would consider above-mentioned aspects, but also the difficulties involved.

Moderated discussion:

- Ewa Kulik-Bielińska, Batory Foundation
- Chris Abrams, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Balazs Jarabik, Dexis Consulting Group

Moderator: Genevieve Shea, National Democratic Institute

13:00 - 13:30 - Summary and Forum Conclusion

OLIMP 2, 10th floor

13:30 - 14:30 - Closing Lunch

Restaurant, Ground floor, Mercure Warszawa Grand