

Terms of Reference – Mapping the state of the shrinking space for civil society in Europe.

Civitates is looking for a consultant to conduct a Mapping of the current state of the shrinking space for civil society in Europe.

About Civitates

Civitates is a philanthropic initiative for democracy and solidarity in Europe. It provides funding for civil society actors to come together, revitalise public discourse, and ensure that all voices are heard. The pooled fund supports cross-sectoral coalitions that strengthen the resilience of the civil society sector, initiatives that push for a healthy digital public sphere, as well as independent public-interest journalism in Europe. These 3 areas of intervention are structured and referred to as sub-funds.

Since becoming operational in 2018, Civitates has provided 38 grants in 14 countries across Europe. In addition to providing funding, Civitates has a Funding Plus component, through which the fund provides capacity development and networking opportunities to its grantees.

Civitates, which has an annual budget of approximately 3M EUR, is supported by [a group of diverse foundations](#), of different shapes and sizes, which bring in a wealth of expertise and different perspectives. The initiative, which is hosted by the [Network of European Foundations \(NEF\)](#) and housed in the [Philanthropy House](#) in Brussels, builds on lessons learned from other pooled funds.

About the sub-fund

Civitates' first sub-fund (further referred to as the sub-fund) aims to strengthen civil society by empowering its actors to respond collectively and effectively to challenges related to their shrinking space.

The sub-fund made an initial set of small grants in summer 2018 to 16 groups in 11 European countries, with an aim of supporting their building of coalitions meant to assist in strengthening the civil society sector in Europe. This was followed by more substantial grants to 13 of these groups in 9 countries in December 2018, for more robust coalition-based work.

An interim evaluation of the grantmaking in this sub-fund was conducted in the first quarter of 2020. The evaluation report concluded that the impact of the coalitions on the shrinking space for civil society in the national contexts was relatively modest in the period it covered. This was a direct consequence of the timing of the evaluation and a mainly 'internal' focus on early stages of coalition formation and growth. One of the recommendations of the evaluator was that a more externally focused impact evaluation would be realistic towards the end of 2020 – beginning of 2021.

As an outcome of the interim evaluation report, the sub-fund working group decided to provide extension grants to 11 coalitions to allow them to continue their work, from December 2020 to November 2021.

To inform the development of the sub-fund strategy from 2021 onwards, Civitates would like to commission a Mapping of the current state of the shrinking space for civil society in Europe.

Purpose of the Mapping

The Mapping will inform the new strategy of the sub-fund that will be developed mid-2021. It should provide Civitates and its partner foundations with a comprehensive picture of what the key trends & challenges/opportunities related to the shrinking space for civil society in Europe are and what are the current or planned initiatives, tools and approaches to address it. It will also help assess what is the added value and the niche of Civitates in addressing those challenges. The Mapping will be considered in relation with an impact evaluation of the work of the coalitions funded by Civitates. Both the mapping and the evaluation report will be submitted at the same time.

Focus

The mapping should provide a comprehensive overview of answers to the following questions:

- What are the main ways in which the shrinking space for civil society currently manifests itself throughout the EU?
- What are the drivers and trends in different European countries in relation to the shrinking space for civil society?
- What are the countries where the situation is the most problematic and why?
- What are the strategies, instruments and initiatives across Europe that civil society or other stakeholders have put in place to address the shrinking space?
- What have been the most successful strategies so far and why?
- What are the main lessons learned from the different strategies, instruments and initiatives so far (positive and negative)?
- Considering the resources available and the work accomplished so far, how can Civitates have the most impact in addressing the shrinking space for civil society (please include strategies, instruments and initiatives)?

Methodology

The Mapping should not be a new piece of research on civic space in Europe, given its restricted target audience - Civitates partner foundations. It should be a mix of literature review and interviews, taking stock of the existing resources and opinions of relevant experts in the field.

The consultant can assume a certain level of expertise in the target audience and the Mapping should focus on the current pertinent manifestations of the shrinking space as opposed to answering the question 'what is shrinking space'.

The expert list will be determined in consultation with the Civitates secretariat.

Expected outputs

- A 10-15 pages analysis
- A meeting with Civitates and partner foundations to present the findings of the report followed by a Q&A.

Timeline

- The final mapping should be delivered by latest **Friday 5 March 2021**.
- Ideally the consultant would carry out the research between December 2020 and February 2021.

Profile of the consultant

The consultant should show demonstrable experience and knowledge of the civic space in Europe, including the challenges, opportunities and the current debates on the topic.

Application Process

Interested candidates should submit their application to Roy Virah-Sawmy, (roy.virahsawmy@nef-europe.org) **by 30 November 2020**. The letter of Interest and CV should clearly reflect the competencies of the candidate required to complete this task and be accompanied by an indicative budget in Euro (stating either the consultant's daily rate and indicating the number of days estimated for this work or a lump sum for the services indicated above).