The EU’s Policies to Protect Civic Space

Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law
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“to operate CSOs need a functioning democratic & legal system – giving them de jure and de facto rights to associate and secure funding, coupled with freedom of expression, access to information and participation in public life”

External Policies
• Human Rights Guidelines
• Country Strategies & Country Roadmaps
• Human Rights Dialogues
• Human Rights Clauses
• Démarches & Statements
• Financial Instruments
• Role of the European Parliament

External Instruments
- No clear definition / use of terms
- No guidance on what comprises an ‘enabling environment’ and how the EU tools can be deployed
- No benchmarks

External policies
• Many of the instruments are difficult to assess because not public / no review
• Human rights clauses not utilised
• Statements often general with no clear call for action
2014: 34 statements. Addresses 12 countries. Half of the statements were on Azerbaijan, China & Russia.
The decision by the Baku Court of Appeals to transfer peace activist and historian Arif Yunus from prison to house arrest is a welcome and positive humanitarian gesture; we hope that further steps will follow. The EU is ready to further deepen and broaden our dialogue and co-operation with Azerbaijan.

Statement by the Spokesperson on the release from prison of Azerbaijani activist Arif Yunus (Nov 13 2015)

Fails to call for release also of his wife Leyla Yunus

Azerbaijan
FEATURED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
AZERBAIJAN
LEYLA AND ARIF YUNUS

ACTION

RESOURCES

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CAMPAIGN
Increasingly civic space is also inside the EU but the EU appears very ill-equipped to tackle this problem “at home”.

**Treaty of the European Union**

The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.

The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

**Internal Policies**
• Article 7 – ‘nuclear option’ sanctioning system in case a member state breaches the values of the Union – unusable in practice
• Rule of Law Mechanism
• Rule of Law Dialogue
• EP proposal for a Rule of Law, Democracy and Fundamental Rights Pact

Internal Instruments
Thanks

Kerstymccourt@opensocietyfoundations.org

Natacha.kazatchkine@opensocietyfoundations.org