



Ex ante appraisal and feasibility study on the establishment of a European house for civil society - COMM C2/4/2013

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Final Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 This Report

This Final Report is the fourth deliverable of the “Ex ante appraisal and feasibility study on the establishment of a European house for civil society”. The Report provides the following:

- An introductory section on the purpose and scope of the study, the main methodological tools used as well as a description of the main obstacles encountered and how these were overcome;
- A summary of the mapping exercise, presenting the mechanisms, organisations and initiatives identified at European Union (EU) as well as in the 15 Member States where the focus groups were carried out. The full results of the mapping are presented in Technical Annex 1;
- The needs assessment, presenting an analysis of citizens’ and civil society organisations’ (CSOs)’ needs, and assessing how and to what extent these are addressed by the current mechanisms, organisations and initiatives in place;
- An analysis of possible options for activities and scenarios to address the priority needs identified; and
- Conclusions and recommendations for action.

An Executive Summary of this Final Report is delivered separately.

1.2 Purpose of the study

As part of the 2013 budget of the European Union, the European Parliament voted for a preparatory action European Civil Society House (line 16 05 09) with a view to “*enable the establishment of a “European Civil Society House” physically as a resource centre and advice bureau on European rights and civic participation for both citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) and as a user-friendly space for brainstorming, ideas exchange and networking of like-minded individuals concerned about Europe’s future.*” In the 2014 budgetary remarks, it was further specified that this measure aimed at establishing such a house physically in Brussels.

Given the long-term nature and the level of budgetary consequences of such an initiative, the Commission decided to carry out an in-depth, objective feasibility study, with a view to ensure that there would be no duplication with existing initiatives, and to assess and determine the conditions required for a successful implementation of this initiative.

This “**Ex ante appraisal and feasibility study on the establishment of a European house for civil society (EHCS)**” has been contracted out by the European Commission, Directorate General for Communication to ICF GHK and Technopolis.

Originally, the aim of the study was to assess, based on an analysis of EU citizens’ and civil society’s needs, the added value of creating an EHCS to support both citizens and CSOs in influencing and contributing to policy making at European level. More specifically, the study intended to:

- Assess the need and critical elements for the establishment of an EHCS;
- Assess the conditions required for a successful implementation of this initiative;
- Define the possible structures and activities to be implemented by the EHCS; and
- Determine the need for EU financial support and possible modules of funding.

The feasibility of establishing an EHCS was to be assessed taking into consideration various criteria (i.e. exploring the operational, technical, financial and legal feasibility).

However, during the course of the study, the methodology had to be adapted to take into account the findings and information gathered during the ex ante appraisal phase, as well as

the opinions of different stakeholders on the possibility of establishing an EHCS. Although during this first phase of the study, which included extensive consultations (interviews, focus groups, surveys, a workshop and street interviews) and a mapping of existing initiatives in this field (as further explained in section 1.3 below), the study did indeed identify a number of needs in relation to civic participation and engagement in EU affairs (both for citizens and CSOs), it also became clear that there was already a broad variety of existing structures and organisations both at EU and national levels focused on meeting most of these needs (with varying success). In addition, most of the possible functions attributed to the EHCS, as included in the European Parliament budgetary commentary, were also already being developed and implemented by other EU and national structures and organisations.

In addition, the consultations, in particular the stakeholder workshop, but also the focus groups and the street interviews, showed an overall scepticism towards the added value of establishing a new structure with tasks and functions similar to what was included in the European Parliament budgetary commentary.

Following discussions with DG Communication, it was subsequently decided to modify the parts of the study which would look at the feasibility of different options for establishing the EHCS and necessary EU financial support, and to develop and assess instead, a set of broader alternative options to address those needs of citizens and CSOs which in the current situation are partially unmet, namely:

- The baseline scenario – no change to the current situation;
- Ensuring that existing organisations can (better) address the identified needs; and
- The possible establishment of a new structure such as the EHCS as described in the European Parliament budgetary commentary.

1.3 Methodology

The following methodological tools were used in the context of this study:

- Review of evidence, literature and other documentation;
- Exploratory interviews;
- Mapping and assessment of existing structures /mechanisms;
- Focus groups;
- Surveys;
- A stakeholders workshop; and
- Street interviews.

Review of evidence and exploratory interviews

The study started with an initial collection and review of evidence and exploratory interviews. During this phase, a literature review was carried out and exploratory interviews were undertaken by the team members in order to get a picture of the main actors involved in this field, as well as understand what activities are implemented. A total of 21 interviews were undertaken. Eight interviews were undertaken with representatives of EU institutions, one with the Council of Europe and 12 with CSOs.

Mapping and assessment of existing structures /mechanisms

The study team conducted an extensive mapping of existing organisations/structures in place, at EU and national level, to enhance citizens' civic participation. More information on the methodology used is included in section 2 below.

Focus groups

A total of 31 focus groups were carried out (30 at national level and one at EU level). The focus groups included both citizens and CSOs to get the participants' opinions on the most

immediate needs and gaps, as well as to explore possible future action to address those. More specifically, the following was discussed:

- The most important needs of citizens and CSOs in relation to participation in the EU public sphere;
- Knowledge of, and satisfaction with current initiatives aiming to enhance citizens' participation in the EU and the "offer/services" provided; and
- Ideas/recommendations on the need for future action in this field.

Surveys

Two surveys were developed to validate/test the information gathered through the focus groups with a much wider group of citizens and CSOs. The online surveys, which were translated into all EU languages, covered all 28 Member States. The respondents were asked to mark their level of agreement with a list of 'core' needs and gaps as well as possible future actions to address these. Text spaces included in the survey allowed them to provide comments and suggest alternative needs and actions. On 1 February 2014, 1,469 replies were received (1,130 from citizens and 339 from CSOs).

Stakeholders' workshop

A workshop was held on 4 February 2014 at ICF GHK's premises, involving representatives of EU institutions as well as CSOs active both at EU and national level. The aim of the workshop was to validate the outcomes resulting from the needs analysis, discuss the initial definitions and dimensioning of the options available to address the needs in the current situation, and to prioritise these options in view of the second part of the study (feasibility). Following criticism expressed by the workshop participants on the draft options proposed for the establishment of the EHCS, as well as the approach taken to the needs analysis, the Commission and the study team decided to revise the methodology for the remainder of the assignment (as described above).

Street interviews

While this data collection tool was not included in the original proposal of the study, street interviews were added to the methodology in order to take into account feedback provided during the stakeholder workshop. This related to the reach of the surveys and to the extent to which 'hard to reach' citizens were included in the online consultation exercise. Therefore, street interviews with citizens were conducted in two Member States: Poland and Italy. In total, 47 interviews were carried out.

1.4 Challenges and obstacles encountered

Table 1.1 below provides a description of the obstacles encountered during the study as well as of the measures taken to overcome these obstacles.

Table 1.1 Obstacles encountered

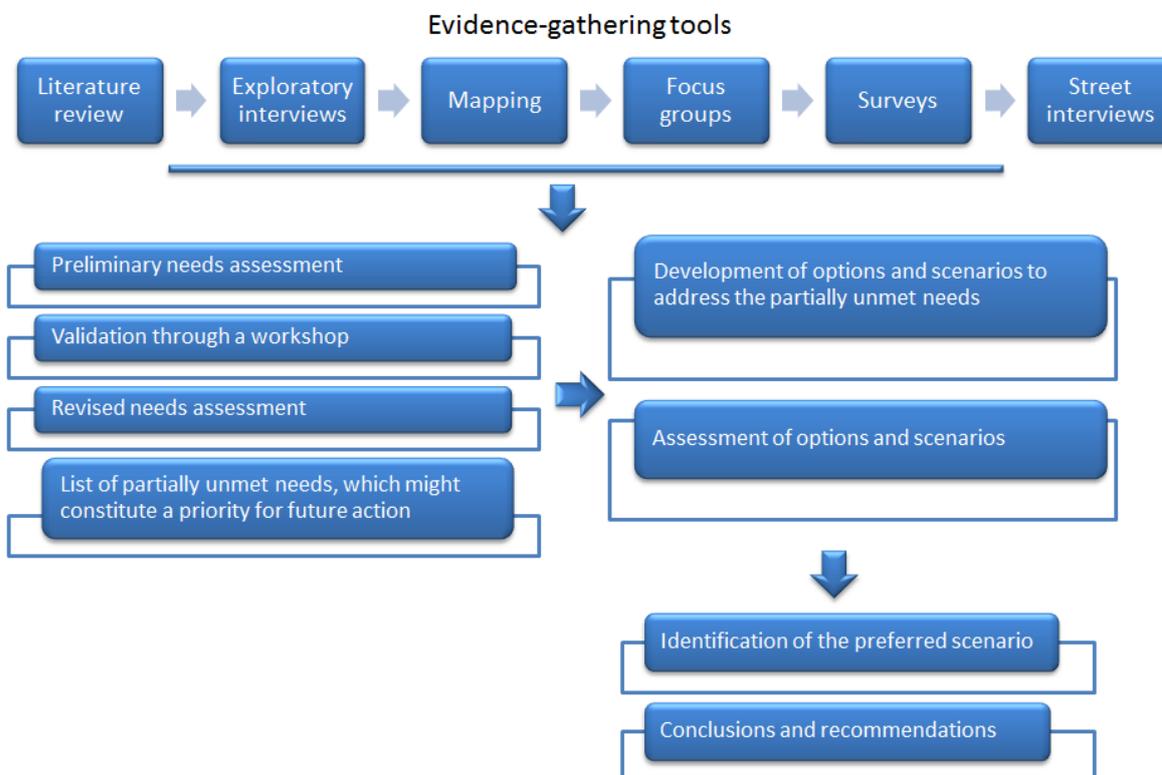
Obstacles	How obstacles were overcome
Engaging citizens and CSOs in focus groups. In some cases, focus groups included only five–six participants (compared with the ten initially foreseen).	Incentives were provided in the form of little gifts. Focus groups were organised after working hours. Focus groups were organised in different cities.
Reaching the number of answers to the survey set as a target in the initial proposal, over the Christmas period.	This was done by using diverse channels of dissemination (from CSOs involved in the focus groups and in the exploratory interviews, to Commission representations). The Commission's channels also proved particularly helpful. The deadline for submission of replies was also extended from 6 January to 20 January.
Criticisms on the content of the surveys. Some of the questions were perceived as being too	It was decided to include open questions in the surveys instead of prompting for specific answers, which might have influenced

Obstacles	How obstacles were overcome
vague and not taking into account the existing initiatives in this area. Also some criticisms were raised on the reach of the survey. These related to the extent to which the “hard to reach” citizens were included in the online consultation exercise.	the respondents. Also, due to the nature of the online surveys (which had to be short and straightforward), it was not possible to present/prompt at the existing initiatives in this area. In order to address the criticisms on the reach of the survey, 47 street interviews were carried out in Italy and Poland. The latter also involved citizens who are “hard to reach”.
Lack of stakeholders support towards the aim of the feasibility study.	The feasibility part of the study was drastically changed, with more focus being placed on the needs assessment and the extent to which current needs were, or could be addressed by existing structures. Also, instead of exploring and assessing options for the future house, the study focused more on “alternative” solutions and scenarios.

1.5 Main body of this Report

Figure 1.1 presents the overall process followed throughout the study for reaching the conclusions and recommendations included at the end of this Report. As mentioned above, the study included an important evidence-gathering component. Different tools were put in place, in the starting phase of the assignment, to collect relevant information. Following the data-gathering phase, the study team proceeded to drafting a needs assessment (identifying the emerging needs for both citizens and CSOs). The needs assessment was further consolidated following the stakeholder workshop (the revised needs assessment is presented in section 3). The latter also included a list of partially unmet needs, which might constitute a priority for future action (the list is presented at the end of section 3). Following this step, the study team drafted and developed a number of options for action to address the partially unmet needs, and identified three scenarios under which those options could be developed in the future. These are presented in section 4 of this Report. Subsequently, the options were assessed under the three scenarios identified, taking into account the overall feasibility, the associated costs, as well as the risks. Finally, following the assessment, the study team identified the preferred scenario for future action and drafted the conclusions and recommendations for action. These are presented in section 5 of this Report.

Figure 1.1 Overall process followed



Therefore, the main body of this Report includes the following sections:

- Section 2 – Main findings of the mapping of existing organisations, structures and initiatives at EU and Member State level;
- Section 3 – Needs assessment;
- Section 4 – Scenarios and activities to address the priority needs and their assessment;
- Section 5 – Conclusions and recommendations.
- Annex 1 – Detailed assessment of the level of costs involved in the implementation of possible activities.

The Technical Annexes (not published) include the following:

- Technical Annex 1 – the full results of the mapping;
- Technical Annex 2 – national reports;
- Technical Annex 3 – an overview of the focus groups participants' views on the statements (per Member State); and
- Technical Annex 4 – results of street interviews.

2 Main findings of the mapping of existing organisations, structures and initiatives at EU and Member State level

2.1 Introduction

Aim of the mapping

The aim of this step of the study was to map existing organisations/structures in place, at EU and national level, to enhance citizens' civic participation. The purpose of this mapping exercise was twofold:

- Identify organisations/structures which implement initiatives, projects, activities, etc. and/or deliver services which are interfacing EU public policy and CSOs/citizens and which have similar functions as those set in the European Parliament budgetary commentary concerning the EHCS, namely:
 - **A physical resource centre and advice bureau on EU rights and civic participation for both citizens and CSOs.** This might include, for example, organisations and structures providing information about the EU and on citizens' EU rights, providing access to information of direct relevance to citizens as well as advice and other forms of EU assistance. Also, this might include organisations and structures helping CSOs in pooling resources at national and EU level, as well as providing guidance and support to organisations when involved in EU affairs, etc.; and
 - **A user-friendly space for brainstorming, ideas exchange and networking of like-minded individuals concerned about Europe's future.** This might include, for example, organisations and structures providing opportunities for citizens to engage in debates and discussions around EU policies, express ideas to policy makers as well as involving citizens in the policy-shaping process. Also, this might include organisations and structures helping CSOs in increasing connections, sharing of knowledge and improving relations between national and EU CSOs.
- Assess to what extent the existing organisations/structures already address the identified needs (presented in section 3 below).

Methodology

A mapping of organisations/structures implementing activities at EU and national level was carried out:

- **EU level:** a total of 29 mechanisms/structures were considered to be providing services and activities similar to those which had been initially foreseen for the future EHCS, in terms of acting as a resource centre, providing advice on EU rights, fostering civic participation and providing a space for meetings and exchanges for both citizens and CSOs.

An additional 150 organisations/structures implementing initiatives targeting citizens and civil society were mapped. The mapping focused on organisations/structures active at EU level and/or funded through EU programmes. In particular, the mapping undertaken focused on EU-level organisations/structures and initiatives mainly funded under the Europe for Citizens Programme, as well as under the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, the Lifelong Learning Programme (under Comenius and Grundvig), the Seventh Framework Programme, and the Youth in Action Programme.

- **National level:** a mapping of national organisations/structures (in the 15 Member States covered by the focus groups) was also undertaken. In total 204 organisations/structures were mapped. The national mapping included, whenever possible, organisations/structures and initiatives that present an EU dimension or EU focus. In case there was a lack of organisations/structures and initiatives with an EU dimension,

organisations/structures and initiatives with a focus on civic participation/citizenship at national level, were included.

The mapping focused on identifying CSOs and other stakeholders, as well as initiatives implemented by these, which are aimed at enhancing citizens' interest and participation in the EU. When looking at the organisations/structures identified, the following was considered:

- Types of organisations and the services provided;
- Aims and objectives;
- Main areas of activity;
- Activities developed;
- Target group; and
- Financial resources.

A detailed analysis of the mapped organisations/structures is presented in Technical Annex 1 of this Report. The subsections below provide a summary of the main findings of the mapping.

2.2 Large coordinating mechanisms/structures at EU level that have similar function(s) to the EHCS

A total of 29 mechanisms were considered to be providing services and activities which are similar to those which had been initially foreseen for a future EHCS, in terms of acting as a resource centre, providing advice on EU rights, fostering civic participation and providing a space for meetings and exchanges, for both citizens and CSOs (as mentioned in the European Parliament budgetary commentary). A full list of these mechanisms is provided in Technical Annex 1.

These big mechanisms target both citizens and CSOs. Those targeting citizens mainly aim to inform the latter about the EU providing general or thematic information (for example Your Europe, EDICs, etc.), organise debates during which citizens can express their views (European Movement International, Friends of Europe, Gov2U, Association of Local Democracy Agencies, European Civic Forum, etc.) help citizens in solving practical problems linked to the application of their rights (Solvit, the EU Rights' Clinic, the Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (AIRE) centre, etc.) as well as improving communication with policy makers (for example, the "Citizens' Dialogues") and their involvement in the policy-shaping process (for example, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)).

Mechanisms targeting CSOs mainly aim to provide organisations with the right tools (through training and capacity building) to engage in EU affairs (for example, the Euclid Network), coordinating policy positions and channelling them (Social Platform) as well as providing opportunities for CSOs to increase connections with similar organisations, access to resources (for example, the European Economic and Social Committees and "*Maisons de l'Europe*") and consultations (structured dialogues organised by Directorate Generals (DGs), Your Europe website, the Euclid Network website, the Euclid Network, the European Year of Citizens Alliance (EYCA), Friends of Europe Debating Europe, etc.).

As far as the services provided by those mechanisms are concerned, most of them seem to focus on provision of information and knowledge sharing as well as on developing networking/partnerships. Facilitation of dialogue and debate as well as advocacy/fundraising also constitutes common services provided. On the other hand, a more limited number of the mechanisms considered offer capacity building/training for CSOs and support/legal advice for citizens.

As far as the activities developed are concerned, most of the mechanisms considered provide general or specific information to citizens and CSOs, organise meetings and workshops where CSOs can meet and discuss as well as produce reports and policy papers on EU-related issues. A big share of mechanisms considered also organise conferences for

both citizens and CSOs, while a very limited number of those mechanisms promote engagement in EU matters through cultural activities.

2.3 Other relevant organisations/structures and the implemented initiatives mapped at EU level

Overall, more than half of EU-level organisations/structures mapped are EU-level networks/umbrella organisations representing national organisations (33%), and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (28%). Associations and foundations follow, representing, respectively, 12% of organisations developing EU-level initiatives in this field.

In terms of **services provided**, the great majority of the 150 EU-level organisations/initiatives mapped develop services focused mainly on ‘information/awareness raising/knowledge sharing’¹ (67%) and ‘networking/partnership/lobbying’ (43%). ‘Capacity building/training’ services, ‘advocacy/fundraising’ and ‘dialogue/debate’ activities also constitute an important share of the services provided (31%, 27% and 21% respectively).

Overall, **the aims and objectives** of EU-level initiatives implemented by the organisations/structures mapped can be divided into four main categories, namely:

- *To provide information, raise citizens’ awareness of different issues* – 40% of the organisations/structures mapped seem to share this specific objective. This category includes organisations/structures developing activities such as: research and awareness raising on specific issues (e.g. migration, economic governance, remembrance, EU rights, etc.), information services (e.g. hotlines, newspapers, radio programmes, etc.), remembrance activities, training, pedagogical materials for schools, etc.;
- *To provide advice/support to citizens in solving problems linked to the application of their rights* – 10% of the organisations/structures mapped seem to share this specific objective. This category includes organisations/structures providing advice and support to citizens on how to solve problems caused by the misapplication of EU law by public authorities, handling complaints, solving difficult legal cases, etc.;
- *To support citizens in expressing/communicating their views at EU-level* – 35% of the organisations/structures mapped seem to share this specific objective. This category includes organisations/structures developing activities such as: conferences/debates, advocacy activities that promote citizens’ or civil organisations’ interests vis-à-vis European and national policy makers, etc.;
- *To engage citizens in the policy-shaping process* – 33% of the organisations/structures mapped seem to share this specific objective. This category includes organisations that actively engage citizens, for example, through volunteering activities, community actions, study exchanges for young people, dialogue sessions with policy makers, or that empower citizens to launch their own initiatives at EU-level.

Regarding the **type of activities implemented**, EU-level organisations/structures mapped are extensively involved in the organisation of meetings/workshops (60%), the production of reports/policy papers (41%), and the organisation of debates/conferences (35%). To a lesser extent, EU-level organisations/structures are also involved in the organisation of campaigns (21%), the provision of information (e.g. newsletters, EU news, EU legislation) (18%), and the coordination of activities (17%). Cultural activities (ex. exhibitions, films, etc.), consultations (ex. interviews, focus groups, surveys...) and running a hotline constitute less than 11% of the activities of EU-level organisations/structures.

Finally, EU-level organisations/structures **target**, to a large extent, specific categories of citizens (43%) or “all citizens” (37%). It is interesting to note that 27% of these specific categories of citizens are young people and 11% are people involved in education (i.e.

¹ Note that organisations of campaigns such as awareness raising activities do not constitute the main type of activities of EU-level initiatives: only 19% of the initiatives develop such activities. Services thus concentrate more on overall awareness raising, via the production of reports and research/studies.

teachers, students/pupils, trainers, etc.). Seven per cent of the specific categories targeted are disadvantaged local communities (e.g. Roma, migrants, communities at risk of social exclusion, etc.) and 2% are women. These findings therefore indicate that, to some extent, the initiatives work closely with local communities and try to engage the very local, and young citizens in EU policies.

Public authorities and CSOs are the next most important target groups of the mapped organisations/structures after locals and young people'. Between 29% and 33% of the organisations/structures mapped target these two groups.

2.4 Organisations/structures and the implemented initiatives at national level

This section of the Report presents an overview of the organisations/structures mapped in the 15 Member States where focus groups were carried out (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom). More detailed information, on the organisations/structures and initiatives mapped at national level, is presented in Technical Annex 1, as well as in the national reports presented in Technical Annex 2. The analysis shows that there are some national differences in the types of services provided by the organisations mapped, their aims, as well as the target groups reached.

Overall, approximately two-thirds of national-level organisations/structures mapped consist of associations (31%) and NGOs (26%). These are followed by foundations and network organisations which represent between 13% and 17% of the organisations/structures mapped at national level.

As far as the types of services delivered by the organisations/structures mapped, the majority of them (in all Member States) focus on providing services related to “information/awareness raising/knowledge sharing” (80%). Fewer organisations focus on this type of service in Italy, the Netherlands and Estonia. Organisations/structures focusing on “dialogue and debates” services are implemented by 51% of the organisations/structures mapped at national level, especially in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom while fewer organisations/structures focus on this type of service in Estonia and Bulgaria.

“Networking/partnership/lobbying” services are developed by 39% of the organisations/structures mapped at national level, especially in Estonia and the United Kingdom, while fewer organisations/structures focus on this type of service in Denmark and Poland. “Capacity building/training” services are provided by 38% of the mapped organisations/structures, mostly in the United Kingdom, Poland and Hungary, while they are scarcely present in Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

“Support and legal advice” services are developed by 15% of the organisations/structures mapped at national level and are well-developed in the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Hungary. Organisations providing this type of service have not been identified in other Member States. Finally, “advocacy/fundraising” activities are implemented by 22% of the organisations/structures mapped at national level, and are particularly developed in the United Kingdom.

Concerning the aims of the mapped organisations/structures², “providing information/guidance and raise awareness of citizens on different issues” is a common aim for organisations/structures across all Member States (53% of the organisations/structures mapped at national level). Fewer organisations focus on this type of aim in the Netherlands and Greece. “Engaging citizens in the policy-shaping process /civic participation” is mostly addressed by 44% of organisations/structures, particularly in Romania and Poland, while few organisations/structures in Denmark, Hungary, Estonia and France seem to focus on this aim.

² Note that these figures must be interpreted with caution as the aims are expressed in qualitative terms and therefore are not easily quantifiable. In addition, in some cases, information about the exact aims of the organisations is missing or unclear on the organisations/structures' website. Therefore, these figures should be interpreted as general trends rather than as exact statistics.

“Support to citizens and NGOs in expressing their views at the national/EU-level” is an aim addressed by 21% of the organisations/structures mapped in the Member States, particularly in the Netherlands, while addressed to a lesser extent in Bulgaria, France and Poland (and not found as an aim in Denmark). Finally, “support/advice to citizens in solving problems linked to the application of their rights” is an aim for 16% of the organisations/structures mapped and commonly found amongst organisations active in Romania and Greece. This aim is addressed to a lesser extent in Denmark and Belgium (and not found as an aim amongst the mapped organisations in France, the Netherlands and Poland).

The majority (57%) of the mapped organisations/structures target all citizens (with lower levels in Portugal and Italy where specific categories of citizens are targeted by a significant proportion of mapped organisations/structures). CSOs/NGOs are targeted by 39% of organisations/structures, especially in Estonia and Poland, and to a lesser extent in Denmark. Specific categories of citizens are targeted by 25% of the organisations/structures, especially in Poland, and to a lesser extent in Greece (specific categories of citizens were not targeted at all by the mapped organisations in France and Germany). Amongst the specific categories of citizens targeted, 51% are young people in general, 28% are people in the education system (i.e. teachers, students/pupils, teachers in training) and 17% are disadvantaged local communities (e.g. Roma, migrants, communities at risk of social exclusion, etc.).

Regarding the **type of activities implemented**, national-level organisations/structures mapped are extensively involved in the organisation of “meetings/workshops” (56%) and of “debates/conferences” (47%), as well as in providing information to citizens (48%). Activities such as the organisation of campaigns, production of reports/policy papers or coordination of activities, still represent a significant proportion (between 30% and 36%) of activities developed by national-level organisations/structures. In addition, “cultural activities” (e.g. exhibitions, films) are developed by 20% of national-level organisations. Finally, “consultations” (e.g. interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.), “hotline” and “town-twinning” activities represent only 10% or less of their activities.

Overall, national-level organisations/structures seem to be more active in diversifying their types of activities than EU-level organisations/structures, which tend to focus mainly on “meetings/workshops”, “debates/conferences” and the production of reports/policy papers.

3 Needs assessment

The needs assessment undertaken as part of the study aims to:

- Present the needs of citizens and CSOs, which have been identified as part of the research through desk research, interviews, focus groups, the online survey and a stakeholder workshop;
- Review the extent to which any of these needs are already (in part) met by existing structures. In particular, this includes a review of the mandate, services and activities of the 29 mechanisms considered to be providing services and activities which are similar to those which have been initially attributed to the future EHCS, in terms of acting as a resource centre, providing advice on EU rights, fostering civic participation and providing a space for meetings and exchanges, for both citizens and CSOs;
- Identify any unmet needs which should and could be addressed. This includes considerations as to whether each unmet need is relevant, important and whether it can actually be addressed at EU level, in particular by improving existing structures and/or establishing a new structure, as the one suggested for the future EHCS.

This section is solely focused on assessing the current needs and hence not intended to elaborate any future action which could be considered as a result. The latter is done in section 4, which includes considerations on possible actions to meet any needs currently unmet and which provides a thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of different scenarios (including the status quo, the strengthening of existing structures and the establishment of a new structure in line with European Parliament budgetary commentary). The analysis provided in section 4 also explores issues linked to the proportionality, legal basis and EU added value for the scenarios considered. Conclusions on the best scenario to follow in order to address the outstanding needs are subsequently provided in section 5 of this Report.

This section first reviews the specific needs of citizens, followed by a review of the needs identified by CSOs. These two “target groups” are presented separately due the different nature of their needs. Whereas citizens’ needs centre on information, participation in policy dialogues and involvement in policy-shaping processes, several of the needs of CSOs are of a practical nature, linked to sharing of resources and knowledge. As for citizens, CSOs’ needs also relate to participation in policy dialogue and policy-shaping process (in order to represent citizens’ interests and advocate for new policies).

Therefore, since the inception phase, the methodology considered by the study took into account this difference by developing specific tools for each category (i.e. specifically targeted focus groups and surveys).

As described in detail in section 1 above, the needs assessment has been informed by various data collection sources and exercises. The key findings and conclusions on the needs assessments, which will also seek to identify any ‘unmet’ needs, are presented at the end of this section.

3.1 Needs of citizens

The research undertaken to explore the needs of citizens, which included desk research, interviews, focus groups and an online survey revealed that overall, citizens expressed a need for the following:

- **Basic knowledge about the EU**

The study showed that citizens first and foremost need improved basic education and information on EU matters, in terms of what the EU does, what their rights are and how EU policies and legislation may affect their daily lives. Only by improving the basic knowledge of citizens is their interest in and engagement with EU topics likely to increase.

- **Understandable and user-friendly information about the EU and citizens’ EU rights**

In tandem with the need for increased knowledge, citizens want information sources to be more user-friendly and form a more 'mainstreamed' offer. Especially when citizens are using online EU information sources; they consider these to be confusing, difficult to navigate and understand.

- **Improved access to information / signposting to information of direct relevance to citizens (this could be country specific)**

The information gathered shows that what seems to be mainly needed is better signposting of the existing information and advice services. Currently, many citizens do not know how to access or where to find information which could be relevant to them.

- **Improved access to advice and other forms of EU assistance (concerning their EU rights)**

While considered useful, awareness of existing structures providing advice to citizens is low overall, and citizens are unclear as to which structure provides what kind of advice. The visibility of these is low amongst the citizens involved in consultations in the context of this study.

- **Local / national access points**

Another important issues arising from the focus groups is the need for 'local' access points, preferably in the physical proximity of citizens or, alternatively, facilitated through local or itinerant actors, for easy access to information, advice and participation opportunities. Similarly, citizens in general prefer to communicate with policy makers and engage in policy shaping at local and regional level, focusing on policies which influence their everyday life.

- **Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers**

While citizens feel that it is important to them to express their opinions and ideas to policy makers, they often do not know how, or do not have access to opportunities to do so.

- **Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes**

Citizens consulted as part of the study expressed a need for more opportunities to influence EU policies, in particular through more active engagement in policy-shaping processes. They considered that such processes should, in particular, be offered at local/national level.

- **Reducing 'mistrust' in EU policy makers**

A precondition to an improved civic engagement is increased trust in the system, the policy makers responsible for developing policies as well as, in some cases, in CSOs implementing initiatives in this field. There is therefore a need to bring citizens and policy makers closer, improving the transparency of the policy-shaping process. While it is not possible to address this need as part of this study, it is important to make reference to it as it was strongly voiced during the focus groups and it is firmly interlinked to other needs presented in this section.

- **Accommodating new forms of civic participation**

Citizens increasingly express a need for new forms of "policy-shaping", through new forms of civic participation/engagement, which are less "traditional" and less organised. There is an overall need to accommodate these new forms of citizens' expression, also in the EU sphere.

Each of these needs has been further elaborated in the individual subsections below, followed by an analysis of the extent to which the need is addressed by existing structures (and can successfully be addressed).

3.1.1 Basic knowledge about the EU

Need identified

The latest Eurobarometer³ found that a growing majority of Europeans continue to say that they do not know their rights as citizens of the EU (55%, +2 since spring 2013). The focus groups confirmed the Eurobarometer results, showing that amongst participants there is a very low level of knowledge of the EU, its policies and legislation as well as of the rights linked to EU citizenship. Participants considered that this was mainly due to an overall lack of “education” about the EU, i.e. both through formal and informal learning (Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands), as well as a lack of information in national media (or national media consistently ‘scapegoating’ the EU rather than presenting its merits – like for example, in France and the UK).

Focus group participants in all the Member States agreed that it is important for citizens to be informed about EU legislation and policies which affect them, as well as to receive advice on how to solve practical issues linked to the application of their EU rights. There was therefore a general consensus over these issues. An overview of the focus group participants’ views on the statements (per Member State) is provided in Technical Annex 3.

Citizens participating in the focus groups expressed an overall need to know more about the EU, its policies and legislation, as well as about their rights linked to EU citizenship (France, Hungary Czech Republic, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and the UK). This confirms the results of a recent Eurobarometer survey⁴, which show that an outright majority of EU citizens would like to know more about their rights as EU citizens (59%). While this proportion had decreased almost continuously since spring 2010 (from 72% down to 59% in spring 2013), it has now remained stable since spring 2013.

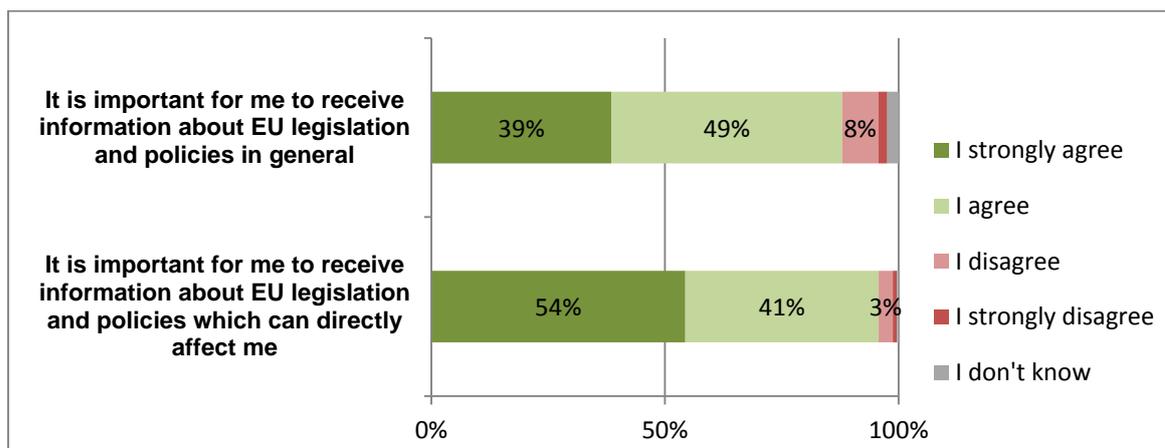
The focus groups showed that this need is particularly strong if such information concerns matters that are of direct interest to EU citizens as well as taking into account the impact of EU developments on the national context (Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Poland). For example, changes in consumer protection legislation, roaming fees, etc. In Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal, citizens participating in the focus groups also expressed a need for an improved “EU affairs” education and training of citizens, starting within schools, going beyond a description of the mere history of the EU. In France, focus group participants also expressed the need to be informed “ex ante” about EU policies and legislation (i.e. still at proposal stage and not after negotiation/adoption).

The final results of the citizens’ survey confirm this trend, showing that it is important for them to receive information about EU legislation/policies in general (88% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with this statement) and, in particular, information on EU legislation/policies which can directly affect them (95%).

³ Standard Eurobarometer 80, Autumn 2013, Public Opinion In The European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_first_en.pdf

⁴ Standard Eurobarometer 80, Autumn 2013, Public Opinion In The European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_first_en.pdf

Figure 3.1 Importance of receiving EU-related information



In some focus groups, citizens saw information as the first step to getting engaged in civic participation. Focus group participants indicated that the degree to which citizens will become active in EU affairs will therefore depend on the extent to which they feel informed about the EU and their rights (Romania, Italy, Portugal).

However, in some Member States (for example in Poland), citizens participating in the focus groups commented that the lack of knowledge about the EU and EU rights directly contributed to an overall lack of interest of citizens in EU affairs (including a lack of interest in receiving information on the EU and advice on EU rights).

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures⁵

The need for basic knowledge about the EU is addressed by more than half of the 29 mechanisms considered, as well as by the EU institutions themselves, for example through the Europa website. Existing structures therefore are providing citizens with enough opportunities to access basic information on the EU. The problem is rather that citizens appear to encounter difficulties in finding the information (see also section 3.1.2 below).

Perhaps more importantly, the extent to which basic knowledge can be provided by existing structures, including EU institutions, remains limited if, in the Member States, insufficient efforts are made to ‘educate’ citizens on the EU, both through formal and informal education, and when national media coverage of the EU continues to be negative overall, and often misinforming citizens. For example, according to a Eurydice report⁶ on citizenship education (the subject most likely to cover the EU), although citizenship education was part of the national curricula in all countries, the way in which it was integrated (as a standalone compulsory subject or as an optional part of another subject or learning area), at which level (primary or secondary) and for what length varied greatly, for example from one year in Bulgaria to the full 12 years in France. The way in which national media depicts the EU also affects both the level of knowledge of citizens and their perception of the EU. In a recent article by Benjamin Hawkins, the author confirms that ‘media framing’ influences public attitudes towards the EU and that the way in which five UK newspapers reported on the EU Treaty reform process (2003–2007) contributed to the feeling of separation expressed by British citizens⁷.

⁵ The analysis in this subsection and in all the similar subsections is based on the 29 mechanisms considered to be providing services and activities which are similar to those which have been initially attributed to the future EHCSEHCS, in terms of acting as a resource centre, providing advice on EU rights, fostering civic participation and providing a space for meetings and exchanges, for both citizens and CSOs

⁶ Citizenship Education in Europe, 31 May 2012, see: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/139EN_HI.pdf

⁷ Nation, Separation and Threat: An Analysis of British Media Discourses on the European Union Treaty Reform Process, July 2012, Benjamin Hawkins

3.1.2 Understandable and user-friendly information about the EU and citizens' EU rights

Need identified

EU citizens participating in the focus groups pointed out that the information currently available on the EU, its policies and legislation was neither user-friendly nor easily accessible (Hungary, Romania). The European Commission website, for example, was considered unattractive for a “modern viewer”. It is difficult to find relevant information which is not for specialists and not written in EU jargon (Poland). Similarly, in France, focus group participants thought that the European Commission website is too complex to understand.

In Portugal, citizens participating in the focus group indicated that they often do not know what to look for and the information available is perceived as too complex in terms of language, and mainly targeting well-educated citizens rather than ordinary citizens. Bulgarian citizens participating in the focus groups also thought that the information provided was not sufficiently adapted to the national context. In the UK, focus group participants highlighted some of the inadequate methods used in outreach, and the overuse of traditional ways of information sharing – such as newspapers, newsletters and television– which do not achieve the desired effect.

In some countries (UK and France), the role of the media in providing information on EU policies was (negatively) highlighted by focus group participants. In the UK, for example, participants emphasised the effects of negative media coverage on EU issues. Focus group participants regard the information received through different media channels as generally unhelpful, confusing and often highly negative. The written media portrays an unfavourable image of the EU, creating ambivalence and even resentment amongst businesses and general public.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Almost half of the 29 mechanisms mapped, aim to provide understandable and user-friendly information, for example because their website or other information materials specifically focus on informing citizens, on guiding citizens with specific queries/problems, or because the organisations provide certain information and advice services to citizens. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the information they provide is indeed *perceived* as understandable and user-friendly by users. Also, several existing information sources do seem to assume some level of previous involvement and knowledge of EU matters, thus making them less suitable for ‘novices’.

The Europa website, while providing a wealth of exhaustive information, was considered as very difficult to navigate by many participants in the focus groups. A major overhaul of the website is expected to address these issues, as its key priority is to make the site more accessible to the general public. The information provided by some stakeholders is occasionally quite technical and might therefore be difficult to understand by citizens who are not already engaged in EU matters (for example, Gov2U, Generation 112, etc.). Other organisations/initiatives also provide information to citizens, but only related to very specific topics (for example, the “Citizens’ Dialogues” focused on the economic crisis and the future of Europe, etc.). In other cases (for example European Network of National Civil Society Associations (ENNA), Euclid, etc.) general information targeting citizens is not provided, as those organisations/initiatives are more focused on CSOs’ needs. When reviewing the type of information provided, Your Europe Advice and the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) seem to respond best to this need.

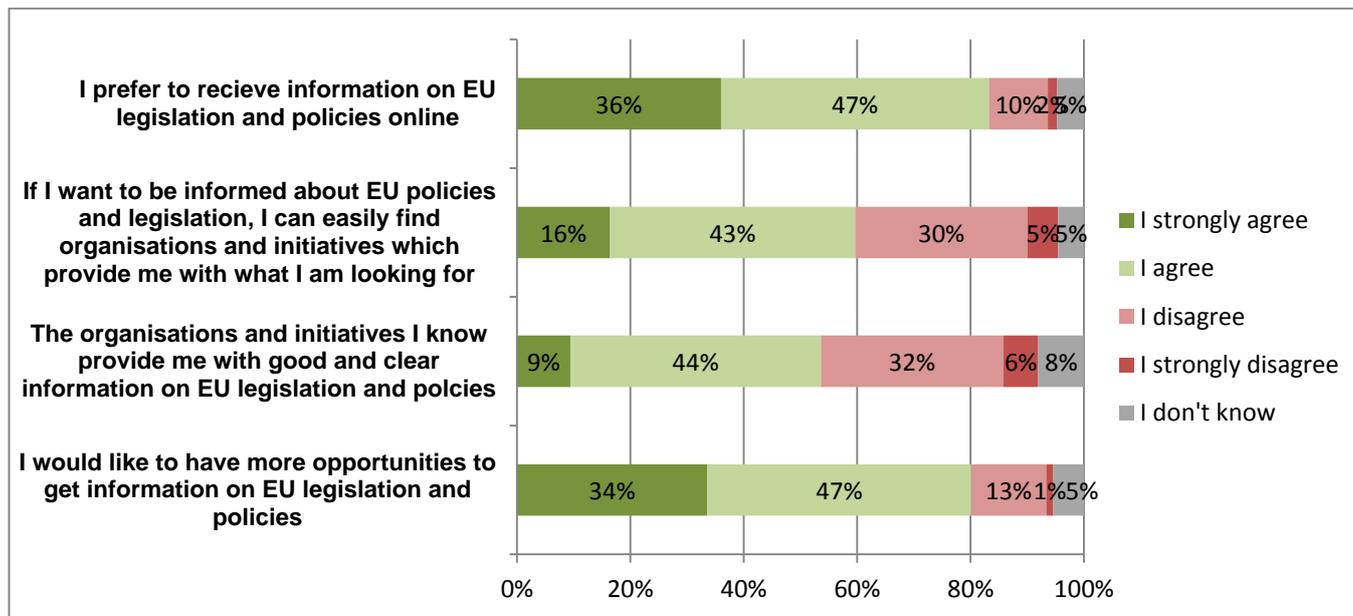
3.1.3 Improved access to information / signposting to information of direct relevance to citizens

Need identified

In the majority of the Member States, focus group participants indicated that it is not easy for citizens to find organisations and initiatives which provide good and clear information on EU legislation and policies. Exceptions were noted in Germany, Poland and the UK, where focus group participants indicated that information of direct relevance to them is easy to find.

The final survey results show a slightly different situation. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, the respondents to the survey had a more positive view about the organisations/structures currently available, compared with the citizens involved in the focus groups. The analysis of the survey's results show that the majority of respondents (between 53% and 59%) seem to easily find organisations/initiatives that provide them with accurate information on EU policies/legislation. Respondents would also welcome, to a great extent (81%), additional opportunities to get more information on EU policies/legislation, and preferably online (83%).

Figure 3.2 Citizens' opinion on access to information on EU policies/legislation



When looking at the national results, however, the answers to the survey indicate that, at least in some Member States, problems in accessing information/signposting to information of direct relevance to citizens still exist. For example, the majority of survey respondents in Greece (52%) indicated that they cannot easily identify organisations and initiatives which provide them with information about EU policies and legislation. In the other countries, the situation seems to be more positive, even if quite high proportions of negative replies can be noted in the Netherlands, Italy and Germany (50, 46 and 45% respectively).

Also, respondents from Italy, Greece, and Portugal express more doubts about the extent to which organisations and initiatives they know provide them with clear information on EU legislation and policies (54, 53 and 51% respectively).

Finally, the majority of citizens interviewed in Italy and Poland (through street interviews) mentioned that they are not aware of initiatives and organisations currently supporting citizens in engaging in civic participation and providing information on EU rights. More information on the results of street interviews is provided in Technical Annex 4.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Half of the 29 main EU-level mechanisms/structures mapped, focus on providing information/signposting to information sources and services which are of direct relevance to citizens. The latter seem to be mainly linked to topics such as working in Europe and moving around the EU, legal assistance, education and studying, quality of life, environment, etc. It is therefore assumed that citizens should be able to easily find information relevant to their needs (mostly online or through local/national access points of EU-level structures, as highlighted below).

The survey responses and the focus groups, however, seem to suggest that there are still some difficulties for citizens. The survey shows that, at least in some countries (Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Portugal), as mentioned above, organisations and initiatives providing information on the EU are not easy to find or are perceived as not

providing clear information on EU legislation and policies. Citizens participating in the focus groups also indicated that they feel confused/lost when looking for information on the EU.

The majority of the interviewees in Italy (street interviews) stated that it would be useful to have a support centre/bureau, which would help citizens in engaging more in EU affairs. In Poland, only nine out of 27 respondents fully supported the creation of a support centre/bureau, which would help citizens in engaging more in EU affairs. Most of the citizens interviewed stressed the importance of having such a centre/bureau in their city to improve its accessibility. More information on the results of street interviews is provided in Technical Annex 4.

While some expected developments will contribute to improving access and signposting to information, problems are still likely to exist in the absence of action specifically aimed at streamlining the information available and improving referrals to citizens. As already discussed under 3.1.2 above, citizens want a more 'mainstreamed' offer, which may in part be addressed by the revamping of the Europa website and the new common EU identity. Other existing structures, including those which do not (yet) focus on this, could also be encouraged to further profile themselves as information providers and/or signpost citizens to other relevant sources of information, particularly as part of their websites and other online tools.

3.1.4 Improved access to advice and other forms of EU assistance (concerning their EU rights)

Need identified

With the exception of Portugal and the UK, in the majority of focus groups participants indicated that there were not enough organisations and initiatives supporting citizens in solving their practical problems. In all the Member States, with the exception of Bulgaria, focus group participants agreed with the fact that citizens are not sufficiently aware of organisations and initiatives which support them in solving their practical problems. This lack of awareness is thus most likely one of the main reasons why participants consider that there are insufficient organisations providing such services.

The survey showed that, respondents believe it is important for them to receive advice on how to solve issues linked to their EU rights (93%) as shown in Figure 3.3. However, although respondents are, to a great extent, aware of their EU rights (61%), they are not always able to easily identify organisations/initiatives to help them in solving practical problems in relation to their EU rights (43% stated having encountered some difficulties). Overall, they would also like to receive more support on how to solve problems linked to their EU rights (about 75%) and have a slight preference for receiving this support directly from EU institutions (53%).

Figure 3.3 Importance of receiving advice

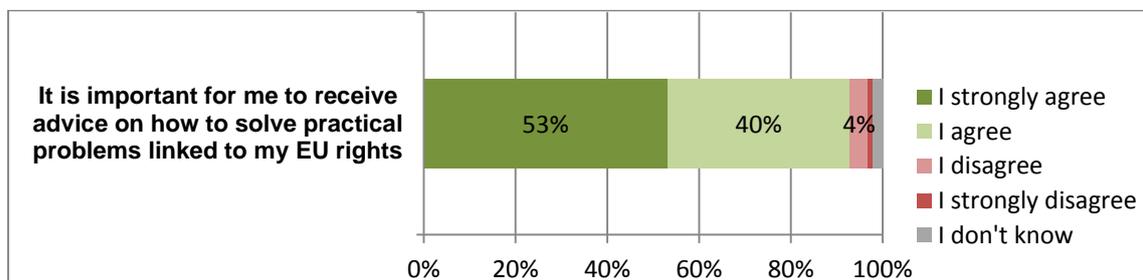
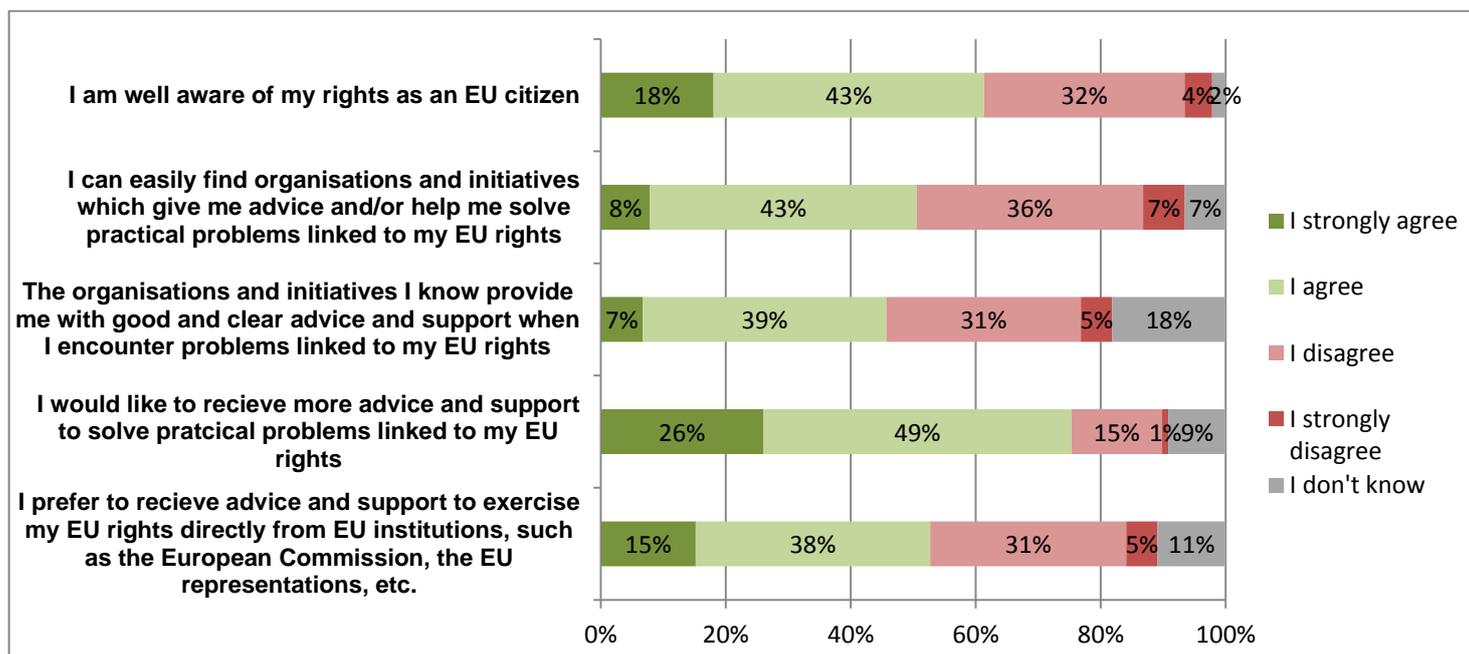


Figure 3.4 Citizens' opinion on access to advice and other forms of EU assistance



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

There are a number of organisations amongst the 29 mechanisms identified, whose mandate is to improve access to advice and other forms of assistance, some with a general and others with a more specific (thematic) focus. These are, for example, Solvit, Your Europe Advice, EU Rights' Clinic, AIRE centre, etc. In the majority of cases, these organisations/initiatives use hotlines or means of online contact for citizens to speak to specialised experts (lawyers in some cases) who will help them solve their practical issues. In most cases, national contact points and language options are available to facilitate contact. In addition, the EDICs, while not providing advice on specific matters directly, have local presences in several cities in each Member State and can refer citizens to these more specific services.

On the basis of the above, it would appear that the need for improved access to advice and other forms of EU assistance is largely covered by existing structures, although there would certainly be benefit in further increasing their visibility, as not all citizens are aware of them.

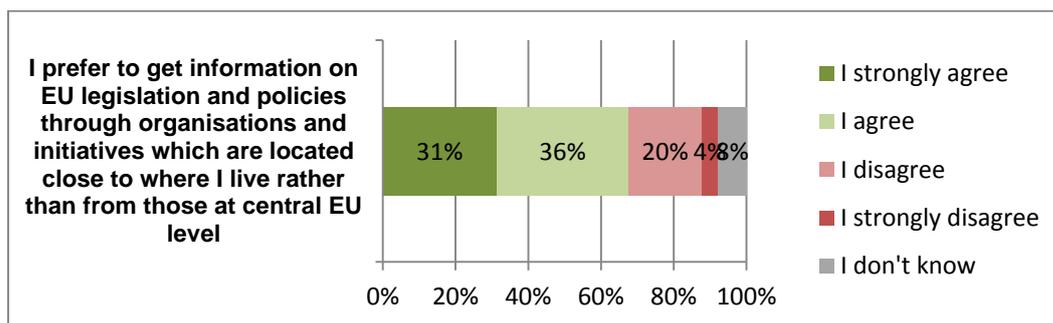
3.1.5 Local / national access points

Need identified

Citizens participating in the focus groups indicated that information provided at local level is the most accessible to them, especially when it is provided by local CSOs or local authorities (Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands and Romania). In Greece, proximity was stressed by the participants as an important need for citizens in accessing information and advice, because if citizens cannot find a solution to a practical problem via Internet sources, they will need to go somewhere close to home and talk to someone about it. An exception to the need for more proximity was Germany, where participants stated that they prefer to search for information about EU issues by approaching EU institutions (websites, Members of European Parliament (MEPs)) rather than local CSOs. Distance was also perceived as a problem by some focus group participants, especially in bigger Member States where citizens think that EU services, such as the EDICs, are located primarily in larger cities which can still be more than a few hours away for citizens living in remoter areas.

The majority of survey respondents (67%) confirmed that local information services are preferred to those provided at central EU level as shown by Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5 Where to get information about the EU

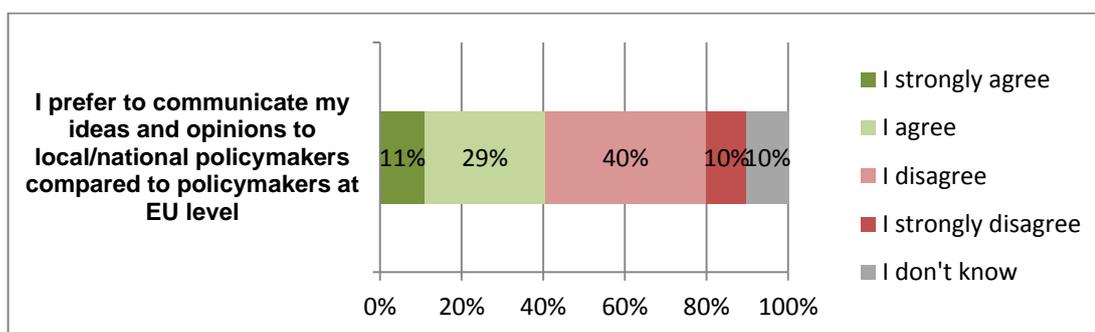


Proximity is also important when citizens wish to actively engage in policy-shaping processes, as these are considered to be more effective and relevant when taking place at local or national levels. For example, engaging in participatory democracy at EU level was considered as less important and too distant from the citizens’ realities by focus group participants in Czech Republic, Estonia and Poland. In some cases, focus group participants did not feel they were even able to influence EU policies (for example, in Italy). An analysis of the initiatives launched to date under the ECI, showed that when citizens engage in EU policy shaping, they tend to focus on issues affecting their everyday life, with initiatives being launched in the field of education, environmental protection, health, and food security. Other areas of concern for citizens include gender equality, the protection of rights (such as electoral rights) and other social issues (such as abortion).

The survey results showed that respondents seem to be actively engaged at local level, as the majority of respondents seem to be effectively engaged in local initiatives around EU topics.

Concerning dialogue with policy makers, the extent to which citizens prefer to communicate with those responsible for developing policies at local level is unclear. The final survey results in fact show that respondents seem to prefer to communicate with EU-level policy makers (50%) rather than with local/national policy makers (40%) as illustrated in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6 Communication with local/national vs. EU-level policy makers



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Around one-third of the 29 main mechanisms identified offer local/national access points, particularly those which aim to provide information to citizens (such as the EDICs), advice and other forms of assistance (Solvit, etc.) or those which represent EU institutions in the Member States (EU Representations). The EDICs have a very good geographical coverage, whereas other EU-led organisations are mainly based in capital and other large cities. The EU Representations are increasingly known, as indicated by the citizens participating in the focus groups, as places where information on the EU can be obtained. However, many participants did not consider them sufficiently accessible. Already the high security measures in place in most EU Representations discourage people from entering the buildings. Also, the opening times of most representations present a problem as citizens are not able to access the structures outside working hours (Portugal).

Beyond the structures implemented by, or on behalf of, EU institutions, few other organisations have a physical presence in each Member State. For example, Eunet coordinates a network of European centres or houses in different Member States⁸. The latter implement similar activities on the ground: from the organisation of discussions around a topic, study tours, to meetings with policy makers, etc.

Umbrella organisations and networks, in most cases, ensure a presence through their national members, which overall ensure a good reach locally/nationally, but which do not necessarily act as points of entry for citizens. Even fewer of the 29 mapped mechanisms provide opportunities to directly communicate with policy makers and engage in policy shaping at a local or national level and those that do, do not cover all Member States. For example, the European Civic Forum organises advocacy campaigns (through the collection of signatures) while the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) supports citizens with the procedures for launching local and national ECIs (however, this activity was not part of the European Civil Society House project implemented by the organisation). This need could thus be further addressed.

When looking at the broader mapping (an additional 150 organisations at EU level and 204 at national level), 35% of the organisations/structures mapped at EU level and 44% of national organisations/structures support citizens in expressing their views. However, the vast majority of these develop advocacy activities that promote citizens' or civil organisations' interests, vis-à-vis European and national policy makers, rather than creating an opportunity for citizens to meet with policy makers directly at local level. The latter are therefore a very limited minority.

3.1.6 Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers

Need identified

A recent Eurobarometer⁹ showed that two-thirds of Europeans consider that their voice does not count in the EU (66%, -1 percentage point since spring 2013). The proportion of Europeans considering that their voice does count in the EU thus represents less than three Europeans in ten (29%). The Member States in which citizens feel most strongly that their voice does not count are Greece, Cyprus and Spain.

The views of focus group participants on whether it is important for citizens to be able to communicate their ideas and opinions to policy makers are varied across the Member States. Whereas in several focus groups citizens agreed that it was, indeed, important, in others, the idea of communicating ideas and opinions to EU-level policy makers was considered to be 'detached' from the participants' lives and realities. In addition, focus group participants overall, were sceptical about the usefulness of a dialogue with those in charge of policy making at EU level (France, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic). This might again be linked to the lack of information and awareness of the EU amongst citizens and the fact that uninformed citizens may have little to communicate.

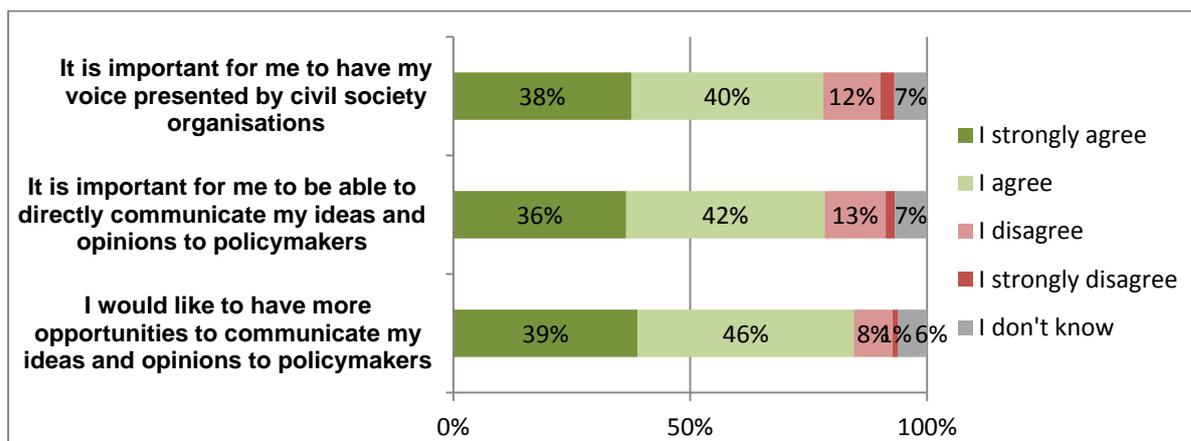
When asked about the method to communicate with policy makers, most of the national focus groups (with the exception of Germany, Hungary and the UK) indicated that the most effective method was through direct contacts.

The final survey results, illustrated in Figure 3.7, show that the majority of the respondents find it important to have their voice represented by CSOs as well as to directly communicate their opinions to policy makers (78% of them agreed and strongly agreed with these statements). They also would like to have more opportunities to communicate with policy makers (85%).

⁸ CZ, CY, DK, DE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, MT, NL, NO, AT, PT, SL, SE, SK, TR, UK

⁹ Standard Eurobarometer 80, Autumn 2013, Public Opinion In The European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_first_en.pdf

Figure 3.7 Citizens' opinion on communication with policy makers

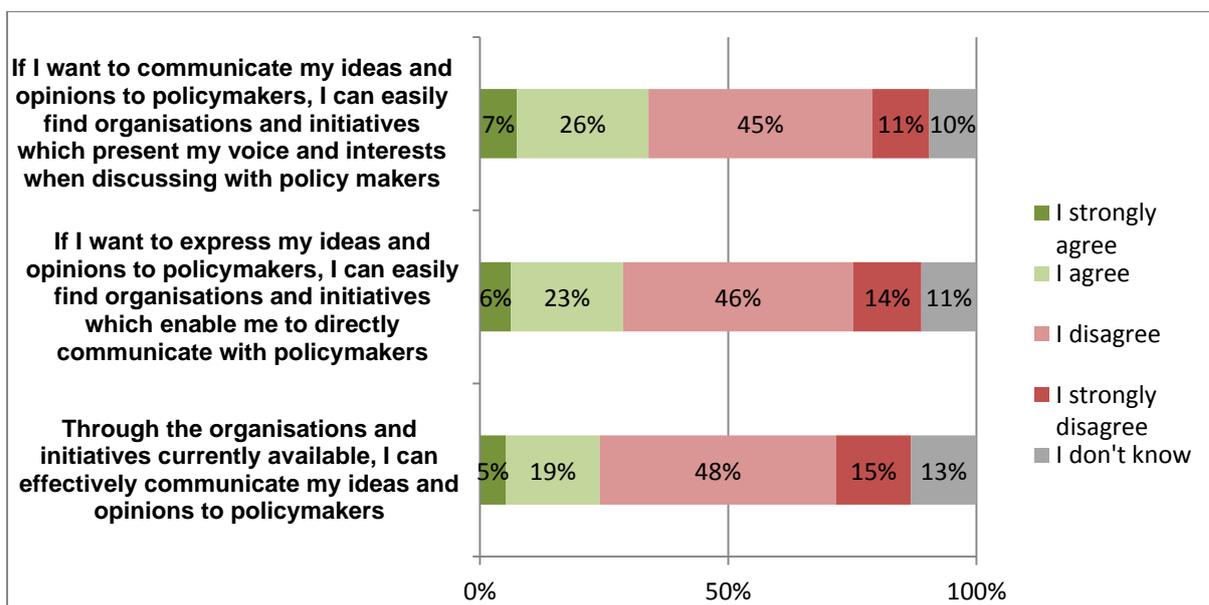


In the majority of the Member States, focus groups participants indicated that it was not easy for citizens to find organisations and initiatives which support them in communicating their ideas and opinions to policy makers, which was mainly due to a lack of awareness of existing opportunities.

In Italy and France, for example, focus group participants felt that they were not aware of, and could not easily find initiatives and organisations which support them in communicating their ideas. In addition, not all participants were satisfied with the organisations/ structures providing opportunities to voice their concerns and interests. In Bulgaria, for example, citizens participating in the focus group said that policy makers did not undertake the necessary actions to enable an effective communication with citizens. In Greece, focus group participants felt that even if citizens were more aware of opportunities to communicate with policy makers, the 'language' and jargon that EU policy makers used was considered too alien for Greek citizens (even for highly educated ones) to be able to engage in dialogue with them.

The final survey results overall confirm the results of the focus groups, as shown in Figure 3.8. Indeed, respondents seem to be rather negative about whether it is easy to find organisations/initiatives that represent their voice or that enable them to communicate with policy makers. They also largely thought that initiatives currently available do not enable them to communicate effectively with policy makers.

Figure 3.8 Citizens' satisfaction with current organisations/initiatives that support them in the communication process



The vast majority of citizens interviewed in Italy (street interviews) mentioned that they were unaware of initiatives and organisations currently supporting citizens in engaging in dialogue (with policy makers or, more generally, in brainstorming and debating activities). Only one respondent mentioned that he was aware of some EU Representations in Italy but had never used their services. Similarly the majority of interviewees in Poland were not aware of such organisations. Three citizens mentioned being aware of EU Representations but they did not know the role of European Public Spaces. Some interviewees also mentioned an awareness of the Citizens' Dialogues (though they never participated in the sessions organised).

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Around one-third of the 29 mechanisms considered, provide opportunities for citizens to express their views at EU level. The "Citizens' Dialogues" is a good example of an initiative in this field, as it provides citizens with an opportunity to meet with EU policy makers (mainly commissioners) and ask them questions which are relevant to their everyday life. The events are organised in different cities across the EU. "Your Voice in Europe" provides information to citizens on how to contact local MEPs or representatives at the Committee of the Regions or at the European Economic and Social Committee. The European Parliament Information Offices offer an overview of the MEPs' work, together with their contact details. This is intended to increase the transparency of the work of members of Parliament, bringing their work closer to citizens. In addition, organisations such as Friends of Europe offer the chance to submit questions, which will be asked to EU policy makers. The answers of policy makers are recorded and posted on the Friends of Europe's website. It is also possible to join virtual debates, commenting on the answers provided by the politicians.

When looking at the broader mapping (an additional 150 organisations at EU level and 204 at national level), 35% of the organisations/structures mapped at EU level, and 44% of national organisations/structures support citizens in expressing their views. However, the vast majority of these develop advocacy activities that promote citizens' or civil organisations' interests, vis-à-vis European and national policy makers rather than creating the possibility for citizens to communicate their opinions and ideas directly to the policy makers. The latter are therefore a very limited minority. For example, Live+Gov¹⁰ is an initiative enabling citizens to express their needs to government by using a variety of mobile sensing technologies available on their smartphones. Citizens may contact the authorities via smartphones, either to report issues and make suggestions, or to retrieve context-aware information.

Hence, although efforts are being made by existing structures to involve citizens in communicating with policy makers, their reach appears to be limited and further efforts could be envisaged to improve communication opportunities for citizens, also in relation to their accessibility (e.g. use of language) and level of awareness, as discussed under sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.5 above.

When looking at broader communication and dialogue (i.e. not only with policy makers but, more generally, in debate and brainstorming), the majority of the citizens interviewed in Italy (street interviews) stated that it would be useful to establish a user-friendly space for brainstorming, ideas exchange and networking. However, they also mentioned some conditions to the effective implementation of such a place. For example, some interviewees mentioned the importance of having such space established in their own city. Another indicated that the topics discussed should not be too broad, but tailored to the needs of citizens participating. Other interviewees in Italy, however, were sceptical about the idea of having such a space. In Poland, opinions on the establishment of a user-friendly space for brainstorming, ideas exchange and networking were more critical, as only a minority of respondents supported the idea. More information on the results of street interviews is provided in Technical Annex 4.

¹⁰ <http://liveandgov.eu/>

3.1.7 Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes

Need identified

A recent Eurobarometer¹¹ also showed that the majority of citizens (57%) think that the best way to make their voices heard is by voting in European elections. The study's survey results showed that the great majority of respondents (87%) agree that that voting in EU elections is important; 83% of the respondents voted in previous EU elections (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7).

Focus group participants in all 15 Member States agreed that it was important for citizens to be able to influence EU policies. The discussions showed that citizens are aware of EU Parliamentary elections as a way to influence EU policies. Focus group participants in Czech Republic, Italy and Poland stated that they considered voting to be the main instrument to influence EU policy. However, the discussions held in the focus groups showed that this is not the case in every Member State. In Portugal, voting in EU elections was considered by participants as the most well-known way to influence EU policy but not the most effective. Focus group participants stated that elected politicians often do not implement their programmes and are under the influence of lobbies. They thus have the impression that the decision-making process in Brussels is not transparent and that the influence of interest groups hinders the democratic process.

In other Member States (Greece, France, UK) focus group participants were sceptical whether voting is an effective way to influence policy shaping. This was mainly due to the perceived lack of transparency of the voting system (in which voters vote for parties instead of for individual candidates). In France, most of the focus group participants were disillusioned with the voting system. In the UK, there was a general lack of trust and interest in representative democracy at EU-level. Almost all of the participants are actively exercising their rights and responsibilities in local and national elections, yet when it comes to European level, most of them either had no interest, or the necessary information to feel obliged to vote in European elections.

In addition to voting in EU Parliamentary elections, citizens participating in the focus groups considered it important to be able to engage more actively in policy-shaping processes (Hungary, France and the UK) but felt that there were insufficient opportunities. In Italy, France and the UK, for example, participants were not aware of initiatives (both at EU and national level) enabling them to influence EU policies or the 'policy-shaping' process. In Portugal, focus group participants noted that initiatives supporting participation in policy shaping were missing at national and EU level, or were badly advertised. The ECI, one of the most important initiatives in this area, was generally not known about amongst focus group participants. The CSOs participating also confirmed that the ECI has not been sufficiently promoted in the Member States.

The final survey results, illustrated in Figures 3.9 and 3.10, show that the majority of citizens (84%) find it important to influence EU policies through direct participation and, overall, would like to have more opportunities to influence EU policies. Results, however, show a contradiction between the intentions and the actions. Indeed, survey results show that respondents do not participate in policy-shaping activities as actively as they participate in voting in EU elections, although the great majority firmly believe this is important. In fact, about 50% of them reported having signed a petition or to have been engaged in organisations promoting human rights, and only between 27% and 30% of respondents are active in a political party or in launching policy initiatives. Nevertheless, about 50% of respondents seem to be effectively engaged in local initiatives around EU topics.

¹¹ European Parliament Eurobarometer (EB79.5), 'ONE YEAR TO GO UNTIL THE 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS', http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2013/election/synth_finale_en.pdf

Figure 3.9 Needs of citizens concerning engagement and involvement in policy shaping

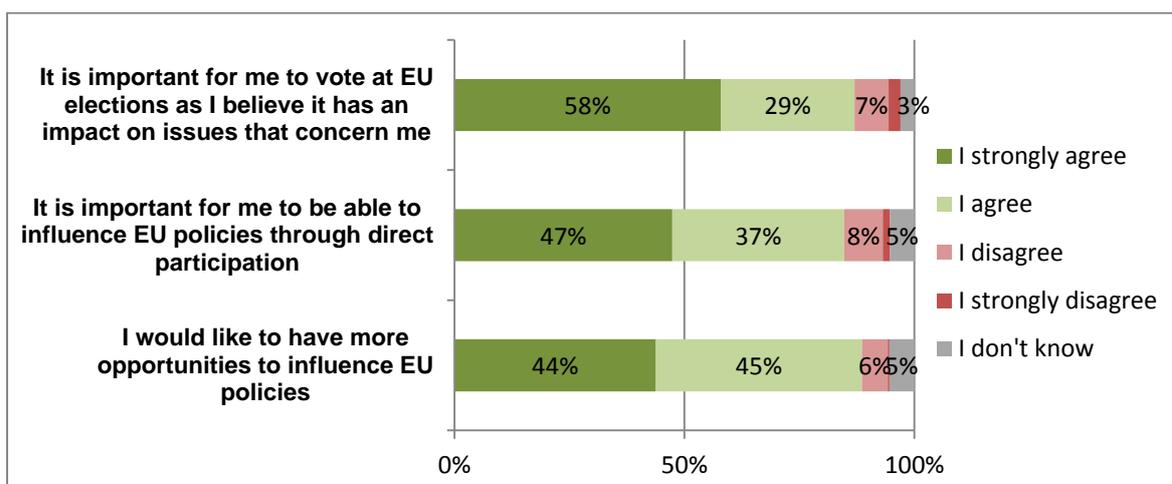
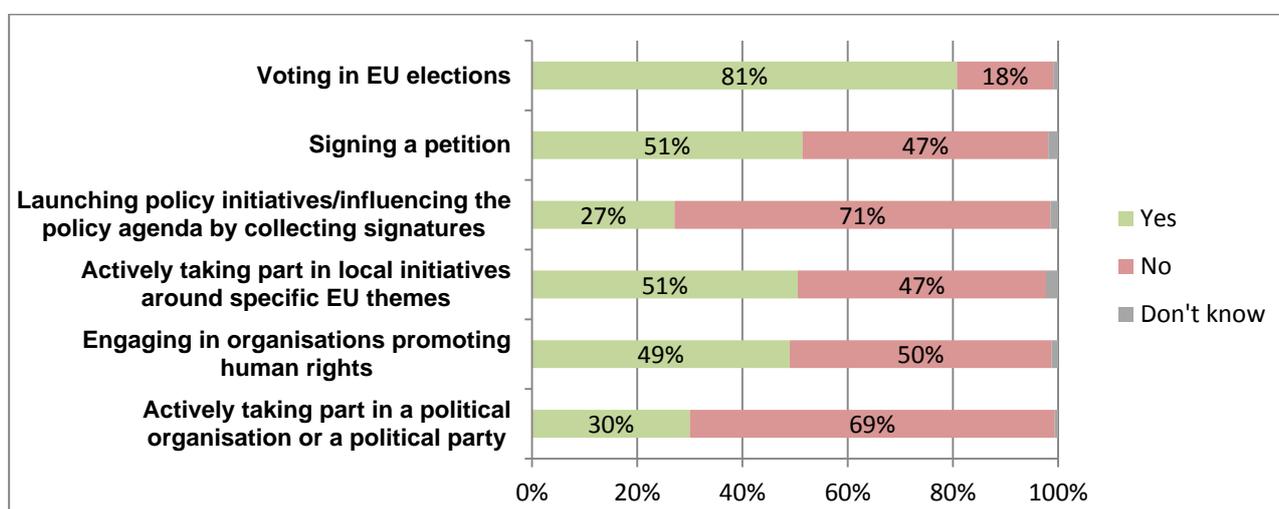
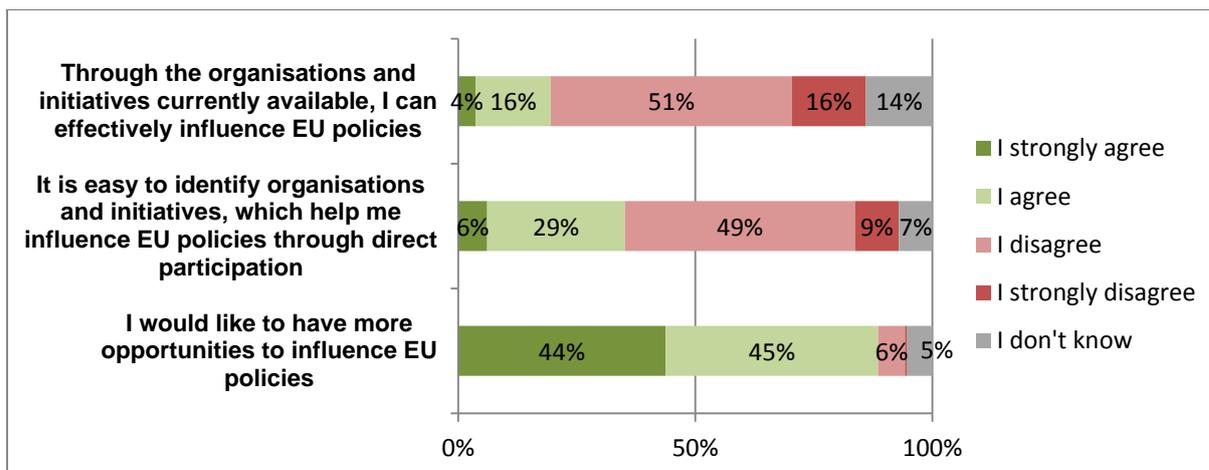


Figure 3.10 Participation of citizens in activities of policy shaping



The final survey results confirmed respondents' dissatisfaction with current organisations/initiatives. Between 58% and 67% of respondents do not think that organisations/initiatives effectively support their participation in the policy-shaping process, and about 89% would like to have more opportunities to influence EU policies, as illustrated in Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.11 Citizens' satisfaction with current organisations/initiatives that support them in the policy-shaping process



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Around one-third of the mapped mechanisms aim to engage citizens in the policy-shaping process. In addition, through the ECI, citizens can invite the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate. A number of mechanisms identified, also offer services to citizens to improve their knowledge of the ECI and its functioning in order to enable citizens to take part in the initiative. For example, Gov2U and ECAS developed a project (ECI-Link), supported by the European Commission under its Europe for Citizens Programme. The project included the organisation of information sessions in Barcelona, Paris, Vienna and Brussels, followed by the creation of an online training tool, in the form of e-learning material, for the purposes of wider outreach. However, the extent to which these initiatives are visible to all citizens and are being used (some 'logistical' limitations have for example been identified in relation to citizens being able to launch an initiative under the ECI) appears to be limited.

3.1.8 Reducing 'mistrust' in EU policy makers

Need identified

A recent Eurobarometer¹² shows that while trust in national political institutions continues to decrease (23%, -2 percentage points since spring 2013 for national governments, 25%, -1 for national parliaments), trust in the EU is at a relatively higher level and remains unchanged (31%). Moreover, the proportion of respondents for whom the EU conjures up a positive image has risen slightly (31%, +1).

However, the focus groups showed that, particularly in some Member States, an overall mistrust in EU institutions and the policy makers responsible for developing policies still exists. This mistrust leads to "a disconnect" between the citizens and the policy-shaping process as well as to a feeling of disillusionment concerning the meaning of civic participation. In Bulgaria, for example, focus group participants said that they do not believe that their voice is going to be heard or taken into account at EU level. In France, focus group participants feel distant from their European representatives and policy makers. They do not feel represented at all and they do not know what the policy makers are doing for them at EU level. They also do not really see the impact of communicating their ideas and opinions to these policy makers.

In addition, in two Member States (Hungary and Romania) focus group participants indicated that there is an overall feeling of mistrust amongst citizens of the activities of CSOs. In Romania, focus group participants felt that CSOs had a "hidden agenda" or were not transparent about their activities and the way they use their funds.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Two of the 29 selected mechanisms address this need specifically. The “Citizens’ Dialogues” aims to bring EU policy makers closer to the citizens at national and local level, thus increasing citizens’ trust in their activities. Also, the European Parliament Information Offices offer an overview of the MEPs’ work, together with their contact details. This is intended to increase the transparency of the work of members of Parliament, bringing their work closer to citizens.

However, the efforts of the EU institutions and other structures are often countered by negative national media coverage and, similar to the issue related to basic knowledge of the EU and the visibility of existing initiatives, as discussed above, can only be successfully addressed if at national level, both politicians and the media would be willing to portray the EU in a more positive light.

3.1.9 Accommodating new forms of civic participation

Need identified

Literature review showed that citizens increasingly express their need to be part of the “policy-shaping process” through new forms of civic participation/engagement, which are less ‘traditional’ and less organised. These sometimes result in non-structured actions ranging from online activism to citizens’ mobilisation and protests (as exemplified by the recent Occupy and Indignados movements).

Box 3.1 Examples of new types of citizens’ movements

In Spain the protests went under the broad label of the Indignados – the outraged – who occupied the public squares of major cities to protest against unemployment, welfare cuts and the power of the banks, originally under such banners as Youth without Future in March, and then the Democracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now) movement. Tens of thousands of people occupied Puerta del Sol, the central square of Madrid, on 15 May, in what became known as the 15-M movement, with many staying on to occupy the square until August, and over 100,000 protested on 15 May around Spain. An Ipsos Public Affairs study into the Spanish protests estimated that between 6m and 8.5m Spanish people claim to have participated in the Real Democracy Now protests, a staggering proportion of a population of around 46m people.

This followed the Geração à Rasca ‘desperate generation’ protests in Portugal, in which 200,000 people marched in March against unemployment and the hardships facing young people. At the same time as the Spanish protests there were large-scale protests throughout the year in Greece, which saw the long-term occupation of public spaces, particularly Athens’ Syngtama Square, and the instigation, as in Spain, of directly democratic people’s assemblies. A focal point for the various movements was offered by the Global Day of Rage, in October 2011, in which people protested in almost 1,000 cities in over 80 countries.

Source: State of civil society 2011, 2012 CIVICUS

Events as those described above have sparked discussion about the need to bridge the gap between ‘traditional’ CSOs and activists. They have also promoted a number of conversations about the role of new media in encouraging civic participation and helping CSOs to build more activist memberships.

Literature review also showed that this latter type of participatory policy making is more organic than the more traditional form of lobbying. It involves individual citizens directly as they gather together around a common cause and develop their own structures and methods for making changes to society. In this way, it does not follow the established structure of EU civic engagement; indeed, the movement may focus on local community or special interest issues which do not necessarily find their place in an organised European civil society, or need a permanent association.¹³ Such movements are facilitated by the Internet, which makes it possible for disorganised civil society and citizens to get organised. Similarly, social

¹³ See also: Extended Briefing Note No.3, Creating a European Civil Society House, European Citizen Action Service, April 2011

entrepreneurship is based around citizens making changes to society outside of the traditional forms of communication and representation.

Citizens in all the national focus groups, with the exception of Italy, indicated that new forms of civic participation are important to be able to express and feel part of the policy-shaping process. The discussions held at the focus groups showed that in some Member States (Czech Republic, France, Greece, Estonia and the UK) new forms of civic participation are increasingly perceived as important. In Estonia, focus group participants stated that less traditional forms of participation worked more easily and quickly. People can organise into groups and raise serious problems, when insufficient or unsatisfactory feedback is provided by national and EU policy makers. In Greece, focus group participants mentioned that the crisis has generated several new forms of participation, informal structures and citizen groups, which are already being embraced by the local authorities in Athens. The focus group participants expressed a need for EU institutions and policy makers to be more supportive towards these new forms of participation. In France, focus group participants consider new forms of civic participation as attractive, complementary to the vote as well as more accessible to a large number of citizens. In the UK, a stronger presence and increased use of new forms of civic engagement, including new online communication and information channels e.g. social networks and search engines, were strongly supported by the participants of the citizens' focus group.

However, other focus group participants said that these forms of participation only involve a minority of citizens. Also, participants indicated that, in some Member States (as for example in Italy), a negative image of these new forms of civic participation is channelled through the media, who report on violent acts, instead than focusing on the message.

Focus group participants in all Member States agreed that, currently, insufficient support is provided by existing CSOs to these new forms of civic participation/engagement.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

The existing organisations/initiatives considered do not (yet) seem to focus on new forms of civic participation. Gov2U enables citizens to express their views through blogs and online chats. This could be seen as a way to take into account those citizens who want to express their views through less traditional forms of communications.

At this stage, it may be difficult for existing structures to understand how to best link and/or reach out to new movements, as several of these are still in the process of further developing and structuring themselves, and others may be too volatile to involve. It is also not yet clear what kind of support the new movement would need and would want to receive from existing structures, as often they have been borne out of a certain dissatisfaction with the status quo, meaning that they may not wish to be associated with 'established' mechanisms (nor with the EU).

It would however, at EU level, be important to follow the further evolution of these new movements and to seek an appropriate way to reach out to them and consider ways in which their voices could be heard.

3.2 Needs of CSOs

The research undertaken to explore the needs of CSOs, which – like for the citizens' needs – included desk research, interviews, focus groups and an online survey, revealed that overall, CSOs perceive a need for the following:

- **Existing organisations / structures to better meet the needs of CSOs with regard to participation in EU matters**

The research showed a need for CSOs to be better supported by existing organisations and structures when engaging in EU matters and when developing activities in this area. At present, not all CSOs, specifically in some Member States, are aware of existing organisations/structures which can provide them with support, and not all consider that the support provided is relevant to their needs.

■ **Increase connections between CSOs**

CSOs expressed a strong interest in finding out more about other CSOs, especially the smaller organisations which were currently not involved in a network or part of an umbrella organisation.

■ **Pooling of resources, at national and EU levels – involving small CSOs**

As funding is decreasing, especially as a result of the economic crisis, it is becoming increasingly important, for CSOs, to pool and share their existing resources and physically coordinate their activities, thus leading to economies of scale. Where resources were shared between different CSOs, this led to a significant cost saving for CSOs without a presence in Brussels and/or the national capital.

■ **Sharing of knowledge, at national and EU levels – involving small CSOs**

It is important for CSOs, to share knowledge and build synergies with organisations working in the same thematic areas and having common objectives. CSOs with similar aims and activities wish to improve cooperation thus maximising their impact and/or visibility. This could include activities bringing organisations together through events, allowing them to meet similar stakeholders, exchange best practice and setting up new forms of cooperation and strategic alliances, etc.

■ **Guidance and support for preparing funding applications**

Funding is obviously an ongoing concern of most CSOs, particularly in the economic crisis. While the availability of EU funding for smaller national organisations was stressed as highly important, CSOs considered it equally important to have improved guidance and support for preparing funding applications.

■ **Improving relations between national and EU CSOs**

Many national CSOs considered that there was “a disconnect” with CSOs in Brussels and that the latter were not representative of all relevant national civil society movements and their interests and concerns.

■ **Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making**

It is important, for CSOs, to be able to engage in policy-shaping processes (i.e. to be directly involved in policy development and also, at later stages, in policy implementation, monitoring, compliance, etc.). In particular, CSOs expressed an interest in being directly involved in consultation processes rather than having yet another intermediary in this process.

■ **Improved transparency and feedback on CSO involvement in policy making processes**

CSOs feel that their opinion rarely translates into concrete policy changes. Moreover, they have the impression that EU institutions do not sufficiently consider consultations as they cannot observe impact on legislation. There is therefore a need for an improved transparency and feedback on CSO's involvement in consultations in order to improve CSOs' satisfaction with dialogue and policy making initiatives. While it is not possible to totally address this need as part of this study (as the main responsibility for improved transparency and feedback chiefly lies within EU institutions), it is important to make reference to it as it was strongly voiced during the focus groups and it is strictly interlinked to other needs presented in this section.

Each of these needs has been further elaborated in the individual subsections below, followed by an analysis of the extent to which the need is addressed by existing structures (and can successfully be addressed).

3.2.1 Existing organisations / structures to better meet the needs of CSOs with regard to the participation in EU matters

Need identified

Even though the research on the needs of CSOs showed that, overall, they are more aware of EU organisations/structures which are of relevance to them and generally considered these useful, in particular grass-roots organisations but also some national CSOs considered that existing structures and organisations did not fully meet their needs with regard to participation in EU matters. CSOs highlighted some gaps in the coordination of activities by EU organisations/structures, as well as the limitations of their outreach activities, which could in turn lead to missed opportunities in networking and knowledge sharing as well as in the availability of opportunities to be part of the EU policy-shaping process.

CSOs participating in the focus groups expressed mix views on the extent to which CSOs can find structures and initiatives which are relevant to them and which can help them to participate in EU policy-shaping processes. While seven national focus groups (Belgium, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Romania and the UK) and the EU-level focus group expressed a positive opinion on the availability of such initiatives, focus group participants in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands expressed a negative opinion. Concerning the awareness of CSOs in relation to such initiatives, most of the focus groups indicated that there is sufficient awareness of existing opportunities. Exceptions were noted in the focus groups organised in Bulgaria, France, Greece and Portugal.

As discussed further below, CSOs are also not entirely satisfied with the current opportunities to participate in policy-shaping processes, or found that these opportunities did not fully meet their specific requirements or needs.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Almost all 29 mechanisms and organisations considered as part of this needs assessment focused on engaging other NGOs in EU matters, to a smaller or greater extent. This would suggest that, in principle, CSOs (including the smaller organisations) have enough opportunities to engage in EU matters, if they wish to do so. In addition, several organisations/structures focus on providing training and capacity building to CSOs to enable them to actively engage in activities with an EU dimension (by for example, providing relevant information on how to engage). While there is thus a vast choice of opportunities available to CSOs, to support them in engaging and participating in EU matters, it appears that what seems to be a relatively small group of interested CSOs, in some Member States, are not being reached.

Existing EU organisations/structures could be encouraged to focus more on identifying and reaching out to CSOs which at present consider that their needs are insufficiently met. This could in part imply focusing more on outreach activities in certain Member States, and in part on possibly taking a more 'thematic' approach, as CSOs in certain sectors may feel less engaged in EU matters than others. Also, wider mechanisms such as the European Economic and Social Committee could be further expanded and adapted to better meet the needs of CSOs.

3.2.2 Increase connections between CSOs

Need identified

Discussions during the focus groups also showed that there is a need to identify other organisations, find out what they do, etc. in order to explore opportunities to work together. Focus group participants indicated that there is a lack of knowledge about other organisations, especially of those not working in the same field (as for example in Italy). In the UK, CSOs participating in the focus groups pointed out that a key common factor in successful engagement is to know the right networks and organisations, and this is an issue for many organisations.

In order to bridge this gap, some focus group participants expressed the need to create central registers, platforms or portals presenting information on other organisations, in order

to improve visibility and networking opportunities (Italy, the Netherlands). Where such portals have already been created (for example in Poland¹⁴ and France¹⁵), these were perceived positively by CSO representatives, as reported by focus group participants.

The lack of knowledge of other organisations with similar aims and activities, with whom to share knowledge and build synergies, has been identified by focus group participants in Bulgaria, Italy and Portugal as a factor inhibiting cooperation. In Bulgaria, for example, the participants in the focus groups stated that CSOs do not know each other as the sector is too big. Focus group discussions indicated that thematic organisations seem to have an increased awareness of other CSOs with similar aims and activities and are better at sharing knowledge and synergies compared with organisations with a less specific focus, which struggle to link to others. For example, in Portugal, organisations working on youth-related issues know each other and are much more organised at national level. This was in contrast with the other CSOs participating in the focus group, which claimed to be unaware of other CSOs with similar aims and activities (apart from their members or those within their own network).

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

More than half of the 29 mechanisms mapped provide opportunities for CSOs to increase connections with similar organisations. These mainly consist of organising opportunities for organisations to meet, including seminars, debates and conferences, as well as, in some cases, databases and websites where CSOs can find relevant partners projects or to establish partnerships for other purposes (as for example provided by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)). Also, the creation of new networks, such as Gov2U, the EYCA, ENNA, ALDA, the Council of EU Municipalities and Regions, etc. have also provided members with opportunities to connect with other members. A few (for example Gov2U) provide for establishing connections between CSOs via ICT tools.

The extent to which small, local CSOs are benefiting from these opportunities appears to be low. As highlighted during the focus groups, several would have welcomed further opportunities (e.g. a database) to identify and possibly reach out to CSOs which are similar to them, or which focus on similar themes, in other Member States.

3.2.3 Pooling of resources, at national and EU levels – involving small CSOs

Need identified

A number of actors consulted as part of the study identified a need for improved access to concrete (shared) resources, such as access to meeting rooms, computing and printing facilities in Brussels as well as ‘cheaper’ accommodation.

According to an ECAS report¹⁶, CSOs, especially those active at EU level, are increasingly bringing together resources to jointly increase their capacity. The existing trend is to pool resources and share facilities under one roof. In a period of economic uncertainty, there is pressure on all organisations to explore new ways of maximising their activity and output without increasing costs. Sharing of office spaces, rather than aiming at self-sufficiency, is increasingly becoming part of the strategy of CSOs. The focus group participants in Greece, confirmed that the need to have access to, and the pooling of concrete resources/facilities has become increasingly important in the context of the economic crisis, where CSOs are being taxed heavily, jeopardising their sustainability. Many CSOs have ceased their operations or they have closed down their branches in recent years, due to the inability to access resources on the one hand, and to meet increasing taxation demands from the State, on the other.

¹⁴ A portal (www.eu.ngo.pl) offers a database of European organisations – potential partners for Polish NGOs (there is a separate database of all Polish NGOs).

¹⁵ Most initiatives of the civil society focusing on the EU are listed on the website *Rencontrez l'Europe*.

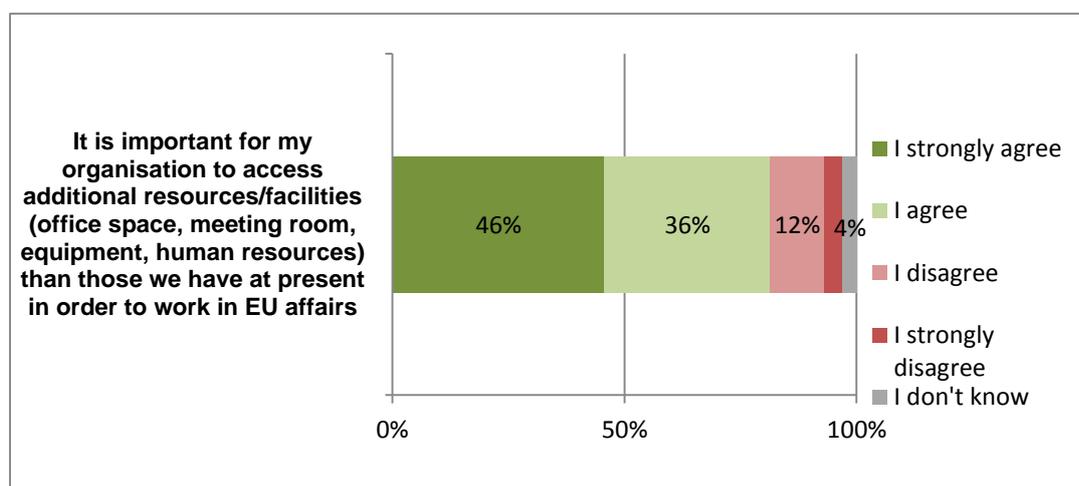
¹⁶ Extended Briefing Note No.3, Creating a European Civil Society House, European Citizen Action Service, April 2011

Discussions held in all the focus groups confirmed that access to and pooling of concrete resources/facilities is an important need for CSO, as this also enables CSOs to have sufficient critical mass to make a difference, especially in engaging citizens to become more active in EU affairs. The focus groups also pointed out that CSOs can do a lot with few resources by introducing more cost-efficient ways to manage their resources, which includes sharing facilities, equipment, etc. The focus groups also indicated that bigger organisations tend to meet this need by informally cooperating with each other, as well as by being part of larger networks with representations in capital cities as well as in Brussels. In some countries, focus group participants highlighted that informal cooperation works well and that problems in accessing resources and facilities are not encountered very often (Italy, Poland).

The focus groups also indicated that in particular grass-roots organisations, implementing activities at the very local level seem to struggle more to find opportunities to access resources at national and, even more, at EU level.

The survey results confirmed the information gathered through the focus groups; 82% of the respondents confirmed that access to resources and facilities is a very important need for CSOs.

Figure 3.12 Importance of access to resources/facilities for CSOs

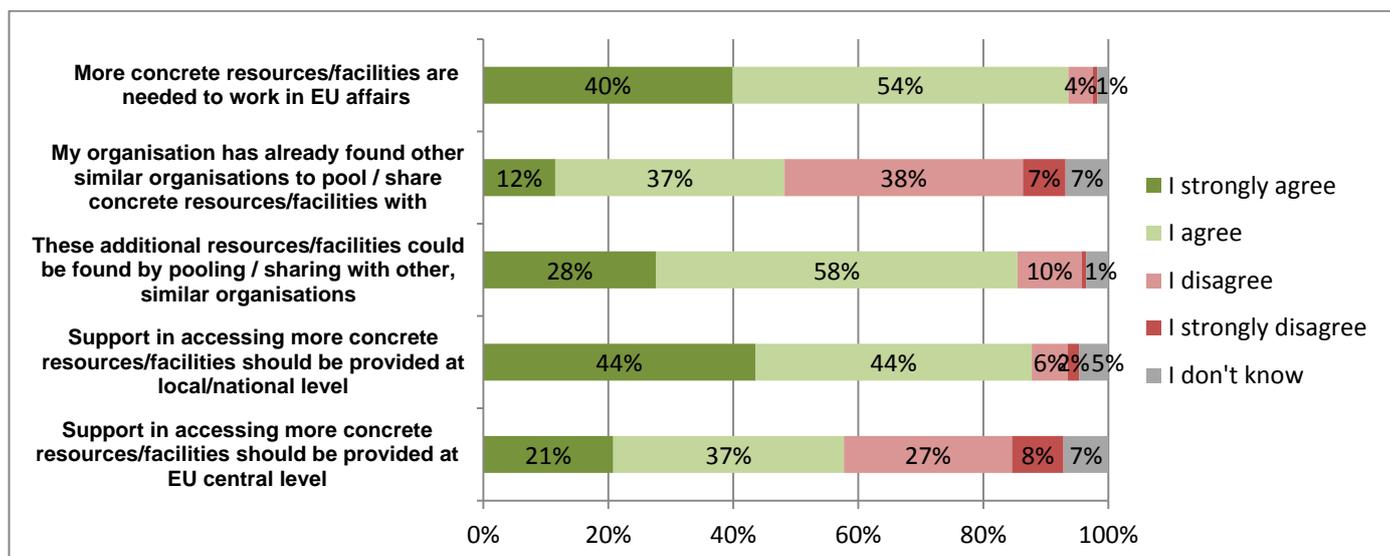


Overall, the majority of CSOs participating in the focus groups were aware of EU and national organisations and initiatives which support the pooling and sharing of concrete resource. CSOs with a presence in large or capital cities are usually able to engage in informal cooperation with similar organisations in order to get access to offices, meeting rooms, personnel, etc. While the situation is generally satisfactory for CSOs with a presence in big or capital cities and in Brussels, the focus group participants flagged some difficulties for smaller CSOs, which are active at a more decentralised level.

During the focus groups, CSOs in different countries stated that there is an overall lack of awareness of initiatives supporting small CSOs, working at a decentralised level, in accessing/pooling concrete resources/facilities. Additional difficulties arise in some countries, as indicated by CSOs participating in the focus group in Romania, where the current legislation does not allow or makes it difficult for CSOs to pool resources (for example sharing an employee or setting up a “hub” structure).

Almost all CSOs responding to the survey indicated that more concrete resources/facilities are needed to work in EU affairs. Further, 86% of them also stated that these additional resources/facilities could be found by pooling/sharing with other, similar organisations. Half of the respondents seem to have already found other similar organisations to pool/share concrete resources/facilities with. CSOs responding to the survey stressed the importance of having support in accessing more concrete resources/facilities at local/national level compared with the central/EU level.

Figure 3.13 Satisfaction of CSOs with currently available organisations/initiatives



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Overall, it appears that the need for the pooling of resources is more prominent in a few specific Member States. This makes it more difficult, and perhaps less relevant, to be addressed at the level of the EU, also because in a few cases, there are national legal and practical obstacles to sharing resources.

At EU level, a few existing mechanisms ‘formally’ address this need, such as the ECAS’ Citizens’ House (through the virtual house project) and the European Economic and Social Committee (providing facilities to host meetings and events). At national level, structures such as the Commission Representations (through the European Public Spaces) and the “Maisons de l’Europe” provide similar opportunities. Most pooling of resources at EU and national levels, however, happens at a more ‘informal’ level, with umbrella organisations, networks and member organisations providing “temporary office spaces” to other organisations.

For example, CSOs participating in the focus group in Poland stated that opportunities provided in Warsaw are sufficient to enable effective access to resources and facilities as organisations are, in general, willing to share these. In Paris, the “Maison de l’Europe”, which already hosts approximately 20 associations at its premises, is a good example of how access to and sharing of resources/facilities can be facilitated. Moreover, participants indicated that CSOs with a presence in Brussels are also able to access concrete resources and facilities. In Belgium, focus group participants also confirmed that they were well aware of initiatives available to them to share and access concrete resources (e.g. Mundo B).

However, access to these resources are not open to all organisations and in some Member States, these opportunities are less available. At EU level, existing structures could be encouraged to raise awareness of member and non-member organisations of the possibility to access common facilities and resources, within the limits of their capacity. At national level, in Member States where this need has been identified and where there are no obstacles, national (larger) organisations could be encouraged to do the same, paying particular attention to grass-roots organisations.

3.2.4 Sharing of knowledge, at national and EU levels – involving small CSOs

Need identified

Discussions held during the focus groups identified knowledge sharing and building synergies as one of the most important needs of CSOs. As for access and pooling of resources/facilities discussed under 3.2.3 above, organisations tend to informally cooperate with each other as well as being part of larger networks in order to increase networking

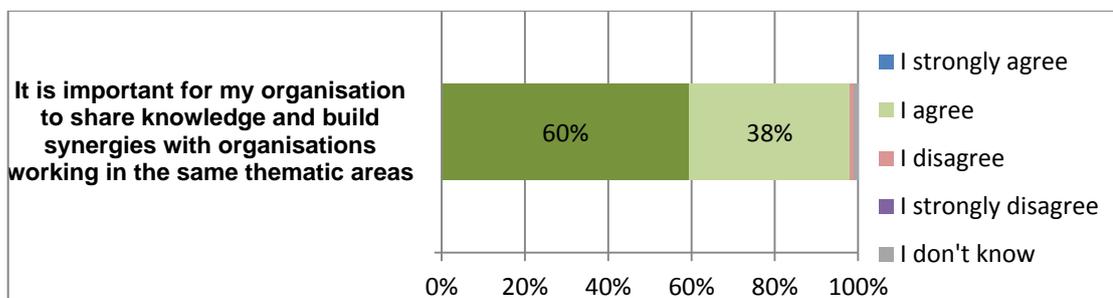
opportunities, sharing of knowledge, best practice, etc., thus facilitating CSOs’ involvement in EU affairs.

The focus groups showed that while bigger CSOs with an established presence in capital cities and Brussels have enough opportunities to share knowledge and build synergies (through networks, alliances, etc.) there is a need to include CSOs which are active at local level and further away from the EU institutions. The latter confirmed, during the focus groups, that they feel disconnected from knowledge sharing and synergy building opportunities. CSOs based in Brussels are sometimes perceived as “an elite”, with facilitated access to knowledge and networking opportunities. In France, for example, focus group participants confirmed that organisations based in Paris are more developed and informed about initiatives than organisations based in provincial cities, which have a limited access to knowledge sharing and synergy building opportunities.

In Germany, CSOs participating in the focus groups stated that access to knowledge currently largely depends on informal contacts and, therefore, on the goodwill of organisations involved. Also, they stated that CSOs usually tend to share knowledge only within their close networks, therefore limiting more “horizontal” knowledge sharing practices. In Portugal, focus group participants expressed the feeling that collaboration was not easy as there seemed to be strong competition between organisations for access to public funds (instead of simple/straightforward cooperation). In Italy and Czech Republic, focus group participants indicated that limited financial resources also hinder CSOs’ access to initiatives facilitating knowledge sharing because of high membership costs). In Belgium, focus group participants noted that, sometimes, national legislation hinders the building of synergies and puts CSOs in competition with each other. For instance, when applying for the title of official Lifelong Learning Institution, CSOs cannot present events organised with partners in their track record – as these will not be validated by the competent national authority – and for that reason they tend to avoid organising joint events.

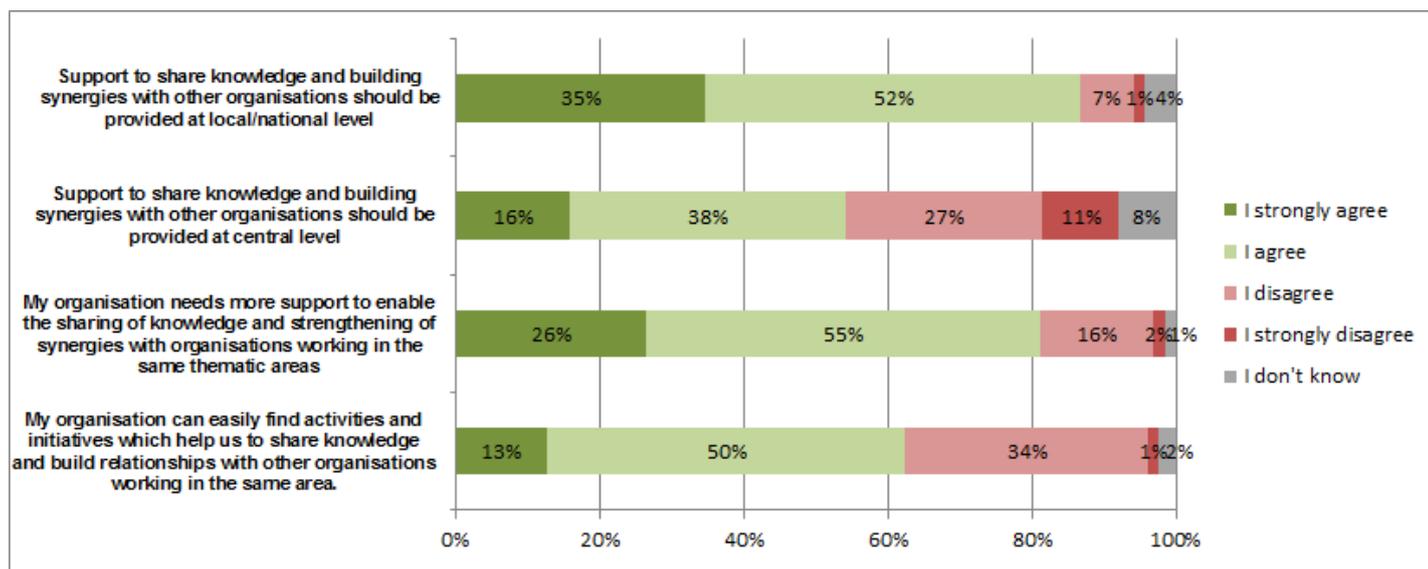
The survey results confirmed the information gathered through the focus groups; 98% of the respondents confirmed that sharing knowledge and building synergies is a very important need for organisations active in civic participation.

Figure 3.14 Importance of sharing knowledge and building synergies for CSOs



The majority of CSOs completing the survey (63%) indicated that their organisation can easily find activities and initiatives which help them to share knowledge and build relationships. However, a greater proportion of survey respondents – 81% – indicated that their organisation would welcome more support to enable the sharing of knowledge and strengthening of synergies with organisations working in the same thematic areas. Similarly to access to resources and facilities, CSOs responding to the survey stressed the importance of having support in sharing knowledge and building synergies at local/national level compared to the central/EU level.

Figure 3.15 Satisfaction of CSOs with currently available organisations/initiatives



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

More than half of the 29 mechanisms identified provide opportunities for CSOs to increase knowledge sharing at national and EU levels. Such opportunities are either provided in a direct way (for example through the organisation of events to exchange views and best practice amongst CSOs, or through the availability of an online “resource” centre), or in an indirect way (for example more networking opportunities will lead to better knowledge sharing amongst CSOs). For example, organisations such as ALDA, European Movement International (EMI), ENNA, the Council of EU Municipalities and Regions, the European Network for Education and Training and Eunet provide opportunities for member organisations (meetings, exchange of best practice, etc.) to increase sharing of knowledge and connections amongst national and EU CSOs.

In 2013, National Alliances were created in the context of the European Year of Citizens. Participants in the focus groups confirmed that the latter had created additional networking opportunities for national CSOs working in this area.

On the basis of the above, it appears that CSOs overall have enough opportunities to share knowledge, if they wish to do so. However, the extent to which smaller CSOs’ needs are addressed is difficult to assess, and in some Member States these opportunities may be less available than in others. As for the pooling of resources discussed under 3.2.3 above, at EU level, existing structures could be encouraged to raise awareness of member and non-member organisations of knowledge sharing possibilities, within the limits of their capacity. At national level, in Member States where this need has been identified and where there are no obstacles, national (larger) organisations could be encouraged to do the same, paying particular attention to grass-roots organisations.

3.2.5 Guidance and support for preparing funding applications

Need identified

CSOs participating in the focus groups expressed the need to receive more information and training on where to access funding opportunities, and how to fulfil the requirements for grants applications (Belgium, France, Czech Republic, Italy and Greece). This information would be beneficial in improving the capacity of CSOs.

It appears from the focus groups that this need might be particularly important for smaller CSOs, which do not have enough human resources to deal with the burdensome procedures linked to funding applications.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

This “service” is provided by a few of the organisations/initiatives considered. ECAS, for example, developed a “Guide to European funding for civil society organisations”. The guide provides tips for the would-be European fundraiser, contact details, all the main budget lines (development, environment, health, human rights, social policy etc.) and a chapter on funding by foundations. Similarly, the Euclid established an “EU funding helpdesk”. The latter supports CSOs in finding the most relevant EU funding opportunities including supporting them in issues pertaining to application forms, partnerships, co-financing or EU auditing. Moreover, Your Europe Advice provides information on funding opportunities. Though the main beneficiaries of this initiative are businesses, some information is also of relevance to CSOs. The Europe for Citizens Programme established Europe for Citizens Contact Points (ECPs), which also provide guidance to organisations on the process and modalities of responding to calls for proposals under the Programme. On the basis of the above and the opinions of CSOs gathered throughout the assignment, it appears that, while this need is addressed adequately by the existing organisations/initiatives, in a few Member States, CSOs are insufficiently aware that such opportunities exist. Existing organisations could be encouraged to further raise awareness on the services they offer and consider offering additional training/advice on EU funding opportunities. This should also target, as far as possible, smaller organisations amongst the beneficiaries.

3.2.6 Improving relations between national and EU CSOs

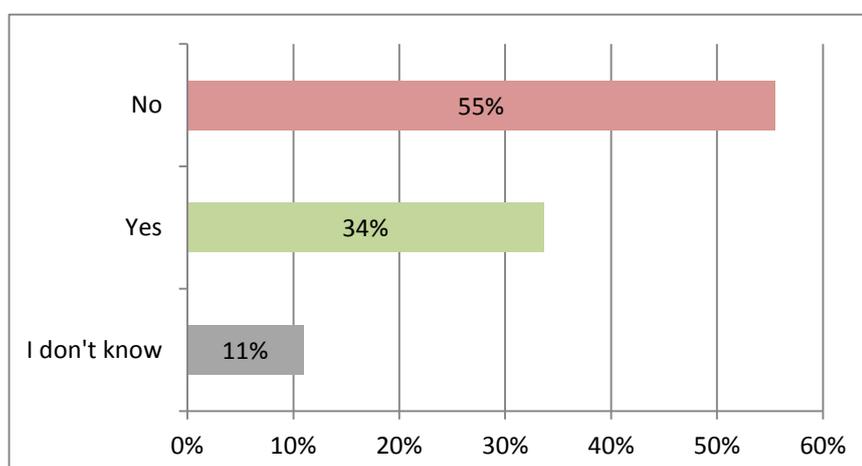
Need identified

Bigger organisations tend to meet their needs related to the participation in EU matters by informally cooperating with each other as well as by being part of larger networks with representations in capital cities as well as in Brussels. However, smaller CSOs as well as grass-roots organisations implementing activities at local level seem to be less “connected”, therefore struggling to have access to resources/facilities as well as to opportunities to share knowledge and build synergies (as mentioned above).

Smaller CSOs are often not part of a larger network because of financial reasons (focus group participants in Czech Republic mentioned high membership fees) or because they are simply not aware of such opportunities. As pointed out during the focus groups this results in a feeling of “disconnection” from smaller CSOs as well as grass-roots organisations, which perceive Brussels-based organisations as an “elite”.

The survey results showed that the majority of CSOs are not represented in Brussels by an umbrella organisation. This might lead to difficulties connecting with the EU and engaging in EU matters.

Figure 3.16 Do you have an umbrella organisation representing your activities and interests in Brussels?



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

A good share of the organisations/initiatives considered address this need indirectly. This is usually the case of organisations/initiatives promoting connections between CSOs and therefore strengthening networking opportunities between different types of organisations, active at different levels. Organisations like ENNA, ALDA and the Council of EU Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), etc., are examples of structures trying to bridge the gap between the local level entities involved in the civil society sector and actors at EU level.

The European Economic and Social Committee also fulfils this role by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society in the Member States.

Despite the presence of such organisations and structure, however, discussions held during the focus groups showed that there is an overall need for more inclusion of CSOs which are active at local level and further away from EU institutions. CSOs confirmed, during the focus groups, that they feel disconnected from opportunities. This is particularly true for smaller organisations, which cannot benefit from existing opportunities (for example, because of a lack of financial resources, hindering them from being part of a larger umbrella organisation).

The extent to which this need can be addressed through action at EU level is however questionable. Existing EU-level organisations with a national presence could be encouraged to further secure additional members in the Member States they cover, ensuring that smaller CSOs as well as organisations working at the very local level are included. This would improve relations between national and EU CSOs and decrease the existing “disconnect” between the two levels.

3.2.7 Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making

Need identified

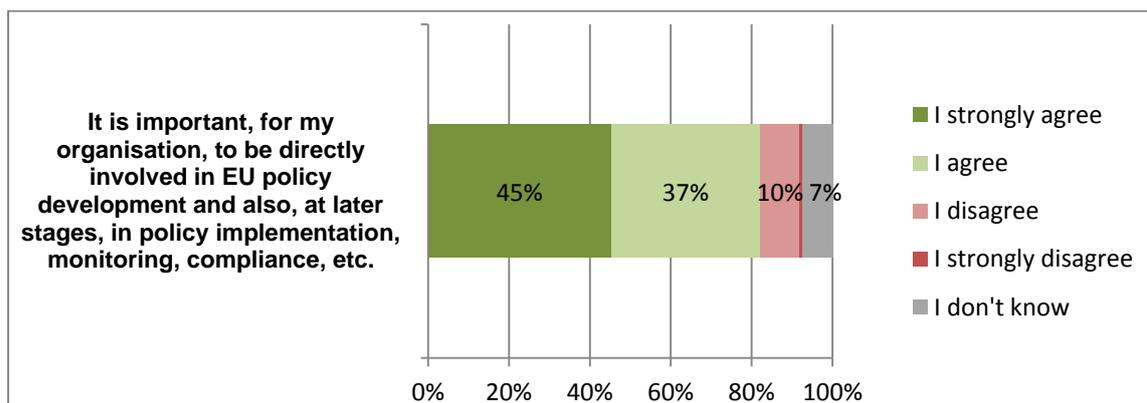
The focus group discussions showed that while bigger CSOs with an established presence in capital cities and Brussels have enough opportunities to be involved in policy shaping (through consultations, dialogues with the Commission, etc.), in some Member States there is a need for more inclusion of CSOs which are active at local level. In Romania, for example, focus group participants stated that organisations at local level encountered more obstacles when wanting to be part of the policy-shaping process because of limited resources and a lack of qualified staff to take part in policy-shaping activities. In Italy, CSOs participating in the focus group confirmed that only large associations could afford to participate in the EU policy-shaping process as this usually entailed a cost, which could not be recovered. In the Netherlands, focus groups participants also argued that the possibility to influence policy was largely dependent on the size of the organisation and its resources. In general, engagement and interaction with EU policy makers is considered to be limited to larger CSOs with sufficient resources and an established network at EU level.

Focus group participants in other countries (Bulgaria, Greece) felt that there was a distance between national organisations and the EU policy making process. They suggested that national authorities could play a role by acting as intermediaries between CSOs and the EU policy-shaping process. In Portugal, CSOs participating in the focus group stressed that there was a distance between CSOs and national policy makers. CSO representatives noted a general lack of recognition, from policy makers, of the work of CSOs at the national and EU level.

In Greece, there is a feeling, amongst focus group participants that public authorities only “pay lip-service” to the process of consultation with civil society and that civil society do not really influence policy at national level, and by extension at EU level. CSOs participating in the focus group in Romania also highlighted a need for national authorities to be more open to inputs from organisations representing citizens when discussing future strategies and policies, therefore making the policy-cycle more inclusive.

The survey showed that 82% of the respondents feel that involvement in EU policy development and monitoring is a very important need for organisations active in civic participation.

Figure 3.17 Importance of being involved in EU policy developments for CSOs



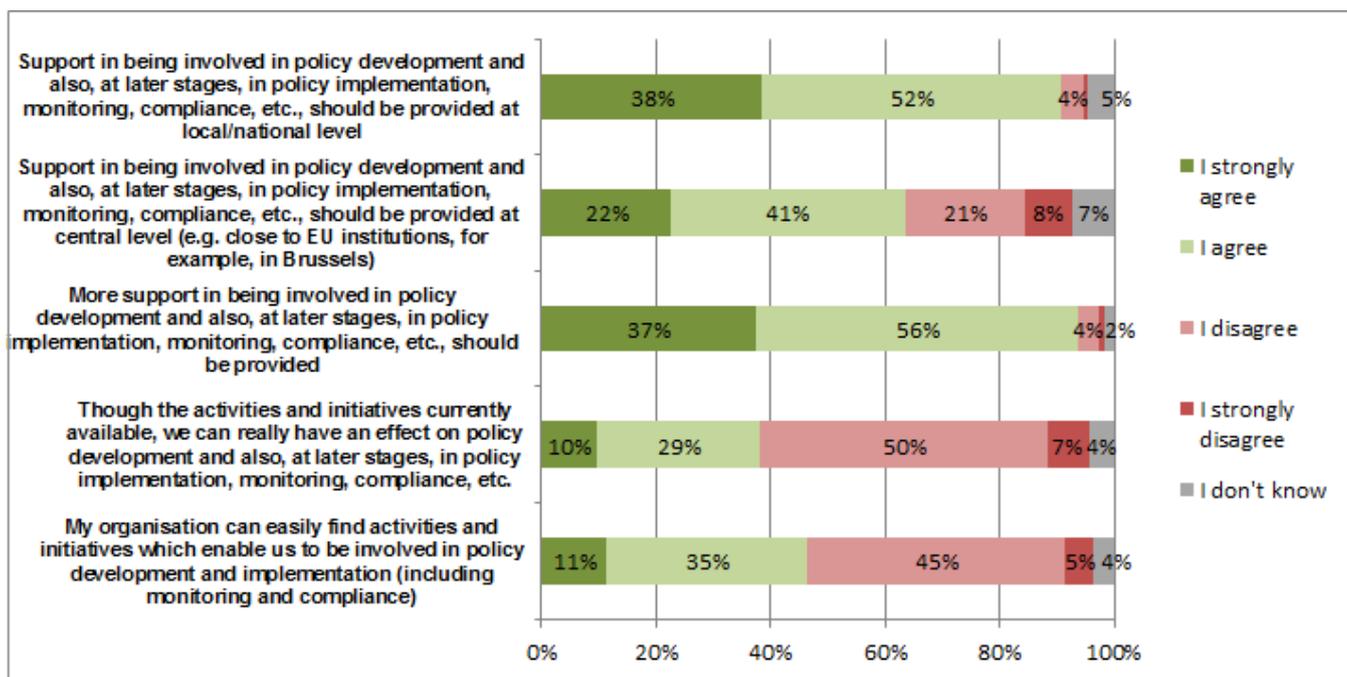
The extent of satisfaction of CSOs with current opportunities to participate in the policy-shaping process was mixed. In some Member States (for example Czech Republic and France) focus group participants felt quite satisfied with current opportunities to engage in EU policy shaping (for example through Commissions’ dialogues) and did not feel “excluded” from the process. In France, participants agreed that (especially) large organisations can easily identify relevant structures and initiatives to participate in the policy-shaping process. The main issue is more the lack of time and resources.

In other countries, focus group participants expressed less satisfaction with the opportunities currently available. For example, CSOs in Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal stated that it is hard to find organisation/initiatives that would help them influence the EU policy-shaping process.

For CSOs participating in the focus group in Romania, the public consultation process is not optimal; the EC should take a more proactive approach in informing both organisations and citizens about ongoing consultations. In Belgium, participants also noted that consultations are badly advertised. In other cases (for example, during the focus group in the UK), CSOs expressed a lack of awareness of opportunities to be engaged in the policy-shaping process at EU level because of their strong focus on national issues. Although there are a large number of active CSOs in the UK, their main focus is on issues of national and local importance.

Most survey respondents (57%) indicated that they could not effectively take part in the policy-shaping process through the activities and initiatives currently available; a further 50% stated that they could not easily find activities and initiatives which enabled them to be involved in policy development and implementation (although 46% said it was easy). Also, 93% of the survey respondents indicated that they wished more support was provided to CSOs when engaging in the policy-shaping process. Similarly with accessing resources and facilities, as well as sharing knowledge and building synergies, CSOs responding to the survey stressed the importance of having support in participating in the policy-shaping process at local/national level compared to the central/EU level.

Figure 3.18 Satisfaction of CSOs with currently available organisations/initiatives



Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

Around one-third of the 29 mechanisms considered address this need. This is achieved through, for example, the publication of consultation opportunities to which CSOs might contribute (as included on the Your Europe website, the Euclid Network website, etc.). Also, recently, a new alert mechanism was launched by the Commission. The latter provides, via email, information on newly-launched public consultations and newly-published roadmaps. The focus groups discussions and the survey responses, however, highlighted that consultation opportunities appear not to be visible enough and that a more proactive approach is needed to inform both organisations and citizens about ongoing consultations. The survey respondents further expressed a wish for more support when engaging in the policy-shaping process. Also, CSOs responding to the survey stressed the importance of having support in participating in the policy-shaping process at local/national level compared to the central/EU level.

Some of the main mechanisms considered also address this need through the organisations of events attended by policy makers or representatives of EU institutions (Euclid Network, EYCA, Friends of Europe Debating Europe, etc.). However, the majority of organisations/initiatives seem to provide “ad hoc opportunities” to EU dialogue and policy making. Only one of these initiatives provides a chance to establish an ongoing dialogue with policy makers – the structured dialogues organised by the Commission’s DGs. The dialogues contribute to improving access of national/local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making, although the latter involve CSOs only in an indirect way, i.e. through the intermediary of umbrella organisations. The extent to which this process is cascaded to a vaster audience (i.e. to the members of networks and associations) is therefore left to the organisations taking part in the dialogues.

At EU level, some efforts could be made to better promote opportunities for dialogue and participation in policy making, ensuring also that smaller and local CSOs are included in the process. Also, existing organisations could be encouraged to provide more opportunities for CSOs to meet and discuss with EU policy makers. Such opportunities should be provided especially at local/national level. This could, indirectly, reduce the “disconnect” between the grass roots and EU level (see also section 3.2.6 above) and further contribute to the recognition of the role of CSOs in promoting civic participation across the EU.

3.2.8 Improved transparency and feedback on CSO involvement in policy making processes

Need identified

Focus group participants expressed a need for more transparency in the policy making and consultation processes (i.e. more information on how their inputs are going to be used by the policy makers). For example, CSOs participating in the focus groups in Portugal and Belgium noted that the main problem is the lack of feedback from policy makers to inputs to consultations or petitions.

CSOs which participated in the focus group in Belgium were very active in the 'policy-shaping' process both at national and EU level and knew how to use channels available to them. They however expressed strong frustration in relation to the fact that, despite their active participation, their voice seems not to be translated into social change at EU level.

Extent to which the need is currently addressed by existing structures

CSOs currently receive little information on their impact on policy making, which does not add to the transparency of consultation processes. EU institutions should place more effort on informing on the outcomes of consultations, in particular highlighting the impact of CSOs' contributions to consultations and explaining how their inputs were taken into account when elaborating and/or revising policies. In addition, smaller and local CSOs should be encouraged to take part in consultation processes, possibly by involving EU Representations and EDICs in awareness raising on these processes.

3.3 Findings and conclusion on the needs assessment

Based on the information collected on the needs in the previous subsections, this subsection of the report summarises whether and to what extent the needs identified are sufficiently and adequately addressed by existing structures, and draws conclusions as to which needs can be considered as partially unmet needs, and which might constitute a priority for future action. Section 4 subsequently analyses how these needs could be addressed. It develops possible options for activities to address the nine partially unmet needs and considers the extent to which these can be tackled by future action. Section 5 provides recommendations on the best way forward following the assessment.

Overall, the analysis above has shown that both citizens and CSOs consulted as part of the study identified a number of needs. The needs identified by citizens relate mainly to information and advice on EU matters, as well as communication with policy makers (and, more broadly, engagement in debate and brainstorming on EU issues) and involvement in the policy-shaping process. The needs identified by CSOs relate mainly to support in engaging in EU matters, knowledge sharing and networking, pooling of resources, dialogue with EU institutions and involvement in the policy-shaping process.

The assessment above showed that the vast majority of the identified needs (both for citizens and CSOs) are already being addressed by the variety of organisations, instruments and initiatives established on the ground and active both at EU and national level. However, the analysis also showed that:

- *For citizens* – while opportunities do exist and are available to them, the main problem relates to a lack of proper access to existing information, activities and structures as citizens primarily face difficulties finding and hence making use of existing opportunities. Therefore, concerns exist in relation to local access to opportunities, referrals and signposting, engagement mechanisms, etc.;
- *For CSOs* – while opportunities do exist and are available to them, the main problem relates to the low level of involvement of national and local small/grass-roots organisations. Opportunities to engage in EU affairs are to a lesser extent made available to small and grass-roots organisations, which are not based in Brussels or other capitals/large EU cities. Therefore, concerns exist in relation to the engagement of small and grass-roots organisations and how these can create connections with larger national organisations and with their counterparts in Brussels.

Moreover, the assessment above also showed that some of the needs identified are mainly caused by external factors such as negative media coverage of EU-related issues, lack of education on EU matters within schools, extreme political movements supporting Eurosceptic positions, etc. These needs are considered as outside the scope of this study.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below provide a summary overview of the needs of citizens and CSOs, as discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.2 above, the extent to which these are currently sufficiently and adequately addressed by existing structures as well as including considerations on the potential focus of future action to better address those needs.

The needs which are highlighted in grey are those which are considered to be partially unmet needs, which might constitute a priority for future action. This represents four of the nine needs identified for citizens, and three of the eight needs identified for CSOs.

Table 3.1 Summary assessment of needs of citizens

Needs identified	Extent to which the need is addressed by existing structures / initiatives	Focus of future action
<p>1. Basic knowledge about the EU – increasing overall knowledge is a precondition for citizens’ interest and further involvement in EU matters.</p>	<p>This need is addressed by more than half of the selected existing structures mapped. Problems encountered relate more to <i>(local) access and insufficient referrals</i> (see needs 3 and 5 below) rather than to the availability of existing opportunities.</p>	<p>While it would be important to improve citizens’ basic knowledge about the EU, this depends, to a great extent on external factors (media coverage, education on EU matters within schools, etc.) and therefore cannot be addressed by CSOs alone. However, issues related to improved (local) access and signposting to available information would be addressed under needs 3 and 5 below.</p>
<p>2. Understandable and user-friendly information about the EU and citizens’ EU rights – currently, a barrier to further citizens’ engagement. Increasing the awareness of citizens of EU policies and legislation, and their related rights, is a precondition for their further involvement in EU matters.</p>	<p>The need is largely addressed by the existing structures mapped. Problems encountered relate more to <i>(local) access and insufficient referrals</i> (see needs 3 and 5 below) rather than to the availability of existing opportunities.</p>	<p>Issues related to improved (local) access and signposting to information about the EU and citizens’ EU rights would be addressed under needs 3 and 5 below.</p>
<p>3. Improved access to information / signposting to information of direct relevance to citizens (this could be country specific) – the insufficient access to information/signposting to information of direct relevance to citizens can become a barrier to further citizens’ engagement.</p>	<p>The need is currently addressed only to some degree. Some improvements are expected in the near future (ex. improvement of Europe website, increased awareness of Commission Representations, European Parliament Information Offices, EDICs, etc.). However, access / signposting to information are expected to remain a key issue for citizens.</p>	<p>Focus could be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raising awareness of existing “information providers” at EU and national levels; and ■ Better signposting citizens to relevant sources of information.
<p>4. Improved access to advice and other forms of EU assistance (concerning their EU rights) – awareness of existing structures providing advice to citizens is overall low and citizens are unclear as to which structure provides what kind of advice.</p>	<p>Many existing structures already provide advice and other forms of assistance. Problems encountered relate more to <i>(local) access and insufficient referrals</i> (see needs 3 and 5) rather than to the availability of existing opportunities.</p>	<p>Issues related to improved (local) access and signposting to advice and other forms of EU assistance would be addressed under needs 3 and 5.</p>
<p>5. Local / national access points to relevant information on the EU and EU rights – citizens in most Member States agreed on the importance of direct, preferably local/national, contacts in accessing relevant</p>	<p>This need is currently only addressed to some extent. While existing structures have a local and national presence, not all act as ‘entry points’ or ‘referral points’ for citizens and even those that do, may not always provide the most relevant and up-to-date</p>	<p>Focus could be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improving the accessibility of information, services and referrals at the very local level, thus involving the “hard to reach” citizens; ■ Improving the quality of information,

Needs identified	Extent to which the need is addressed by existing structures / initiatives	Focus of future action
<p>information on the EU and EU rights. These would serve for information and for referral to other organisations/structures.</p> <p>6. Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers – while citizens feel that it is important to them to express their opinions and ideas to policy makers, they often do not know how to do this or do not have access to opportunities to do so.</p>	<p>information and referrals.</p> <p>Only some of the mapped organisations/structures provide an opportunity for citizens to communicate directly with policy makers. The reach of existing organisations/structures providing opportunities to communicate directly with EU policy makers appears to be limited, as citizens are insufficiently aware of these opportunities and would prefer to benefit from opportunities closer to home.</p>	<p>making sure that it is comprehensive and correct;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Providing tailored information, where possible, taking into account the features of the locality of origin of the citizens. <p>Focus could be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Further organisation of events involving EU policy makers, also in non-central locations; ■ The further use of online tools and mobile sensing technologies to contact policy makers; ■ Improved awareness of existing initiatives and better signposting of citizens (as part of need 3 above); ■ Improved local access of such opportunities (as part of need 5 above).
<p>7. Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes – citizens need more opportunities to influence EU policies, in particular through a more active engagement in policy-shaping processes. They considered that such processes should in particular be offered at local/national level.</p>	<p>While there seem to be a sufficient number of existing opportunities, the majority is offered in Brussels or limited to capital/large cities. Improving access and referrals to these would be important and is to be linked to need 3 and 5 above.</p>	<p>Focus would be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Further organisation of opportunities for citizens to engage in policy-shaping processes, also in non-central locations; ■ Improved awareness of existing initiatives facilitating engagement in policy shaping (e.g. in the context of the ECI) and better signposting of citizens (as part of need 3 above); ■ Improved local access of such opportunities (as part of need 5 above).
<p>8. Reducing ‘mistrust’ in EU policy makers – citizens at present do not feel encouraged to engage in EU matters.</p>	<p>A few organisations at EU, as well as several national-level organisations, aim to address the issue of mistrust.</p>	<p>While it would be important to reduce ‘mistrust’ in EU policy makers, this depends, to a great extent on external factors (media coverage, emergence of extremist parties, etc.) and stakeholders other than CSOs, and is therefore considered as falling outside the scope of the study.,</p>
<p>9. Accommodating new forms of civic participation – citizens increasingly express a need for new forms of policy shaping, through new forms of civic participation/engagement, which are less ‘traditional’ and less organised.</p>	<p>Few structures focus yet on new forms of civic participation. Although at a fairly early stage, the latter are showing signs of structuring themselves.</p>	<p>While it is important to further accommodate new forms of civic participation, there is also a need to leave room for self-organisation/bottom-up evolution.</p>

Table 3.2 Summary assessment of needs of CSOs

Needs identified	Extent to which the need is sufficiently addressed by existing structures / initiatives	Focus of future action
<p>1. Existing organisations/structures to better meet the needs of CSOs with regard to the participation in EU matters – CSOs need to have the appropriate tools to be able to develop activities with an EU dimension.</p>	<p>Nearly all selected existing structures focus on this need. Problems encountered relate more to the inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and to a strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and</p>	<p>Issues related to accessing support when participating in EU matters will be improved through an enhanced inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and the strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and EU level (when addressing</p>

Needs identified	Extent to which the need is sufficiently addressed by existing structures / initiatives	Focus of future action
	EU level (see needs 2 and 6 below) rather than to the availability of existing opportunities.	needs 2 and 6).
<p>2. Increase connections between CSOs (horizontal connections) – CSOs expressed a strong interest in finding out more about other CSOs.</p>	<p>This need is currently only addressed to some extent. While the mapping showed that more than half of the existing structures seek to improve connections between CSOs, there are still some problems of inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations working at national or local level.</p> <p>Those CSOs, which are currently not involved in a network or part of an umbrella organisation welcomed further opportunities to connect.</p>	<p>Focus would be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The further development of activities to improve connections amongst CSOs both at national and EU levels, especially those involving grass-roots organisations working at the very local level as well as other smaller CSOs; ■ The development of online tools to increase connections between CSOs.
<p>3. Pooling of resources, at national and EU levels – it is becoming increasingly important, for CSOs, to pool and share their existing resources and physically coordinate their activities, thus leading to economies of scale.</p>	<p>To a large extent, existing structures address this need, albeit mostly informally. Problems encountered relate more to the inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and to a strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and EU level (see needs 2 and 6). This need is not confirmed in all Member States.</p>	<p>Issues related to pooling of resources will be improved through an enhanced inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and the strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and EU level (when addressing needs 2 and 6).</p>
<p>4. Sharing of knowledge, at national and EU levels – CSOs with similar aims and activities wish to improve cooperation thus maximising their impact or visibility.</p>	<p>To a large extent, existing structures address this need, directly or indirectly. These opportunities are however not equally available to and known by CSOs. Problems encountered relate more to the inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and to a strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and EU level (see needs 2 and 6).</p>	<p>Issues related to knowledge sharing will be improved through an enhanced inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and the strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and EU level (when addressing needs 2 and 6).</p>
<p>5. Guidance and support for preparing funding applications – funding is obviously an ongoing concern of most CSOs, particularly in the economic crisis and CSOs considered it important to have improved guidance and support for preparing funding applications.</p>	<p>A few existing structures provide guidance and support concerning funding opportunities and the preparation of applications for funding.</p> <p>Problems encountered relate more to the inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations in guidance and support activities rather than to the availability of information.</p>	<p>Issues related to guidance and support for preparing funding applications will be improved through an enhanced inclusion of smaller/grass-roots organisations and the strengthening of connections to other CSOs at national and EU level (when addressing needs 2 and 6).</p>
<p>6. Improving relations between national and EU CSOs (vertical connections) – many national CSOs considered that there was “a disconnect” with CSOs in Brussels and that the latter were not representative of all relevant national civil society movements and their interests and concerns.</p>	<p>Some of the existing structures focus on increasing the involvement of national and local CSOs but it seems that, in particular, local and grass-roots organisations still experience a distance.</p>	<p>Focus would be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The further development of activities to improve connections amongst national and EU-level organisations in order to limit the disconnect between CSOs acting at local level and those with a presence in Brussels; ■ The development of online tools to increase connections between national and EU CSOs.
<p>7. Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making – CSOs expressed an interest in being directly involved in consultation processes.</p>	<p>This need is primarily addressed at EU level. However, CSOs, especially smaller ones, expressed a need for involvement at national and local levels in particular.</p>	<p>Focus would be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The further development, at local level, of activities to improve communication between policy makers and CSOs, ensuring that these are not ad hoc

Needs identified	Extent to which the need is sufficiently addressed by existing structures / initiatives	Focus of future action
		<p>activities but that CSOs are able to access opportunities in a more systematic way;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raising awareness of opportunities to access dialogues and communicate with policy makers.
<p>8. Improved transparency and feedback on CSO involvement in policy making processes – CSOs feel that their opinion rarely translates into concrete policy changes. CSOs would be more responsive if they received clear feedback.</p>	<p>Feedback is provided by EU institutions but, currently, this is often not considered sufficient/satisfactory by CSOs.</p>	<p>This need is considered as outside the scope of the study (mainly a responsibility of the Institutions).</p>

4 Scenarios and activities to address the needs identified and their assessment

4.1 Possible scenarios to address the needs

There are different “scenarios”, under which options for future activities (presented in section 4.2 below) could be developed to address the partially unmet needs:

- **Scenario 1 – the baseline scenario** – including planned activities under the new financial perspective;
- **Scenario 2 – developing and strengthening of activities by existing structures** – this scenario would ensure that existing organisations are encouraged to (better) address the partially unmet needs and that they are supported in doing so. The activities would take place within the current budget. In addition to the baseline, under this scenario the Commission, with the support of the Commission Representations, European Parliament Information Offices, the EDICs, etc. and a few key existing structures, which would have to be strongly committed, would seek to start a coordinated process of change, based on improving efficiency, the pooling of resources and going local.;
- **Scenario 3 – the establishment of a new structure in line with the European Parliament budget** – this scenario would thus include the establishment of a physical resource centre and space for encounters and other events in a single location (most likely Brussels).

4.2 Presentation of possible future activities under the different scenarios and their assessment

This section of the report presents the possible options for activities, which could address the partially unmet needs as identified in section 3.3 above. For each need listed as partially unmet, a “package” of options was identified. The latter are presented, for each of the scenarios proposed above (however, this is not applicable to the baseline scenario, where only foreseen activities are presented) in Tables 4.4 (covering scenario 2) and 4.6 (covering scenario 3).

Table 4.3 provides an overall assessment of the baseline scenario while Tables 4.5 and 4.7 summarise the assessment of the potential options for activities presented under scenarios 2 and 3. The following assessment criteria are explored:

- **Operational and technical feasibility** – this includes broad considerations on what would be required in order to implement the options for activities under each scenario. This would also include an assessment of the risks/potential weaknesses as well as the additional benefits/strengths;
- **Other feasibility considerations** – this includes considerations on proportionality, EU added value, etc. It also includes considerations on possible constraints as well as an assessment of the extent to which the scenario would have a wider outreach, i.e. reaching those citizens who are currently not informed or involved, reaching ‘unrepresented’ CSOs;
- **Costs (financial feasibility)** – the level and types of costs required for the activities suggested are assessed, including potential cost efficiencies. A detailed assessment of the costs linked to each activity foreseen under scenarios 2 and 3 is included in Table A.1 below; and
- **Summary of the main advantages and disadvantages** – a brief analytical overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each scenario is also included.

For each of these criteria, a rating is provided to the scenario as illustrated in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Explanation of rating logic

Rating	Operational and technical feasibility and other feasibility considerations	Costs (financial feasibility)
√	Low feasibility of the scenario (the scenario entails a significant level of operational/technical constraints)	High costs linked to the implementation of the scenario leading to low feasibility
√√	Medium feasibility of the scenario (some operational/technical constraints are identified)	Medium costs linked to the implementation of the scenario leading to some feasibility constraints
√√√	High feasibility of the scenario (no operational/technical constraints identified)	Low costs linked to the implementation of the scenario leading to high feasibility

4.2.2 Scenario 1 - the baseline scenario

Possible activities

Table 4.2 below presents the possible activities, which are foreseen under the baseline scenario (i.e. under the new financial perspective).

Table 4.2 Description of the possible activities under scenario 1

Partially unmet needs	Foreseen activities under the baseline scenario
Activities targeting citizens	
Improved access to information and signposting	Some of the developments foreseen in this area include the revamping of the Europa website as well as the development of the new common EU identity. Bigger structures like the EDICs, Commission Representations and European Parliament Information Offices are expected to further support citizens in accessing relevant information on the EU. National Agencies, in charge of implementing EU programmes at national level, would also be increasingly involved in the delivery of information to citizens. Smaller CSOs, providing information on EU policies and developments to citizens, would also continue to do so.
Local / national access points to relevant information on the EU and EU rights	Structures like EDICs, the Commission Representations and European Parliament Information Offices are expected to further strengthen their activities as local/national access points for information for citizens. The results of the study showed that these structures are increasingly known by citizens. It is therefore expected that their visibility would further rise in the near future and that more citizens would make use of their services.
Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers	It is expected that some initiatives would continue their activities and reach more citizens compared with the current situation. For example, under the Citizens' Dialogues, meetings with policy makers would continue to take place in different EU cities. Smaller CSOs, organising meetings and discussions including citizens and policy makers, would also continue to do so. However, the mapping conducted in the context of this assignment showed that only a minority of CSOs carries out such types of activities.
Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes	It is expected that, under the baseline scenario, awareness of the ECI amongst citizens would increase somewhat. Current initiatives supporting citizens in launching proposals under the ECI would further continue their activities (for example, the ECI-Link project developed by ECAS). Also, more initiatives of this type would be organised.
Activities targeting CSOs	
Increase connections between CSOs and relations between national and EU CSOs	An increased number of national portals/registers (including details about CSOs) might be created in the future in order to increase connections between organisations at national level. Also, under the baseline scenario, some networks might be strengthened in the future. For example, following the 2013 Year of Citizens, the EYCA might continue to implement activities as a network and turn into a more permanent structure.
Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making	Under the baseline scenario, "ad hoc opportunities" to engage in EU dialogue and policy making would continue to be provided to CSOs.

Assessment

Overall, the EU institutions and, in particular, the Commission as well as organisations active at EU and national levels have invested substantial efforts to address most of the partially unmet needs identified. The activities planned under the next financial perspective are expected to bring some improvements towards further meeting those needs.

As mentioned above, it is foreseen that the revamping of the Europa website as well as the continuous efforts made by the largest initiatives in this area (such as the Commission Representations, European Parliament Information Offices, the EDICs, etc.) as well as other national and EU initiatives, would further support citizens in accessing relevant information on the EU. This information and other services, such as the provision of advice on EU rights, would also be delivered nationally thanks to the decentralised structure of some of the largest initiatives in this area (such as the Commission Representations, European Parliament Information Offices, the EDICs, etc.) as well as the presence of CSOs at national and local level. As the visibility of some of these initiatives (especially Commission Representations, European Parliament Information Offices, the EDICs) is expected to further improve in the near future, it is foreseen that citizens would be increasingly able to make use of the available services at a national/local level.

Some limited improvements are also expected concerning the available mechanisms to directly communicate with policy makers, as well as to engage in the policy-shaping process, thanks to the activities mentioned in Table 4.2 above. Finally, the activities, which are to be developed in the near future, would somewhat increase connections between CSOs and relations between national and EU CSOs. They are also expected to contribute to improving access of national/local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making.

However, some obstacles/challenges are expected to occur under the baseline scenario, in particular, related to the financial resources available to the sector. As a result of the economic crisis, EU and national budgets available to support CSOs are likely to be further reduced or at least stagnate. This would “force” CSOs to become more efficient/reduce their costs, as well as the scope of their activities. Also, a “process of change” would start under this scenario. However, the latter would not be as coordinated and intensive as the process started under scenario 2, described below.

These obstacles might reduce the impact of the foreseen activities on the partially unmet needs. The risk of not involving the “hard to reach” citizens and smaller, “unrepresented” CSOs would therefore remain under this scenario.

Funding-related considerations

Under the next financial perspective, EU programmes already implemented in this area anticipate the funding of activities aimed at increasing civic participation, and are relevant to address the identified partially unmet needs.

For example, under the new Europe for Citizens Programme (2014–2020) managed by DG Communication, which represents a total value of 185 million euro, Strand 2, representing approximately 60% of the budget, would accommodate activities that cover civic participation in the broadest sense, covering for example the development of opportunities for mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, solidarity, societal engagement and the promotion of democratic participation of citizens. Attention is also paid to the participation of citizens in policy shaping. Moreover, the new Programme stressed the importance for projects to be embedded in the local and regional context. Actions aiming to improve local access to services and providing information, which is adapted to grass roots realities are therefore eligible under the new Programme. Activities aimed to facilitate dialogue between policy makers and citizens are eligible under the strand “Democratic engagement and civic participation”, which aims to develop citizens' understanding and capacity to participate in the Union policy making process.

In addition, the Regulation establishing the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for the period 2014 to 2020, managed by DG Justice, representing a total value of 439.4 million euro, mentions that the programme would finance inter alia activities including mutual learning, cooperation, awareness raising and dissemination activities, such as identification

of, and exchanges on, good practice, innovative approaches and experiences, organisation of peer review and mutual learning, etc.

Finally, programmes in this area would also finance activities to promote and enhance the exercise of rights deriving from citizenship of the Union, which may include institutional communication on the political priorities of the Union.

However, with respect to the previous financial perspective, the 2014–2020 programming period makes less funding available. In combination with reduced national public funding and, possibly, more limited financing through fundraising activities, CSOs would have to work with reduced budgets and hence may have to limit their activities.

Table 4.3 below provides an assessment of the baseline scenario.

Table 4.3 Assessment of possible activities under scenario 1

Criteria	Rating	Description
General considerations	Not Applicable (NA)	NA
Operational and technical feasibility	NA	NA
Other feasibility considerations	NA	NA
Costs (financial feasibility)	NA	NA
Summary of main advantages and disadvantages	<p>The evidence gathered through this assignment showed that some of the current initiatives/structures are considered as successful and increasingly known by citizens (for example, the Commission Representations, European Parliament Information Offices, EDICs, EU Citizens' Dialogues, etc.). It is expected that, in future, activities implemented by these initiatives/structures as well as by CSOs working at EU and national level would contribute to addressing the partially unmet needs under the baseline scenario.</p> <p>Moreover, EU programmes to be implemented in this area under the future financial perspective (especially the Europe for Citizens Programme and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme) already foresee support for activities, which are aimed at increasing civic participation and are relevant to address the identified partially unmet needs.</p> <p>However, the baseline scenario triggers a number of challenges and obstacles. Firstly, problems might occur related to the limited funding available to the sector following the economic crisis and consequent cuts to EU and national budgets available to support CSOs. This would "force" CSOs to become more efficient/reduce their costs. Finally, a "process of change" would start under this scenario. However, the latter would not be as coordinated and radical as the process started under scenario 2, described below.</p>	

4.2.3 Scenario 2 - developing and strengthening of activities by existing structures

Possible activities

Table 4.4 below provides a description of possible activities, which are proposed to address the partially unmet needs of citizens and CSOs under scenario 2. The options include both new activities that could be developed and implemented and activities that are already implemented but which could be further improved/strengthened within the current budget (i.e. no additional resources).

The scenario would initially be 'guided' by the Commission and follow a cascading process, i.e. at EU level, the Commission would involve EU stakeholders as well as large national players, while at national level, these large national players would be expected to engage with other, medium, small and grass-roots organisations and follow a similar process. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below

Figure 4.1 Cascading process for the implementation of scenario 2

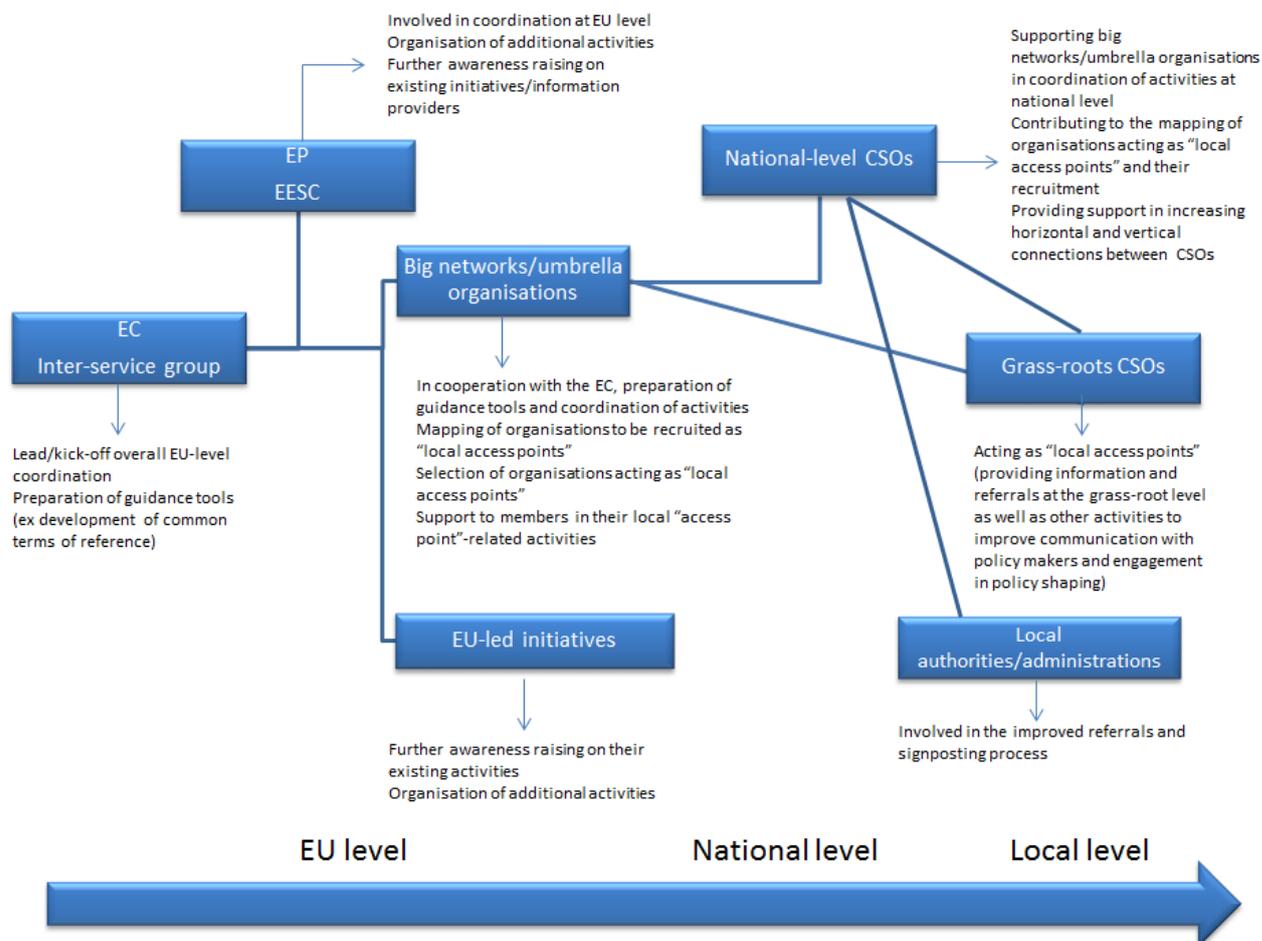


Table 4.4 Description of possible activities under scenario 2

Partially unmet needs	Possible activities
Options targeting citizens	
Improved access to information and signposting	<p>Existing structures, including those which do not (yet) focus on this, would further profile themselves as information providers and/or signpost citizens to other relevant sources of information, particularly as part of their websites and other online tools (newsletters, etc.)</p> <p>Structures which would be particularly well placed to further profile themselves as information providers are, for example, the Commission Representations, the EDICs and the EU Parliament Information Offices. These structures would further run awareness-raising campaigns to further improve their visibility (e.g. undertaken at local level / addressing certain groups of citizens in particular).</p> <p>In addition, other (and smaller) organisations would be encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations to further refer citizens to the (few) information providers mentioned above.</p> <p>The Commission or a selected network/umbrella organisation could work on the development of common 'terms of reference' providing guidance to CSOs on how to further refer citizens to the (few) information providers, how to provide comprehensive information, etc. The terms of reference would be built on existing good practice and include guidance and examples.</p>
Local / national access points to	Under this scenario, efforts would focus on improving the accessibility of existing

Partially unmet needs	Possible activities
<p>relevant information on the EU and EU rights</p>	<p>organisations/structures at the very local level. This would be achieved through a cascading process as illustrated in Figure 4.1 above.</p> <p>At EU level, a coordination effort could be put in place in order to better organise the delivery of activities on the ground through EU institutions, including the Commission Representations, the European Parliament Information Offices, the EDICs, etc. An inter-service group could be established to steer the coordination and cooperation amongst the different Commission services and develop cooperation with the European Parliament as well as representatives of the European Economic and Social Committee liaison group.</p> <p>Under this scenario, the Commission or a selected network/umbrella organisation would work on the development of a common terms of reference to be used by local organisations to better streamline services for citizens on the ground (for example, as mentioned above, guidance could be provided on how to further refer citizens to the “key” information providers, etc.).</p> <p>Other organisations/structures (not necessarily having national contact points as EU-led initiatives) would be encouraged by the Commission to have a better presence in the Member States, not only in the capital, by relying on their national members (both larger and smaller CSOs) which would be recruited to act as ‘local access points’. The recruitment would be performed directly by the networks/umbrella organisations, which would “select” organisations acting as ‘local access points’ amongst their members. The latter would provide information services and referrals at the grass roots level, thus maximising the reach of their activities. They would also deliver tailored information, where possible, taking into account the features of the locality of origin of the citizens. The common terms of reference (see above) would also suggest the criteria for selection of the ‘local access points’.</p> <p>Local authorities/administrations could also be involved in the improved referrals and signposting process.</p> <p>The Commission Representations and European Parliament Information Offices are increasingly known, as indicated by the citizens participating in the focus groups as well as in the street interviews, as places where information on the EU can be obtained. Also, they can count on a presence in each Member State (in some countries, two Representations are even established). Therefore, their “use” would be further incentivised under this scenario. First of all, European Public Spaces could be established in all the Member States’ Representations (currently they are established in only 18 cities). The Representations as well as European Parliament Information Offices could also further encourage CSOs to organise activities using and/or involving the European Public Spaces as well as further raise awareness (amongst CSOs and citizens) of the possibility of using such spaces to host debates, forums, lectures and training on European issues, as well as cultural activities such as exhibitions and films. Additional awareness-raising campaigns would be therefore organised.</p> <p>Also, security measures would be kept to a minimum in order not to discourage the access and improve the user-friendliness of the Commission Representations. In case this cannot be avoided, it would be important to inform visitors of the reason behind the establishment of security measures within the building.</p>
<p>Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers</p>	<p>Under this scenario, existing organisations/structures would be encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations to further organise events involving EU policy makers (including MEPs, Commission officials, etc.). Organisations already facilitating dialogue between policy makers and citizens would be further encouraged to develop their activities and to make use of their member organisations/wider networks of stakeholders to facilitate the hosting and organisation of such events. The “Citizens’ Dialogues” model could be further implemented and, possibly, taken over also by other institutions. This would allow for the organisation of additional meetings with policy makers in more cities within the same country.</p>

Partially unmet needs	Possible activities
	<p>In order to involve the “hard to reach” citizens, existing organisations/structures could include an itinerant element or diversify the venues for organising such events. Also, these meetings would be organised at the very local level and not in Brussels or in the capitals. Events organised by organisations/structures would not be ad hoc activities but represent an opportunity for citizens to communicate with policy makers in a more systematic way.</p> <p>As mentioned during the focus groups, as well as confirmed through the survey and the street interviews, the possibility to express their views and establish dialogue with policy makers online is very important for citizens. Therefore, organisations/structures facilitating dialogue with policy makers through online debates or through mobile sensing technologies available in smartphones (for example, Friends of Europe, Live+Gov, etc.) would be further encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations to strengthen their activities. Services of this kind should be improved in terms of type of thematic areas covered and number of policy makers reached at different levels.</p>
<p>Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes</p>	<p>Under this scenario, efforts would be also placed on raising the profile of current initiatives helping citizens to get involved in policy-shaping initiatives. In order to do so, targeted awareness-raising campaigns around policy-shaping events and initiatives for citizens would be organised by the existing networks/umbrella organisations as well as, directly, by the local organisations or by other stakeholders (such as local public authorities, for example).</p> <p>Organisations/structures helping citizens to launch an ECI (for example, the ECI-Link project developed by ECAS) would be made more visible. The mapping showed that there are several of these organisations/structures already active on the ground both at EU and national level. Information on the services provided by those organisations/structures would be made available, for example, through the EDICs or in local public (communal) services.</p> <p>In addition to better referring citizens to existing opportunities to participate in the policy-shaping process, local/grass-roots organisations would be encouraged to further organise activities supporting citizens in this process. In order to involve the “hard to reach citizens”, existing organisations/structures could include an itinerant element or diversify the venues for organising such activities. Also, the latter would take place at the very local level and not in Brussels or in the capitals.</p>
Options targeting CSOs	
<p>Increase connections between CSOs and relations between national and EU CSOs</p>	<p>Under this scenario, existing organisations/initiatives would be encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations to further develop activities to improve both vertical and horizontal connections amongst CSOs.</p> <p>With regard to enhancing vertical connections, well-established networks and umbrella organisations (such as the EU Social Platform, EYCA, ALDA, EMI, the ENNA, etc.) would be encouraged by the Commission to further improve connections between their members and recruit new ones. Particular attention would be given to involving grass-roots organisations working at the very local level as well as other smaller CSOs. Incentives would be also provided for the latter to become members of networks and umbrella organisations (perhaps in terms of limited membership fees).</p> <p>Guidance (a soft tool consisting of inter alia, good practice and examples) to networks and umbrella organisations on how to improve connections between their members and which organisations to prioritise when recruiting new members would be provided. This guidance would be prepared by the Commission or by a selected network/umbrella organisation..</p> <p>Particular attention would be given to the EYCA as its activities during the 2013 Year of Citizens were considered as particularly successful (as confirmed by the stakeholders consulted in the context of this assignment). While the EYCA might continue some activities at EU and national levels (under the baseline scenario),</p>

Partially unmet needs	Possible activities
	<p>there might be scope in further reinforcing the EU Network and the national networks established in 2013 through a coordinated effort of existing members.</p> <p>With regard to enhancing horizontal connections, existing instruments aiming to improve the awareness of CSOs working in the field would be further developed. Under this scenario, existing portals/registers including information on CSOs and their activities (for example in Poland¹⁷ and France¹⁸), would be further developed and their creation encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations in Member States where such instruments do not exist yet. A further activity would also consist of progressively linking the existing national portals/registers and creating an EU portal/register to improve transnational connections between CSOs. At EU level, this could comprise a strengthening of the Transparency Register. Further functions could be developed/added such as a tool for CSOs to flag their interest in developing joint activities (while registering on the database). Another function could consist of a “screening” of CSOs registered in the Register and recommendations of connections.</p> <p>Other structures, such as the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as the Committee of the Regions, would further organise events bringing CSOs together. The European Economic and Social Committee already organises a variety of events such as public hearings, conferences, seminars, debates, cultural events and other meetings. These are organised both in Brussels and in Member States (but mostly in Brussels). Therefore, under this scenario, additional events could be organised more systematically at the very local level and involve smaller CSOs, which are currently not reached. In bigger cities, such events could be also hosted within the European Public Spaces located in the Representations. Networks/umbrella organisations as well as smaller organisations recruited as ‘local access points’ would be encouraged to publicise these events in the Member States as well as at the very local level.</p>
<p>Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making</p>	<p>Finally, under this scenario, a more proactive approach would be put in place to involve CSOs, especially those at national and local levels, in consultations and dialogue with policy makers.</p> <p>Existing organisations/structures would be encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations to organise meetings and events with policy makers and representatives of CSOs. As for citizens, these meetings would be organised at the very local level and not in Brussels or in the capitals. It would be important to ensure that these are not ad hoc activities but that CSOs are able to access opportunities in a more systematic way.</p> <p>Also, existing organisations with a presence at national and local level would be encouraged by the Commission and existing networks/umbrella organisations to publicise existing opportunities to access dialogue and communicate with policy makers as currently done by Your Europe, the Euclid Network, the new alert mechanism launched by the Commission, etc. and to organise (additional) local opportunities. Also, the newly recruited ‘local access points’ (as described above) could be responsible for providing this information in a more structured way at local level.</p> <p>This would also be in line with the European Economic and Social Committee’s <i>Action Plan for Europe</i>, which calls for the inclusion of better standards of participation for civil society in the European decision-making process by including systematic, organised and financially supported mechanisms and opportunities for consultation.</p>

¹⁷ A portal (www.eu.ngo.pl) offers a database of European organisations – potential partners for Polish NGOs (there is a separate database of all Polish NGOs).

¹⁸ Most initiatives of the civil society focusing on the EU are listed on the website *Rencontrez l’Europe*.

Assessment

This scenario aims at addressing the outstanding needs by developing and strengthening the activities of organisations/structures, which are already active in this field as well as strengthening the coordination and streamlining of services delivered to citizens and CSOs. The activities would take place within the current budget. Under this scenario, the Commission, with the support and cooperation of other stakeholders would seek to start a coordinated process of change, based on improving efficiency, the pooling of resources and going local. The process of change would include all CSOs, from the bigger organisations/structures to the smaller/grass-roots organisations. As further explained below, the scenario would trigger changes to the status quo both from an organisational/logistical, as well as from a cultural/perceptual point of view.

When looking at the proposals for activities (Table 4.4 above), it is assumed that existing organisations/structures would be able to take forward the vast majority of the activities suggested, in particular because at present they already carry out similar activities or have the knowledge/expertise and visibility to do so. In addition, most already have a presence at EU, national and local levels. However, they would need to combine forces to fully meet the outstanding needs. The most significant efforts relate to:

- 'Going local', i.e. a much greater focus on the national and local level is required to meet the identified needs, which would mean making national members responsible for certain activities and possibly engaging new national members to deliver activities closer to EU citizens and grass-roots CSOs;
- Adopting a more coordinated/streamlined approach to some activities to strengthen the coherence in the "services" available to citizens and CSOs across the EU, while at the same time also avoiding duplication of effort;
- Turning some successful approaches into more permanent structures; and
- Undertaking joint activities to maximise the impact and the reach.

Some challenges and risks are, however, associated with the implementation of the additional activities foreseen under this scenario. These can mainly be summarised as follows:

- Given the overall limited resources available (both as part of EU and national funding), existing structures would need to focus on efficiency and cost savings. This would involve adopting a harmonised/joint approach, ensuring communication and cooperation as well as pooling of resources. This may trigger a restructuring of existing resources and organisational frameworks within some existing structures, which could include stopping certain activities because they are already being done more extensively/better by other existing structures, and placing more emphasis on activities which are particularly successful;
- The above would require a coordinated process of organisational change in terms of organisational culture, partnerships and functions. This process would require the development of a common vision, designed in close consultation with all (interested) existing structures, the development of common goals and actions, addressing obstacles (who is resisting change?), creating some short-term wins and building on the results of organisational change. It would also require existing structures to 'think outside the box' to a greater extent, compared to the status quo;

The challenges mentioned above might trigger resistance amongst the existing structures to work together and organise common activities due to some "natural competitiveness" as well as limited financial and human resources.

Table 4.5 below provides an assessment of scenario 2.

Table 4.5 Assessment of possible activities under scenario 2

Criteria	Rating	Description
Operational and technical feasibility	√√	<p>The activities described in Table 4.4 above are expected to bring some changes to the status quo both from an organisational/logistical, as well as from a cultural/perceptual point of view.</p> <p>The additional services and tasks foreseen under this scenario would require CSOs to introduce organisational and logistical changes. In particular, they would be required to intensify their cooperation with other existing structures, review their own ‘service package’ and focus more on local engagement and delivery.</p> <p>As additional funding is not foreseen under this scenario, in order to develop and implement the additional activities, there is a need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Focus on efficiency and cost savings</i> – this would mean putting in practice joint approaches, organising joint activities, streamlining the services provided to citizens and focusing on pooling of resources; ■ <i>Improve the knowledge of what is currently available</i> – a more detailed mapping of the types of functions and activities of existing structures would help to identify where they overlap/where there are gaps. This would help streamlining the services, leading to economies of scale. <p>Most of the organisational/logistical changes for CSOs would relate to the introduction of the concept of “local access points” as explained in Table 4.4. This would entail changes both for bigger networks/umbrella organisations (in charge of selecting and building the capacity of the members acting as “local access points” and coordinating their work) as well as for local CSOs, which would need, in some cases, to adapt their mandate and deliver additional services (for example, referrals to bigger information providers, provision of comprehensive information adapted to the local context, etc.).</p> <p>A key element to the success of “local access points” would be the drafting and implementation of the common terms of reference. The latter would increase the uniformity of the services provided and ensure that citizens in all Member States receive information at a local level in the same way.</p> <p>However, some obstacles could arise in the implementation of this process. For example, challenges could occur linked to the process of recruitment of appropriate partners to act as local access points and ensuring that they have sufficient capacity and resources. Also, the visibility of such access points would need to be raised in order to increase their reach (also to attract citizens who are usually “hard to reach”). This could be supported through training of civil servants in local bodies, provided there is an interest in following this training.</p> <p><i>Specific changes for bigger structures/initiatives</i> – as a result of the increase in referrals and consequent increased visibility, the workload of large information providers (such as Commission Representations, the EDICs and the EU Parliament Information Offices, etc.) would increase. Similarly, a strengthening of the role of information providers as local access points for citizens would lead to an increase in the workload of these structures. This would particularly be the case for Commission Representations, where European Public Spaces are located. It would therefore be important to carefully look at the capacity of these bigger structures/initiatives to avoid a potential overburdening. Similarly, the organisation of more meetings under the “Citizens’ Dialogues” would also require more resources (human and financial).</p> <p>The strengthening of networks and umbrella organisations (such as the Social Platform, EYCA, ALDA, European Movement International, ENNA, etc.), as mentioned in Table 4.4 above, would also increase the workload of these structures (e.g. recruitment, capacity building, network coordination, etc.). Given budget limitations, this may require some organisational and logistical changes to free up resources and/or to pool resources from other organisations. In time, however, new partners and members would add capacity and resources.</p> <p>The progressive linking of existing national portals/registers, the possible creation of an EU portal/register to improve transnational connections between CSOs, including the possible strengthening of the Transparency Register, may be technically very challenging and entail guidance and coordination at EU level to ensure coherence in the services provided and IT structures established. Coordination could be ensured by the Commission or by a designated EU structure .</p> <p>Finally, the organisation of additional events by the European Economic and Social Committee, especially at the very local level could entail some elevated costs as well as additional human resources. In order to</p>

Criteria	Rating	Description
		<p>cut these costs, such events could be organised within EU Public Spaces, where these have been established, or make use of spaces at the disposal of the national partners of existing structures.</p> <p>The development of additional activities foreseen under this scenario by bigger structures/initiatives as well as of the changes mentioned above is considered feasible. Firstly, existing structures/initiatives have the required level of experience and expertise to be able to effectively implement the scenario. Moreover, existing structures/initiatives have already an established presence on the ground as well as relevant contacts and visibility, which would facilitate them when carrying out new activities. In terms of capacity, as explained above, the changes linked to the scenario might require additional capacity and resources. However, these can be “generated” if the coordinated process of change was correctly implemented. By focusing on efficiency and cost savings, adopting a harmonised/joint approach, ensuring communication and cooperation as well as pooling of resources, the existing structures would also increase their capacity and overall, have more resources at their disposal</p> <p><i>Specific changes for smaller CSOs</i> – providing comprehensive information and referrals to citizens, as mentioned above, might have an impact on smaller organisations at EU and national level. This activity would require, for example, staff in existing organisations to be trained on the type of information to provide, on how to refer citizens to other key information providers, to learn more about these providers (in terms of areas covered, geographical access etc.). Similarly, the organisation of extra activities such as additional meetings with policy makers (at the very local level) as well as enhanced support at local level to citizens wishing to be involved more in the policy making process, would impact on the resources of smaller CSOs. It is important therefore to ensure that these organisations/structures have the capacity to deal with an increased number of questions from citizens.</p> <p>The development of additional activities foreseen under this scenario by smaller CSOs is considered feasible. As for bigger structures/initiatives, smaller CSOs have the necessary expertise, experience and presence on the ground to be able to effectively carry out the new tasks foreseen. However, due to the very limited resources available to smaller CSOs, particular focus should be given to the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The correct implementation of a common terms of reference, providing guidance and support to CSOs in the implementation of activities as part of the “local access points” concept; ■ The careful selection, by bigger networks and umbrella organisations, of CSOs being designated as “local access points”. Careful attention should be given to what organisations already do, where they are located and how they could effectively and efficiently contribute to the implementation of the scenario; ■ The provision, by the central level, of guidance and support in terms of training and sharing of best practices. <p><i>Local authorities/administration</i> – as the latter are also expected to contribute to the improved referrals/signposting process, training would be provided to some local authorities on the type of information to provide, on how to refer citizens to other key information providers, to learn more about these providers (in terms of areas covered, geographical access etc.). This training could take place as part of initiatives such as the “Erasmus Public Administration” programme (or similar initiatives aiming to train civil servants from Member States).</p> <p>Some cultural/perceptual changes would also need to be introduced under this scenario. These changes are mainly linked to the approach in the delivery of services to citizens and CSOs.</p> <p><i>A coordinated approach</i> – the scenario foresees the introduction and coordination of a number of approaches such as the establishment of “local access points”, the organisation of joint activities, streamlining the services provided to citizens and the enhanced focus on pooling of resources. In order to effectively implement those changes, some CSOs would need to modify their approach to the delivery of services and further “think outside the box”. This cultural/perceptual change would need to be a bottom-up process, with CSOs at all levels being committed and making a mental shift. The challenge would be to overcome scepticism as well as the natural competitiveness of CSOs. Some of the local CSOs might, for example, be reluctant to act as ‘local access points’ as this might change, in part or totally, their initial mandate.</p> <p>This process of change would ideally be coordinated at EU level, with the Commission possibly ‘guiding’/kicking off this process in close cooperation with the existing structures at EU level, which would</p>

Criteria	Rating	Description
		<p>then, in turn, be expected to set up similar processes with their national members. This cascading process is presented in Figure 4.1 above. The Figure also summarises the main responsibilities of the stakeholders taking part in this process.</p> <p>Funding-related considerations</p> <p>As mentioned above, the activities foreseen under this scenario would take place within the current budget. The EU programmes implemented under the multi-annual financial framework (2014–2020) already foresee the funding of activities, which aim at increasing civic participation and are relevant to address the identified unmet needs (a description of the eligible activities is presented under the baseline scenario in Table 4.3 above). It is expected that activities foreseen under this scenario would be eligible for funding under the existing Programmes.</p> <p>If correctly implemented, the coordinated process of change would also help make better use of the existing funds as it would lead to cost savings (through better cooperation and pooling of resources).</p>
Other feasibility considerations	√√√	<p>The scenario is considered proportionate to the problem at stake. It capitalises on what currently exists, by reinforcing and making better use of the services and structures available.</p> <p>Concerning EU added value, action at EU level is important in order to coordinate the strengthening of existing structures and initiatives, as well as to initiate the coordinated process of change. EU-level action would provide more coherence and uniformity in the services provided as well as ensuring that there are no major overlaps and duplication of effort.</p>
Costs (financial feasibility)	Low – Medium Feasibility: √√	<p>A detailed overview of the level of costs involved for the set-up and implementation of the possible options for activities identified is provided in Table A.1 in Annex 1 to this Report.</p> <p>The overall set-up costs to allow the existing structures to develop most of the activities are low, as the existing structures already have infrastructure, equipment and staff in place. The same applies to the overall implementation costs, as again the existing structures are already up and running (and many are already implementing similar activities).</p> <p>The costs associated with the implementation of the various activities are low to medium. This is mainly because existing structures can benefit from their own capacity, as well as that of their members and wider formal and informal networks. However, for most of the activities, they would incur some additional set-up and implementation costs, particularly when it concerns widening their reach (i.e. seeking to engage other national and local organisations which may not be so easy to reach) and when it comes to undertaking awareness-raising activities (which are, depending on the type of tools and channels used, costly by nature).</p>
Analysis of main advantages and disadvantages		<p>This scenario would contribute to addressing the partially unmet needs to a greater extent compared with the baseline scenario. In fact, the development and strengthening of activities by existing structures would present several important advantages. First, a coordinated process of change would be initiated which would help ensure consistency and avoid duplication of effort. If correctly implemented, the changes would lead to a streamlining of existing structures and services, a better reach and impact of activities, which would be increasingly provided at local level, as well as an increased pooling of resources. The scenario would also overall, help improve the coherence and uniformity in the services provided across the EU to citizens and CSOs. Also, in general, this scenario would help existing structures to better cope with the means they have.</p> <p>However, the scenario would also bring some disadvantages and potential risks. Firstly, as mentioned above, implementation of the scenario may trigger a number of organisational, cultural and operational changes for CSOs.</p> <p>Resistance to the process of change is therefore expected from some stakeholders, who would prefer to work autonomously and stick to 'business as usual', and because additional funding is not foreseen under this scenario in order to overcome some of the challenges related to the possible changes (organisations are rather, required to increase efficiencies). However, it is important to consider that by broadening their membership/partnership base, through the involvement of local/grass-roots organisations in particular, the existing structures would also grow their capacity and have overall more resources at their disposal.</p>

4.2.4 Scenario 3 - the establishment of a new structure in line with the European Parliament budget

Possible activities

Table 4.6 below provides a description of the possible activities which are proposed to address the partially unmet needs of citizens and CSOs under scenario 3.

The existing scenario aims to address the partially unmet needs by setting up a new structure, the EHCS, in line with the European Parliament budgetary commentary. When looking at the proposals for activities, it is assumed that this new structure would:

- Be a physical centre in Brussels, possibly having national members/contact points in all Member States (established in the longer term);
- Target both citizens and CSOs; and
- Include a variety of services (as described below in detail) ranging from the provision of information and signposting to the organisation of meetings with policy makers as well as events involving CSOs, etc.

Table 4.6 Possible activities to address the outstanding needs of citizens and CSOs under scenario 3

Partially unmet needs	Possible activities
Options targeting citizens	
Improved access to information and signposting	Under this scenario, the EHCS would launch targeted awareness-raising campaigns to raise the awareness of citizens of existing information providers (EDICs, the Commission Representations, the EU Parliament Information Offices, etc.). Though its national contact points, if and once established, these awareness-raising campaigns would be undertaken at national level and address certain groups of citizens in particular. Signposting to other relevant information sources would also be improved through the provision of information on the EHCS website(s), as part of newsletters, referrals, etc.
Local / national access points to relevant information on the EU and EU rights	Under this scenario, the national contact points of the EHCS would act as 'local access points', delivering services at Member State level. The latter would provide information services and referrals at the national level. They would also deliver tailored information, where possible, taking into account the features of the Member States of the origin of the citizens. A common terms of reference would be also drafted by the organisation implementing the EHCS to further promote the uniformity of the services provided.
Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers	Under this scenario, the EHCS would organise events involving EU policy makers (including MEPs, Commission officials, etc.) and citizens. This would be done at EU level and, in particular, at national level through its network of contact points, if and once established. Online forms of communication between citizens and policy makers would also be made available through the website of the House (and its national webpages).
Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes	Under this scenario, the EHCS would undertake activities to raise the profile of current initiatives helping citizens to get involved in policy-shaping initiatives. In order to do so, targeted awareness-raising campaigns around policy-shaping events and initiatives for citizens would be organised. In addition, the EHCS would also provide information and assistance with regard to the ECI. These activities would be implemented both at EU level (through the central EHCS) and at national level (through the network of contact points).
Options targeting CSOs	
Increase connections between CSOs and relations between national and EU CSOs	Under this scenario, the EHCS would develop and host an online tool for CSOs to register themselves and their interests, which would allow them to identify and connect with other CSOs. The EHCS would also proactively screen the registered CSOs and suggest connections. The tool would be established at national level while an interconnected database would be developed at the EU level to allow transnational connections. In addition to the establishment of online registers, the EHCS (in Brussels as well as through its national

Partially unmet needs	Possible activities
	contact points) would organise events bringing CSOs together.
Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making	Finally, under this scenario, the EHCS would be responsible for organising meetings and events with policy makers and representatives of CSOs. These would be organised in Brussels as well as in the Member States (through the EHCS national contact points). Moreover, the website of the EHCS (and its national pages) would include information on ongoing consultations.

Assessment

Table 4.7 below provides an assessment of the scenario foreseeing the establishment of a new structure in line with the European Parliament budgetary commentary.

Table 4.7 Establishing a new structure

Criteria	Rating	Description
Operational and technical feasibility	√	<p>The activities described in Table 4.6 above are expected to bring some changes to the status quo from an organisational/logistical point of view.</p> <p><i>Need to set up a new structure</i> – the EHCS would be a new structure, which would thus need to be built from scratch, thus requiring infrastructure, equipment, staffing, etc.</p> <p><i>Need to build expertise for the delivery of services</i> – the staff working within the EHCS would need to undergo extensive training to be able to effectively deliver services to citizens and CSOs. Compared with existing structures/organisations, the EHCS would need to build “know-how” to be able to perform the same tasks. Also, training and guidance would be provided to the staff so that the contact points would deliver similar services and coherent information across the EU.</p> <p><i>Need to raise awareness of the newly established structure</i> – the EHCS (at least in the first phase) would suffer from a lack of visibility amongst citizens and CSOs compared with already-established structures, which are already somewhat known amongst the public. Substantial efforts would be invested in raising the profile of the EHCS both at EU and national level.</p> <p><i>Need for additional human resources</i> – the new activities implemented by the EHCS would require additional human resources, for example, in terms of personnel in charge of signposting citizens to information providers, organising events involving EU policy makers, raising the awareness of citizens on available opportunities to engage in policy shaping, operating the online tool registering CSOs, organising events bringing CSOs together, etc. Additional resources would be needed to implement those activities both at EU and national level (i.e. the national contact points established). The establishment of EHCS ‘local access points’ would require the setting up of a network of contact points with a physical presence in each Member State and with adequate resources (i.e. personnel available to inform and guide citizens).</p> <p>There are some challenges and risks linked to the delivery of activities/services by the new EHCS. First of all, as mentioned above, the lack of visibility (at least in the short term) could jeopardise some activities such as referrals to large information providers or initiatives helping citizens getting involved in policy shaping, etc. Another risk is linked to the lack of capillary delivery of service to citizens and CSOs as the national contact points would only be established in the long term and these most likely would only be located in capitals or big cities. On the other hand, under scenario 2, the delivery of services would be performed through “local access points”, recruited amongst CSOs already active at the very local level. The lack of capillary delivery of services would mean that the hard to reach citizens and small/grass-roots CSOs might be left outside the scope of action.</p> <p>Finally, there is a risk of further confusing the citizens with the establishment of yet another structure performing similar activities to the ones already in place. This would also contradict the streamlining approach highlighted in the Multi Financial Framework 2014–2020.</p> <p>Funding-related considerations</p> <p>The development and running of the EHCS as well as the activities foreseen under this scenario would need to take place within the current budget available under the new Europe for Citizens Programme (2014–2020). Given that the costs are relatively high (see below), this would mean that fewer financial resources would be available for other existing structures applying for funding.</p>
Other feasibility considerations	√	Some of the actions proposed are not considered proportionate to the problem at stake. This is mainly due to the fact that, instead of capitalising on what currently exists, reinforcing and making better use of the

Criteria	Rating	Description
		<p>services and structures available, the scenario established new services and structures, entailing high financial costs and requiring substantial set-up time as well as high long-term costs. The greatest costs are linked to the establishment of a network of national members/contact points. The long-term costs raise some questions concerning the sustainability of the new structure and whether the financial resources would be ensured over the longer term.</p> <p>As shown in the analysis above, the effectiveness and the reach of the latter is more limited compared with what can be achieved by existing organisations/structures under scenario 2. Therefore the involvement of the “hard to reach” citizens and small CSOs is not expected to be improved substantially under this scenario.</p> <p>The added value of establishing such a structure is also not evident as an EHCS might, in some cases, overlap with existing efforts and not bring any considerable improvements.</p> <p>Finally, there are also some legal constraints to the implementation of this scenario. The normal course of action would be that those entities wishing to obtain financing would have to apply in the context of calls for proposals and be selected after an evaluation in relation to all other applicants, in conformity with the principles of transparency and equal treatment. Such application for an operating grant would appear to be possible under the Europe for Citizens programme 2014-20. Only if it was decided to finance a specific entity, as seems to be implied in the budgetary remark, would it require the adoption of a basic act identifying this beneficiary. This could be, however, source of serious criticisms, unless thoroughly justified.</p>
Costs (financial feasibility)	Costs: Medium - High Feasibility: √	<p>A detailed overview of the level of costs involved for the set-up and implementation of the possible options for activities identified is provided in Table A.1 in Annex 1 to this Report.</p> <p>The overall set-up costs of the EHCS are high, as it would require the purchasing or renting of a physical structure (and possibly its refurbishment or at least adaptation). Other costs would relate to recruitment, equipment, other material costs, etc.</p> <p>The same applies to the overall implementation costs, as the EHCS would need to start from scratch. Even under a minimal set-up, the EHCS would need to include at least 3 FTE (Full-Time Equivalents), to cover for example reception/information services, administration and management.</p> <p>The costs associated with the set-up of the various activities are medium to high. This is mainly because of EHCS being a new structure which, at least initially, could not rely on national members/contact points or a wider formal and informal network. Also, the EHCS would be limited in its reach, being centrally located, and would thus need to incur substantial additional costs for engaging with citizens and CSOs at national and local levels. As for the existing structures, high-cost activities include outreach activities and awareness-raising campaigns. The organisation of events in Member States is also a high-cost activity for the EHCS.</p>
Analysis of main advantages and disadvantages		<p>Similar to scenario 2, this scenario would contribute to addressing the identified partially unmet needs as similar activities would be implemented. There are some advantages compared with scenario 2, as the approach to setting up a new structure is more straightforward than setting in motion a coordinated process of change with a large number of existing structures.</p> <p>However, there are a number of important challenges and risks, which severely limit the added value of this scenario. The first risk is linked to the high set-up and implementation costs for a new structure (including the need to hire sufficient human resources to be able to implement the services foreseen), especially given that no additional EU funding has been set aside for this.</p> <p>Secondly, the new structure would implement very similar activities compared to scenario 2 described above. However, the EHCS would not be able to capitalise on the capacity, experience or expertise of existing structures working in this field. The new structure would need time to build “know-how” to be able to perform the same tasks as effectively/efficiently as existing structures would do.</p> <p>Another risk is linked to the reach of the newly established structure. While it is expected that national contact points would be established in the longer term, the latter would be most likely located in capitals or big cities. A capillary delivery of services, as ensured under scenario 2 with the “local access points, would therefore not be established. Finally, there is a risk of further confusing citizens with the establishment of yet another structure performing similar activities to the ones already in place. This would also contradict the streamlining approach highlighted in the Multi Financial Framework 2014–2020.</p>

Criteria	Rating	Description
		The assessment therefore shows that there are more risks than advantages linked to the implementation of this scenario. It would therefore be more efficient to capitalise on what is already in place and streamline existing and future efforts rather than establishing a brand new structure.

4.3 Overview of costs linked to the implementation of the scenarios

Table A.1 in Annex 1 to this Report provides an overview of the costs linked to the implementation of the different options for activities foreseen under scenarios 2 and 3. The Table includes considerations on both set-up costs and running costs.

As shown below, the costs linked to the implementation of scenario 2 overall, range between low and medium. As mentioned above, these costs would need to be incurred without additional funding being made available.

The costs linked to the implementation of scenario 3 are, as anticipated above, higher compared with those linked to the implementation of scenario 2. As mentioned above, no additional (EU) funding can be allocated to scenario 3, which means that the new structure would need to be financed through the budget available for the Europe for Citizens Programme (2014–2020).

The costs range generally, between medium and high. Even when similar activities are considered, the costs for the implementation under scenario 3 are higher as it is expected that the EHCS would not be able to draw on existing formal/informal networks but would, on the other hand, need to set up new structures.

4.4 Comparison of the different scenarios

Under each of the three scenario considered, improvements to the current situation are expected (i.e. the partially unmet needs would be addressed to some extent). Each of the scenarios also presents some risks, which might limit their effectiveness and jeopardise their success. Table 4.8 provides an overview of the ratings provided for the scenarios considered.

Table 4.8 Overview of feasibility ratings

Criteria	Baseline scenario	Implementation by existing structures	Establishment of EHCS
Overall assessment	NA	NA	NA
Operational and technical feasibility	NA	√√	√
Costs (financial feasibility)	NA	√√	√
Other feasibility considerations	NA	√√	√

Under the **baseline scenario**, the substantial efforts invested both at EU and national level to increase civic participation would result in an overall improvement of the current situation. The successful activities currently implemented are expected to be further strengthened under the baseline scenario and be increasingly recognised by citizens. New activities, targeting citizens and CSOs, are also expected to be developed under the future financial perspective. EU programmes to be implemented in this area under the future financial perspective (especially the Europe for Citizens Programme and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme) already foresee support for activities aimed at increasing civic participation and are relevant to address the identified partially unmet needs.

However, problems might occur related to the limited funding available to the sector following the economic crisis and consequent cuts to EU and national budgets available to support CSOs. This may “force” CSOs to reduce their costs and possibly downscale their operations, thus reducing the positive effects discussed above.

A “process of change” would start under this scenario, although not as coordinated and intensive as the process started under scenario 2. This would impact on the extent to which the “hard to reach” citizens and smaller, “unrepresented” CSOs would be involved in future activities.

The **scenario which relies on the strengthening of existing structures** is expected to introduce more substantial improvements compared with the baseline scenario. First of all, a coordinated process of change would be initiated. This would consist of a bottom-up approach, involving all CSOs, with some coordination at central level, ensuring consistency and avoiding duplication of effort (see cascading process represented in Figure 4.1 above). This process of change would entail changes to the status quo both from an organisational/logistical, as well as from a cultural/perceptual point of view.

If correctly implemented, the changes would lead to a streamlining of existing structures and services, a better reach and impact of activities, which would increasingly be provided at local level, as well as to an increased pooling of resources. The scenario would also help improve the complementarity and coherence of the services provided across the EU to citizens and CSOs. Also, by broadening their membership/partnership base, through the involvement of local/grass-roots organisations in particular, the existing structures would also grow their capacity and overall, have more resources at their disposal. Capacity-related problems would therefore be attenuated if the “local access points” concept was correctly implemented.

However, resistance to the process of change is expected from some stakeholders as additional funding is not foreseen under this scenario in order to overcome the challenges related to the organisational/logistical changes. Moreover, some reluctance is also expected concerning cultural/perceptual changes to be introduced. Under this scenario, CSOs would need to change their approach to the delivery of services and further “think outside the box”. Some CSOs might not welcome the new approach proposed.

The **EHCS scenario** is also expected to bring improvements to the current situation. Similar to scenario 2, additional services would be provided to citizens and CSOs ranging from the provision of information and signposting to existing information providers, to the organisation of meetings with policy makers as well as events involving CSOs, etc. This “improved offer” is expected to contribute to addressing the partially unmet needs identified.

Compared with scenario 2, the implementation of this scenario might be more straightforward (provided that sufficient human and financial resources can be secured) as it would not require coordination and consensus building amongst a relatively large number of existing structures.

However, there are several challenges and risks, which severely limit the added value of this scenario. The first risk is linked to the high set-up and implementation costs for a new structure (including the need to hire sufficient human resources to be able to implement the services foreseen). Secondly, the new structure would implement very similar activities compared to scenario 2 described above. However, the EHCS would not be able to capitalise on the capacity, experience and expertise of existing structures working in this field. The new structure would need time to build “know-how” to be able to perform the same tasks as effectively/efficiently as existing structures would do. Another risk is linked to the reach of the newly established structure. While it is expected that national contact points would be established in the longer term, the latter would be most likely located in capitals or big cities. A capillary delivery of services, as ensured under scenario 2 with the local access points, would therefore not be established. Finally, there is a risk of further confusing the citizens with the establishment of yet another structure performing similar activities to the ones already in place. This would also contradict the streamlining approach highlighted in the Multi Financial Framework 2014–2020.

As far as the **costs** of implementing the scenarios are concerned, under the scenario which builds on existing structures, the overall set-up costs to allow the existing structures to develop the activities are very low, as the existing structures already have infrastructure, equipment and staff in place. The same applies to the implementation costs, as again the existing structures are already up and running (and many are already implementing similar

activities). The type of costs associated with the set-up and implementation of the various activities is low to medium. This is mainly because existing structures can benefit from their own capacity, as well as that of their members and wider formal and informal networks.

On the other hand, the overall set-up costs of the EHCS are high, as it would require the purchasing or renting of a physical structure (and possibly its refurbishment or at least adaptation). Other costs would relate to recruitment, equipment, other material costs, etc. The same applies to the overall implementation costs, as the EHCS would need to start from scratch. The level of costs associated with the set-up of the various activities is medium to high.

As far as **additional feasibility considerations** are concerned, the EHCS scenario also triggers some constraints in terms of proportionality, added value and its legal basis.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Main findings of the mapping exercise and needs assessment

With regard to the mapping of existing organisations and the needs assessment, the study has shown that:

- Both citizens and CSOs consulted as part of the study overall showed an interest in EU matters, but most did not find it easy to access information or find out about services and opportunities offered in terms of advice and engagement in policy-shaping processes.
- Citizens in particular expressed a need for:
 - Improved local access to EU information, advice and other services and better signposting
 - More understandable and user-friendly information, ideally tailored to national/local needs and interests
 - Opportunities to communicate with policy makers and to engage in policy-shaping processes.
- CSOs in particular expressed a need for:
 - Higher involvement of ‘unrepresented’ CSOs, especially those at the local/grass roots level
 - Increased opportunities for CSOs to connect to other CSOs, as well as with EU CSOs
 - Sharing and pooling of knowledge and resources
 - Increased involvement in policy making processes.
- Most of the needs identified are, to a greater or lesser extent, already being addressed by existing organisations, instruments and initiatives (in particular the 30 structures which were, as part of the mapping, considered to perform functions which were similar to those potentially attributed to the EHCS according to the European Parliament budgetary commentary).
- Some identified needs remain (partially) unmet in the current situation. For citizens, these include the need for:
 - Improved access to information and signposting
 - Local/national access points
 - Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers
 - Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes.

For CSOs, these include the need for:

- Increasing connections between CSOs
- Improving relations between national and EU CSOs
- Improving access of national/local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making.

5.2 Main findings of the feasibility assessment

The feasibility assessment examined the extent to which three main scenarios (baseline – no change; implementation by existing structures; establishment of an EHCS) could successfully develop and implement a series of possible activities suggested to address the (partially) unmet needs and found the following:

■ Scenario 1 – the baseline scenario

Some developments under the baseline scenario would help to address some of the needs identified, such as improved access to information and improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes. However, it is expected that not all would be met to a sufficient extent. However, a “process of change” would not be started under this scenario. Activities would take place as planned, without additional coordination efforts aimed to improve efficiency, the pooling of resources and “going local”. This would

impact on the extent to which the “hard to reach” citizens and smaller, “unrepresented” CSOs would be involved in future activities.

On this basis, the baseline scenario is not considered the preferred option.

■ **Scenario 2 – strengthening of activities and existing structures**

The involvement of “hard to reach” citizens and (grass-roots) CSOs would be improved through a stronger focus on the access to information and services at local level and a greater focus on improving connections between CSOs.

If correctly implemented, the scenario would lead to a streamlining of existing structures and services, a better reach and impact of activities, which would be increasingly provided at local level as well as to an increased pooling of resources. The scenario would also generally help improve the coherence and uniformity in the services provided across the EU to citizens and CSOs. Also, in general, this scenario would help existing structures to better cope with the means they have. The scenario is proportionate to the problems at stake and can be achieved at a low to medium cost. However, it implies that a coordinated process of change is correctly established and taken forward, ensuring a high level of commitment from all stakeholders involved.

On this basis, the scenario is considered to be the preferred option, providing some conditions are met (as described in section 5.13 below).

■ **Scenario 3 – establishment of an EHCS**

While the EHCS would bring some important benefits, similar to the ones identified for scenario 2, these could only be achieved at a relatively higher cost.

Although the EHCS could place specific focus on some of the (partially) unmet needs identified, rather than addressing these on top of its core activities (which would be the case for some existing structures), its impact would be limited as it would be based in a single location. At least initially, the EHCS could not benefit from a network of existing members or from other formal or informal networks to ensure the much needed focus on ‘going local’, i.e. providing local access points to information and advice. Also, the costs of the EHCS would be much higher than scenario 2, as it would need to set up from scratch and compensate organisations for activities at local level. Finally, the consultations carried out in the context of this assignment and, in particular, the focus groups, street interviews and the workshop, showed a limited appetite for the establishment of a new structure amongst the citizens and CSOs consulted.

There is therefore no clear added value in establishing a new structure compared with capitalising on what is already in place and streamlining existing and future efforts.

On this basis, scenario 3 is not considered to be a feasible option as additional feasibility and cost constraints have been identified compared with scenario 2.

5.3 Recommendations

Following the assessment of the different scenarios, **the study considers that the (partially) unmet needs are best addressed by strengthening existing structures (scenario 2)**. The study suggested and assessed some activities which could be implemented, but it would be important that existing structures are incentivised to examine alternative options and to develop a common approach.

Table 5.1 below summarises the main activities proposed under this scenario (a more detailed description is provided in section 4.2), highlighting the role and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved.

Table 5.1 Main activities proposed under the preferred scenario

Who	What
European Commission	<p><i>a) Issue recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better visibility of existing services for citizens – the recommendations would call on existing information providers to better profile themselves and improve their visibility to citizens (for example, through the organisation of awareness-raising campaigns, etc.) and/or signpost citizens to other relevant sources of information, particularly as part of their websites and other online tools (newsletters, etc.). The recommendations would also encourage existing organisations/structures to organise additional targeted awareness-raising campaigns to better advertise and promote policy-shaping events and initiatives available to citizens (for example linked to the ECI, etc.). ■ Going local – in line with what is presented in section 4, the recommendations would encourage bigger networks and umbrella organisations to recruit ‘local access points’ amongst their members to better deliver services at the very local level and reach the “hard to reach” public; ■ Strengthening of connections between CSOs – the recommendations would stimulate the further development of activities improving connections amongst CSOs both at national and EU levels. They would stimulate bigger networks of CSOs and umbrella organisations to further recruit new members as well as the further strengthening and development of national portals/registers including information on CSOs and their activities; ■ Promoting dialogue between citizens, CSOs and policy makers – the recommendations would encourage policy makers to participate more in national events involving citizens and CSOs, also outside the capital cities. They would also stimulate the organisation of additional meetings and events involving policy makers, citizens and representatives of CSOs as well as better visibility of existing opportunities to access dialogue and communicate with policy makers. <p><i>b) Develop guidance and tools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Linked to the above, the Commission could lead the development of common terms of reference, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Guidance to CSOs on how to further refer citizens to the (few) information providers and perform other activities as part of the ‘local access points’ mandate. The guidance would comprise good practice and examples; – The criteria for the selection of ‘local access points’ as well as the potential mandate and activities, in close cooperation with existing structures. ■ The Commission could also provide guidance to bigger networks/umbrella organisations on how to improve connections between their current members and how to recruit new members which may be “hard to reach”. The guidance would comprise good practice and examples; and ■ Finally, the Commission could strengthen the Transparency Register by adding functionalities or by developing a linked online database specifically aimed at connecting CSOs. <p><i>c) Lead/kick off the coordination of activities (at least in the shorter term):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At EU level, a coordination effort would be put in place in order to better organise the delivery of activities on the ground through the Commission Representations, the European Parliament Information Offices, the EDICs, etc. An inter-service group could be established to steer the coordination and cooperation amongst the different Commission services and develop cooperation with the European Parliament as well as representatives of the European Economic and Social Committee liaison group.
Other EU institutions	<p>The European Economic and Social Committee could be made responsible for the organisation of additional activities such as public hearings, conferences, seminars, debates, cultural events and other meetings. The latter would be organised more systematically at the very local level and involve smaller CSOs, which are currently not reached. In bigger cities, such events would be also hosted within the European Public Spaces located in the Representations. Such events would rely on networks/umbrella organisations as well as smaller organisations recruited as “local access points’ to publicise these</p>

Who	What
	<p>events in the Member States as well as at the very local level. These additional activities could be coordinated by the European Economic and Social Committee liaison group in cooperation with the Commission inter-service group established as part of this scenario (see above)</p>
EU-led initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Commission Representations, the EDICs and the EU Parliament Information Offices would run additional awareness-raising campaigns to further improve their visibility (e.g. undertaken at local level/addressing certain groups of citizens in particular), possibly involving the 'local access points' (see below) in these campaigns. ■ Commission Representations and EU Parliament Information Offices would establish additional European Public Spaces in the Member States where such structures do not yet exist. The availability to the public (in terms of opening hours) would be improved. The representations would also keep the security measures to a minimum. They would proactively reach out to CSOs and citizens and make their rooms and facilities available to them.
Networks/umbrella organisations	<p>Bigger networks of CSOs and umbrella organisations would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In cooperation with the Commission, contribute to the development of a common terms of reference highlighting the criteria for selection of the 'local access points' as well as the potential activities of the latter; ■ Map potential local organisations to be recruited as 'local access points' and "select" organisations acting as access points amongst their members; ■ Support their members in carrying out tasks as part of their 'local access point' function (including support with logistical arrangements, training of staff, etc.); ■ Support the further strengthening and development of national portals/registers including information on CSOs and their activities; and ■ Actively recruit new 'hard to reach' members, and improve connections between members (following the guidance provided by the Commission).
Smaller CSOs	<p>Smaller CSOs (especially those active at the very local level) would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Organise events involving EU policy makers (including MEPs, Commission officials, etc.) and facilitate contacts with policy makers through online debates or through mobile sensing technologies available in smartphones; ■ Organise targeted awareness-raising campaigns around policy-shaping events and initiatives available for citizens (for example linked to the ECI, etc.); ■ Publicise existing opportunities for CSOs to access dialogue and communicate with policy makers. <p>In addition, part of the CSOs would act as local access points', i.e. providing information services and referrals at the grass roots level, deliver tailored information, where possible, taking into account the features of the locality of origin of the citizens, etc.</p>

5.4 Using a change management approach to encourage the implementation of the preferred scenario

As mentioned above, the implementation of scenario 2 requires a process of organisational change, both with regard to the ways in which existing structures cooperate with each other as well as within each structure.

The scenario assumes a minimum level of willingness and interest from existing structures to introduce changes in their current approaches and practices, to work towards meeting the partially unmet needs which have been identified and to engage in a process to identify: how they can best jointly meet these needs; and how this should be done, by whom and what to prioritise. .

Scenario 2 further assumes that there is a de facto need for change driven by:

- Other external factors, i.e. reduced availability of funding both at national and at EU level, caused by public sector budget cuts and a decrease in revenue from other fundraising activities, membership fees, etc. (where this is applicable); and
- Internal factors, i.e. the related need for organisations to streamline their activities and increase efficiency gains.

The change management process should help in identifying which existing structure can best contribute in view of their collective 'mission' and accompany the internal changes which may be required to realise this. The process should also provide existing structures with the tools to consider external changes. Finally, the scenario assumes that there is overall consensus, amongst existing structures, of the fact that, at present, their reach is insufficient, particularly outside the capital and large cities. The change management process should help in identifying which organisations would be best placed to 'go local' and encourage the development of a common approach to "going local".

Provided the above assumptions are valid, in order to set in motion this process of change, there would be great benefit in this being, at least initially, 'guided' or 'steered' by a single structure. In this section, we have assumed that the Commission would take this role, although the suggested change management approach could also be applied to other existing structures, provided these would have sufficient leverage to take the lead.

Main dimensions of change

The implementation of scenario 2 would require increased cooperation between existing structures at all levels (see cascading process illustrated in Figure 4.1) above, to jointly decide on, develop and implement activities to meet the needs of citizens and CSOs. The process of organisational change would focus on streamlining, pooling of resources and 'going local. The possible specific activities are outlined in section 4.2 above. In a climate of austerity, the additional resources required to realise these would mainly need to be generated through efficiency gains, with existing structures jointly reviewing and taking action on increasing synergies and reducing duplication of effort. That said, (some) additional resources would also be secured by existing structures engaging new partners in particular at local and grass roots level.

There are three key dimensions of change which relate to realising the preferred scenario:

- **Organisational culture of existing structures at all levels:** the first dimension relates to changes required to the overall 'organisational culture' of the existing structures at all levels, in particular with regard to their readiness to cooperate (also) for the 'greater good', which would imply streamlining and creating economies of scale and, linked to this, an openness towards reviewing their current activities (further elaborated below);
- **Partnership building and cooperation:** the second dimension relates to reviewing and changing current forms of cooperation and partnerships, by intensifying and possibly formalising/structuring collaboration efforts. One possible forum for this could be the EYCA;
- **Operations:** the third dimension would result from the modifications to cooperation above and relate to the possible changes to the functions of the existing structures, which may be altered or dropped altogether in the light of the focus on streamlining for efficiency gains and the increased collaboration between existing structures.

The change management process would need to take account of each of these dimensions in order to be successful.

Actors involved in the change

Ideally, the change management process is initially guided by a single stakeholder, in close cooperation with the other relevant existing structures. We have assumed that the Commission (through the inter-service group) would kick off and initially steer the work, although it would also be possible to have another existing structure taking this role. . Alternatively, the appointment of a single stakeholder to steer the change management could

also be discussed and agreed as part of step 1 (see below – *key steps in the change management process*), which focuses on the rationale for change.

The role of the “guiding” stakeholder would in particular focus on organising the first steps of the change management process as described below. If the Commission would take this role, then after steps 3 or 4 (see below) it could seek to ‘hand over’ guidance and coordination to one or a small steering group of existing structures.

The existing structures to be involved in the change management process are those presented in Figure 4.1 above, illustrating the cascading process and the role of single stakeholders in the implementation of scenario 2..

Key steps in the change management process

The change management process proposed would comprise broadly the following steps:

- **Step 1: Explaining the rationale for the change** – this entails explaining why the change is needed, what the rationale is behind the changes required to implement scenario 2 and what the risks and disadvantages are of not changing. At this stage, stakeholders need to agree on, firstly, the need for change and, secondly, the broad dimensions of the change;
- **Step 2: Developing a common vision** – the second step would relate to developing a common vision to take forward. The designated “guiding” stakeholder (the Commission) would present a ‘draft’ vision, which would be further elaborated in close cooperation with other actors involved in this process (for example, representatives of networks and umbrella organisations, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions). This step could also include objective setting as well as a first review of (possible) key actions and milestones;
- **Step 3: Addressing obstacles** – any obstacles, including reluctance and a lack of commitment, would need to be addressed at an early stage. Efforts would need to be made by the designated “guiding” stakeholder (the Commission) and by other actors committed to the change (for example, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and representatives of networks and umbrella organisations) to convince broader stakeholders of the rationale and the vision (for example, CSOs at national and local level). Practical obstacles would also need to be identified and addressed;
- **Step 4: Implementing the change** – the implementation process would include the elaboration of the vision, objectives and key actions into a detailed work programme; preparing for the change and setting it in motion;
- **Step 5: Communication** – at all times, progress on the change process would be communicated by the designated “guiding” stakeholder to all the actors involved in this change process in order to ensure transparency. First wins (see also below) should be amply celebrated and delays or problems examined and explained;
- **Step 6: Creating quick wins** – as the change process is expected to be challenging, it would be important to share and celebrate the first achievements, to confirm that the change process is indeed bringing improvements and to ensure further buy in from stakeholders involved in the process at different levels;
- **Step 7: Building on the results of the change** – rather than considering it a process with a start and an end, it would be important to continuously review the change process (as part of the monitoring below) to evaluate learning by the stakeholders involved at all levels, and build on the results of the change, looking at potential future action; and
- **Step 8: Monitoring the implementation** – monitoring the change process is essential to keep track of progress and assess its achievements, but also to inform communication efforts and to identify good practice and lessons learned.

Each of the above steps has been further elaborated, taking into account the different dimensions of change which are envisaged as part of the preferred scenario (scenario 2),

and presented in the Table below. This includes considerations on the key ‘messages’ to be delivered, the ‘format’ in which these could be provided and the possible tools.

Table 5.2 Elaboration of different steps and their key messages and tools

Dimension of change Steps	Organisational culture	Partnership building and cooperation	Operations
Step 1: Explaining the rationale for the change	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Several needs of citizens and CSOs are insufficiently addressed. Many have an interest in EU matters but are at present not reached by existing structures. – Existing structures are best placed to address the identified needs, having the appropriate expertise and knowledge – The current economic climate and related reductions in funding and other forms of revenue however require a joint approach and streamlining of activities – existing structures cannot do this on their own and need to focus on creating economies of scale – Existing structures should stop seeing each other as potential ‘competitors’ and rather focus on their complementarity. <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preparation of a summary paper on priority needs (and possibly the draft vision) – Organisation of an event by the Commission for all relevant existing structures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Presentation of the needs assessment in a summary paper ○ Facilitated discussions ○ Consensus building on the need to change the overall organisational culture <p>The event could combine the steps related to the rationale and the vision, although in this case it would need to last at least two full days.</p>	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Existing structures cannot meet the insufficiently addressed needs on their own, as they do not have the capacity or the resources – There is a need to cooperate, creating more structured forms of cooperation, building new partnerships (which may be based on existing ones) and pooling of resources – The intensified cooperation would imply giving up some autonomy, but it would definitely not affect the specific identity of each existing structure. <p>Format and tools:</p> <p>The same as under <i>organisational culture</i>, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mapping of existing structures and their functions / activities – First analysis of areas of duplication and gaps. – Presentation of the results of the mapping and the analysis at the event organised by the Commission and facilitated discussion, followed by consensus building on the need to strengthen cooperation and partnership 	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As a result of the current economic climate and related reductions in funding and other forms of revenue, many existing structures would have to scale down their operations – To still address the needs of citizens and CSOs, existing structures would need to streamline operations and focus on what each does best, leaving less successful functions to other existing structures who deliver these more successfully. – The above would imply that some existing structure may have to ‘drop’ certain activities. <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The mapping and first analysis (see <i>partnership building and cooperation</i>) – Facilitated discussions at the event organised by the Commission, followed by consensus building on the need to streamline operations.

Dimension of change Steps	Organisational culture	Partnership building and cooperation	Operations
Step 2: Developing a common vision	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Together, existing structures can successfully address the priority needs which have been identified - Together, existing structures can successfully reach much larger numbers of citizens and CSOs with an interest in EU matters - The engagement of currently unreached citizens and CSOs can best be achieved by existing structures 'going more local' <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft vision document - (Written) consultation on the draft vision - Organisation of an event by the Commission for all relevant existing structures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Presentation of the draft vision and consultation responses o Facilitated discussions on vision, objectives, key actions and milestones o Agreement on next step - Preparation and dissemination of updated and further elaborated vision document - Existing structures could be asked to sign the vision document to formalise their commitment 	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More intensified and structured forms of cooperation would help to streamline and identify opportunities for the pooling of resources - Streamlining and pooling of resources would bring substantial efficiency gains which can be used for addressing the needs of citizens and CSOs. <p>Format and tools: The same as under <i>organisational culture</i></p>	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The streamlining and pooling of resources provides an excellent opportunity for existing structures to review what works well, what works less well - It would also help them to set priorities and build actions around these, while letting go of activities which may not have the desired effect or which have little stakeholder support. <p>Format and tools: The same as under <i>organisational culture</i></p>
Step 3: Addressing obstacles	<p>Key messages:</p> <p>These would strongly depend on the type of obstacles encountered, although, likely messages to be conveyed may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The change to the organisational culture mainly relates to their readiness to cooperate closely with other existing organisations and to their willingness to let go of some functions or activities which are less effective and relevant. - It will not affect the specific identity of the existing structure. 	<p>Key messages:</p> <p>Depending on the obstacles, these could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new partnership between existing structures will provide additional resources - The intensified cooperation and new partnerships will also provide new opportunities for the existing structures <p>Format and tools:</p>	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The efficiency gains resulting from the streamlining process can be significant and may save some existing structures from substantially scaling down their operations <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>

Dimension of change Steps	Organisational culture	Partnership building and cooperation	Operations
	<i>As under organisational culture</i>		
	<p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAQ document about the vision - Smaller group sessions to bring 'reluctant' organisations on board (organised by the Commission or by other existing structures which have committed themselves to the vision) 		
Step 4: Implementing the change	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The implementation of the vision will bring positive change - Citizens and CSOs will be better reached and offered more opportunities to engage in the EU - The change process will be supported by the Commission and other relevant EU stakeholders. <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One or more workshops to jointly develop the work programme to implement the vision - Preparation of a detailed approach, setting out actions, roles and responsibilities - Smaller group sessions to develop, kick-start and review progress of specific actions 	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The change is supported by a solid partnership of existing structures - The partners will each have a clear overview of what is expected from them and with whom to cooperate - Each partner is supported by other existing structures and can count on their resources. <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One or more workshops to consider the different forms of cooperation required to implement the work programme - Contribution to the detailed approach in terms of defining roles and responsibilities - Smaller group sessions as under <i>organisational culture</i> 	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The change process will help existing structures to streamline and cope with less financial means, through the pooling of resources - The change process will allow existing structures to focus on their 'core business' <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a method to assess effectiveness of functions and activities of existing structures and to identify resources which could be pooled - Detailed mapping of the resources, functions and activities of the participating existing structures and their effectiveness - One or more workshops between existing structures to agree on who could best undertake which activity and what resources can be pooled

Dimension of change Steps	Organisational culture	Partnership building and cooperation	Operations
Step 5: Communication	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The change is happening and here are the first positive results – The effects in the longer and medium term are looking good – Existing structures are highly committed to the vision – There is evidence that an increased share of citizens and CSOs is being reached <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Commission and existing structures' websites – Press releases – A large dissemination event after the first year (possibly repeated each year) – Internal communication – Use of monitoring and evaluation reporting (see below) 	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Existing structures are successfully cooperating to implement the vision – There is evidence of (additional) complementarities and synergies <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Existing structures have successfully streamlined their activities – The pooling of resources increases efficiency <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>
Step 6: Creating quick wins	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The change is happening and here are the first positive results – What have we learned from these and how can we further improve? <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Internal communication – Smaller group sessions to review learning 	<p>Key messages: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p> <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meetings with 'reluctant' existing structures to convince them to come on board 	<p>Key messages: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p> <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>
Step 7: Building on the results of the change	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The vision, work programme and approach require regular reviews to make sure that both are relevant and effective – The results of the change process will inform this review and provide learning points – Where necessary, adjustments to the work programme and the approach will be made. 	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The cooperation arrangements and partnerships require regular review to make sure that they are functioning smoothly and take account of the results – New partners could be identified and engaged <p>Format and tools:</p>	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The streamlining and pooling of resources require regular review to make sure that they indeed provide efficiency gains and take account of the results – The 'allocation' of who does what may require revision also in the light of new

Dimension of change Steps	Organisational culture	Partnership building and cooperation	Operations
	<p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of monitoring and evaluation reporting – Organisation of an event for all existing structures to discuss the review and proposals for adjustments – Possibly, specific smaller group sessions to review specific elements 	As under <i>organisational culture</i>	<p>partnerships</p> <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>
Step 8: Monitoring implementation	<p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitoring and evaluation are very important to measure the implementation of the vision – Monitoring and evaluation results can be used for internal and external communication – Monitoring and evaluation will help to adjust the work programme if necessary <p>Format and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation group – Development of intervention logic and analytical framework for monitoring and evaluation (including output, outcome and impact indicators) – Development of monitoring and evaluation tools (e.g. assessment forms, data collection sheets, etc.) – Regular monitoring and evaluation meetings (e.g. twice a year) – Regular monitoring and evaluation reporting (e.g. an annual report and evaluation every two years) 	<p>Key messages: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p> <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>	<p>Key messages: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p> <p>Format and tools: As under <i>organisational culture</i></p>

5.5 Possible further development of the preferred scenario: Building on the strengths of existing structures

In this subsection, the preferred scenario is further elaborated, in terms of its rationale, objectives, set-up, activities and next steps. This part could be used as a standalone paper, for the Commission to disseminate.

5.5.1 Rationale

In spite of current efforts, both led by the European Commission, by European CSOs and other European and national stakeholders, citizens still experience distance from the EU. The recent elections of the European Parliament are illustrative of the growing anti-EU feelings in many Member States.

Citizens first and foremost encounter difficulties in finding and properly accessing existing information, activities and organisations, which in turn makes it difficult for them to make use of existing opportunities. What they seem to mainly need is local access to opportunities, including better signposting of information, as well as 'low threshold' engagement mechanisms.

Similarly, national and local small and grass-roots organisations, especially those not based in Brussels or in other capital or large cities, feel insufficiently involved in EU affairs, again in spite of current efforts by European and national stakeholders. They need closer connections to organisations similar to them in other parts of Europe, as well as closer ties with larger national organisations, and their counterparts in Brussels.

Existing structures at EU and national levels are best placed to address the identified needs, having the appropriate expertise, knowledge and resources. However, given the current economic climate and related reductions in funding and other forms of revenue a joint approach and streamlining of activities is required, as existing structures cannot do this on their own and rather need to focus on creating economies of scale.

5.5.2 The change process "Building on the strengths of existing structures"

The process would bring together EU institutions, EU initiatives led by these and CSOs focusing on European policies and rights, and which are active in the field of civic participation for both citizens and CSOs, to jointly develop activities to increase the engagement of citizens and CSOs in EU affairs. While many of these organisations are already working together in networks and projects, or have done so in the past, as part of the "Building on the strengths of existing structures" process they would truly sign up for process of organisational change, based on a common vision and work programme.

Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

- Improve local access and signposting of citizens to user-friendly EU information, advice and other services;
- Enhance opportunities for citizens and CSOs to communicate with policy makers and to engage in policy-shaping processes;
- Increase involvement of 'unrepresented' CSOs in EU affairs, especially those at the local/grass roots level; and
- Improve opportunities for CSOs to connect to other organisations at national/local levels as well as with EU CSOs, to also stimulate the sharing and pooling of knowledge and resources.

Purpose:

The overall purpose is to:

- Adopt a more coordinated/streamlined approach to activities undertaken by EU institutions and CSOs, in order to strengthen the coherence in the “services” available to citizens and CSOs across the EU;
- ‘Go local’, i.e. placing a much greater focus on the national and local level, which would mean making national CSO networks and organisations responsible for certain activities, and attracting new organisations in the Member States to deliver activities closer to EU citizens and grass-roots CSOs;
- Create efficiency gains by pooling of resources and reducing duplication of effort;
- Further develop joint activities to maximise their impact and reach; and
- Turn some successful approaches into more permanent structures.

Organisation

The Commission, in cooperation with the other participating EU institutions, CSOs and other structures, would start a process of organisational change and joint planning, focused on intensifying collaboration, improving efficiency, pooling of resources and going local. The process of change would include all CSOs, from the bigger organisations/structures to the smaller/grass-roots organisations, through a cascading approach. At EU level, the Commission would involve EU stakeholders as well as large national players, while at national level, these large national players would be expected to engage with other, medium, small and grass-roots organisations and follow a similar process. An overview of this cascading approach is provided in Figure 4.1 above (and could be included in a standalone vision paper).

The process would first focus on bringing everyone on board, which would require changes to the overall ‘organisational culture’ of the existing structures at all levels, in particular with regard to their readiness to cooperate (also) for the ‘greater good’, which would imply streamlining and creating economies of scale and, linked to this, an openness towards reviewing and possibly adapting their current operations.

Subsequently, the process partners would jointly develop a common vision and work programme. The former would state what the key objectives and purpose of the process are, now that all partners have been consulted. The latter would not only include a set of actions and initiatives, but also detail which of the stakeholders would be responsible and/or involved, and what their tasks are.

Possible core activities

A detailed overview of the possible core activities is included in Table 5.1 above (which could be included in a standalone vision paper). In summary, the main activities included in the future are:

- **Improving the knowledge of what is currently being offered and organised** – a thorough mapping of current activities by bigger networks of CSOs and umbrella organisations to explore opportunities for the pooling of resources and efficiency gains;
- **Going local** – appointing local CSOs to act as ‘local access points’ for citizens to access information or be referred to other relevant services and opportunities, who would work on the basis of a common approach. The local access points would:
 - Refer citizens to bigger information providers such as the Commission Representations, the EDICs and the EU Parliament Information Offices.
 - Deliver tailored information, where possible, taking into account the features of the locality of origin of the citizens.
 - Co-organise or host meetings involving citizens and policy makers at the very local level as well as provide support to citizens when engaging in policy-shaping activities (for example providing support with the ECI).

The ‘local access points’ would be recruited by umbrella organisations and (national) networks based on their existing pool of members and following outreach activities to attract new members.

- **Improving horizontal and vertical connections between CSOs** – development of a database (or further development of existing databases) to connect CSOs with their counterparts at national level as well as transnationally. Increased efforts of umbrella organisations and networks to attract new members especially at the grass roots level and to involve them in consultations and other policy-shaping initiatives. This would include the organisation of additional events (public hearings, conferences, seminars, debates, cultural events and other meetings) involving CSOs, also at the very local level and away from the capital cities.
- **Further organisation of joint events promoting policy dialogue and policy-shaping initiatives** – joint organisation of national and local events involving EU policy makers (including MEPs, Commission officials, etc.). Joint organisation targeted awareness-raising campaigns around policy-shaping events and initiatives available for citizens (for example linked to the ECI, etc.). Moreover, additional European Public Spaces for citizens and CSOs to meet, communicate with policy makers and engage in policy shaping would be made available within the Commission Representations, the EDICs and the EU Parliament Information Offices. Finally, the “Citizens’ Dialogues” model could be further implemented and, possibly, taken over also by other institutions (for example, the European Economic and Social Committee and/or the Committee of the Regions). The use of new technologies to foster dialogue with policy makers would be encouraged.

Next steps

The first year of the process would be dedicated to its set-up. The key activities would be as follows:

- The Commission would invite potential partners and present the purpose and rationale of the process. A draft vision document could be developed at this stage;
- This would be followed up by several smaller meetings and group sessions, to make sure that potential partners sign up to the process;
- A second larger meeting would be organised after 3–4 months to launch the process, which would include a mapping exercise and the development of a draft work programme. This would require the partners to jointly agree on those actions, which are considered to be a priority, and to also agree on where cost savings can be made;
- The second meeting would be followed by smaller meetings for process partners to work on the specific approach and timetable of the actions included in the work programme, which could be completed within 12 months following the first exploratory meeting;
- Several smaller events could be organised to kick off actions included in the work programme.

In the first year of implementation, the Commission would also encourage the participating CSOs to either nominate one amongst them to further steer the process, or to form a Steering Board to do this.

Annex 1 - Detailed assessment of the level of costs involved in the implementation of possible activities

Table A.1 Detailed assessment of the level of costs involved

(Partially) unmet need	Options for activities	Costs for existing structure to implement the activities		Costs for a new structure to implement the activities	
		Set-up costs	Running costs	Set-up costs	Running costs
Citizens					
General	General costs to be dedicated to setting up and running the structure.	None. Existing structures would develop the activities. Depending on the activities, additional resources may be required (see the assessments below).	None. Existing structures would implement the activities. Depending on the activities, additional resources may be required (see the assessments below).	High. The physical structure of the EHCS would need to be purchased / rented, as well as possibly refurbished. Other costs would relate to recruitment, equipment, other material costs, etc.	High. Even under a minimal set-up, the EHCS would need to include at least 3 FTE (Full-Time Equivalents), to cover reception/information services, administration and management.
Improved access to information and signposting	Further profiling of existing information providers through targeted awareness-raising campaigns (e.g. undertaken at local level/addressing certain groups of citizens in particular).	Medium–high. Existing structures willing to organise such campaigns would need to design and research how to best target these. If undertaken at local level, for example, this would require identifying and engaging local points to carry out the campaign.	High. Targeted campaigns – especially when implemented at - local level – require briefing of all those participating, a (small) compensation for the efforts made by each participant (but total numbers can be very high). In addition to human resources, there will be costs for materials, printing, advertising, etc.	High. Specifically if undertaken at local level, the EHCS would need to identify and engage local points. Without the formal/informal networks of existing structures, this would be very resource intensive.	High–very high. Especially when implemented at local level, the local points would require compensation. The EHCS, especially during the first years, needs to develop contacts from scratch and could not necessarily count on the voluntary/cost-free commitment of some.
	Signposting to other relevant information sources, e.g. on websites, as part of newsletters, referrals, etc.	Low. Existing structures could rely on their national members and other formal/informal networks. Some costs may be required for the development of a 'common' approach to signposting. National members and other organisations would be required to invest some resources to make the necessary changes to their websites, etc.	Low. Some costs will be associated with adding information to newsletters, referring citizens (e.g. by email/phone) to appropriate services, etc.	High. Being based in a single location, the EHCS would also need to identify and engage other national organisations to ensure signposting, to brief them on how to do this, etc.	Low–medium. The EHCS may need to compensate national organisations for the costs incurred to ensure signposting, although these costs may reduce in time.
Local / national access points	CSOs in Member States could be recruited to act as 'local access points', together with common terms of references as to their activities, opening hours, etc., as well as with guidance on information to provide possible referrals to other organisations.	Low–medium. These will mainly relate to the development and agreement on the common terms of reference, to identifying suitable (and interested) CSOs and to ensuring the 'buy in' and understanding of those involved, e.g. through training and other activities.	Medium. CSOs would have to spend additional time to act as local access points and to make referrals to other organisations. For some, this may give rise to capacity issues.	High. Being based in a single location, the EHCS would need to recruit organisations to act as local access points, plus develop materials, organise briefings, etc.	Medium–high. Being a 'newcomer', the EHCS, particularly in the beginning, will need to compensate the organisations acting as local access points and making referrals. These costs may reduce in time, provided that the organisations feel committed to the EHCS.

(Partially) unmet need	Options for activities	Costs for existing structure to implement the activities		Costs for a new structure to implement the activities	
		Set-up costs	Running costs	Set-up costs	Running costs
	These common terms of reference could also be proposed to other national and local EU institutions/bodies providing services on behalf of the EU (e.g. Commission Representations, etc.)	Low-medium. The costs would be similar to what is mentioned above, related to adapting the terms of reference to the specific EU services, ensuring their buy in, etc.	Medium. Some of the elements may increase costs, for example if Commission Representations and other bodies were requested to stay open also during evenings, as this would require additional staff time. Some already act more than others as local access points so these costs would not be evenly spread.	Low-medium. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.	Medium. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.
	Training could be offered to (interested) local civil servants on EU issues so that they can provide information and refer citizens to other services.	Medium. This would require the development of a (short) training course, possibly with printed materials and/or a guide. In addition, trainers would need to be identified and prepared (e.g. within existing EU services/EU-level and national CSOs). Finally, local authorities would need to be approached and asked if they would be interested in receiving the training.	Medium. Depending on the number of interested local authorities, different training courses would need to be organised across different localities. These would require resources in terms of trainers' time, the rent (where necessary) of rooms and civil servants attending the course, possibly during working hours.	High. Being based in a single location, the EHCS would incur higher costs for approaching local authorities.	High. The EHCS, at least initially, would need to organise the training centrally, incurring costs for the travel and subsistence of the local authorities, or would need to spend money on delivering locally.
	Online information on the EU should be 'tailored' to the Member State and, where possible, locality of origin of the citizens, in terms of links and references provided.	Medium. Research would be required in order to tailor information and to subsequently adapt existing websites. The more specific the tailoring (e.g. going down to local level) the more expensive the research will be. CSOs could be asked to support this process, which would help bring down the costs.	Medium. When updating information, this would need to be adapted to the different geographies.	Medium-high. Costs would be the same as those incurred by existing structures, although the EHCS would also need to reach out to other CSOs, to ensure that these support the process.	Medium. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.
Improved mechanisms to communicate directly with EU policy makers	Specific events involving EU policy makers (including MEPs, Commission officials, etc.) could be organised. Such events could be local or itinerant to ensure that citizens in all Member States, also those not living in capital cities, would be offered the opportunity to meet policy makers.	Low. Several EU and national CSOs already have meeting facilities or can easily access these. A programme would need to be developed which ensures that the events are held in different localities across the various Member States, especially outside the capital and large cities.	Medium. The running of events would require both human and financial resources, e.g. for promoting the events, printing materials, refreshments, facilitation, etc. The higher the number of events, the higher the costs.	Medium. Being based in a single location, the EHCS would need to identify possible meeting facilities and develop an EU-wide programme.	High. In addition to the costs incurred by existing structures, the EHCS would very likely also have to pay for meeting facilities.
	Entertainment' activities could be organised, such as games and online shows to engage citizens.	Medium-high. The development of high quality and attractive entertainment activities will require the support of communication experts as	Medium-high. Depending on the type of activity (e.g. an online game will require fewer resources to run than a 'live' online show) and the regularity of	Medium-high. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.	Medium-high. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.

(Partially) unmet need	Options for activities	Costs for existing structure to implement the activities		Costs for a new structure to implement the activities	
		Set-up costs	Running costs	Set-up costs	Running costs
		well the development of new tools and approaches. The costs strongly depend on the level of ambition.	these.		
Improved mechanisms to engage in policy-shaping processes	Targeted awareness-raising campaigns around policy-shaping events and initiatives for citizens.	Medium-high. Targeted awareness-raising campaigns require careful mapping and examination of the target group, to select the most appropriate tools and channels to raise awareness. If undertaken at local level, for example, this would require identifying and engaging local points to carry out the campaign.	Medium-high. Depending on the type of campaign developed, e.g. an online campaign will require fewer resources than using mainstream media, such as newspapers and television. Especially when implemented at local level, costs may be high as it will require briefing of all those participating and a (small) compensation for the efforts made by each local partner.	High. Costs would be the same as those incurred by existing structures, but the EHCS would need to pay more for the identification and engagement of local points to carry out the campaign, not being able to draw on an existing formal/informal network.	High-very high. Especially when in part implemented locally, the local points would require compensation. The EHCS, especially during the first years, needs to develop contacts from scratch and could not necessarily count on the voluntary/cost-free commitment of local partners.
	Additional practical support could be provided to citizens (and CSOs) wanting to launch an ECI.	Low. One or two EU-level CSOs and their national members could set up a new service or expand their existing services, to provide information and support to launch ECIs. It will be important to ensure proper referrals to these existing services (see also signposting and access points above) so that a larger proportion of citizens can find out about this support and the ECIs in general.	Medium. CSOs would have to spend additional time on providing the assistance to citizens.	Low-medium. The EHCS would need to set up and develop the service from scratch, identify and engage national stakeholders and ensure proper referrals.	Medium. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.
CSOs					
Increase connections between CSOs	Development of an online tool for CSOs to register themselves and their interests, to allow them to identify and connect with other CSOs.	Low-medium. Some CSOs already have similar tools in place. Possibly, the most suitable ones could be further elaborated and proposed for use at EU level.	Low. Costs would relate to maintenance and updates to the database.	Low-Medium. The EHCS would need to develop a tool from scratch or link to existing tools.	Low. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.
	When joining a wider EU structure, the latter could be encouraged to screen CSOs and suggest connections.	Low-medium. The activity would require a mapping of existing CSOs and dissemination of this mapping exercise, so that EU structures can make appropriate suggestions for connections.	Low. The mapping exercise would need to be updated, on a yearly basis. Existing structures could 'rotate' responsibility for this exercise. Some minor costs would be associated with the screening of CSOs and the provision of suggestions for connections.	Medium. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures, although the EHCS may take the lead in undertaking the mapping exercise and may need to invest more efforts in encouraging other existing structures to use it and to screen CSOs.	Low. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.
	Organisation of events bringing CSOs together, at both EU and national levels.	Medium. Existing structures would benefit from their own meeting facilities and those of their national members. Costs would however be	Medium. The running of events would require both human and financial resources, e.g. for promoting the events, printing materials,	Medium. Being based in a single location, the EHCS would need to identify possible meeting facilities in the Member States and develop an	High. In addition to the costs incurred by existing structures, the EHCS would very likely also have to pay for meeting facilities.

(Partially) unmet need	Options for activities	Costs for existing structure to implement the activities		Costs for a new structure to implement the activities	
		Set-up costs	Running costs	Set-up costs	Running costs
		incurred for the overall organisation process.	refreshments, facilitation, etc. The higher the number of events, the higher the costs.	EU-wide programme.	
Improving relations between national and EU CSOs	National CSOs which are part of a wider EU structure could be encouraged to engage in outreach activities to involve other national and local CSOs.	Low–medium. Costs would include the preparation of guidance on outreach activities and the identification of possible 'candidates' to take part in these activities. The commitment of the national members would need to be ensured.	Low–medium. CSOs would have to spend additional time to undertake outreach activities. For some, this may give rise to capacity issues.	Medium. The EHCS would need to spend more efforts on engaging national CSOs to undertake the outreach activities.	Medium–high. The EHCS would, at least initially, incur costs to compensate CSOs for the time spent on outreach activities.
	As under "Organisation of events bringing CSOs together, at both EU and national levels."	As under "Organisation of events bringing CSOs together, at both EU and national levels."	As under "Organisation of events bringing CSOs together, at both EU and national levels."	As under "Organisation of events bringing CSOs together, at both EU and national levels."	As under "Organisation of events bringing CSOs together, at both EU and national levels."
Improving access of national / local CSOs to EU dialogue and policy making	The organisation of events to bring national and local CSOs closer to EU policy makers. These could be local or itinerant.	Low. Several EU and national CSOs already have meeting facilities or can easily access these. A programme would need to be developed which ensures that the events are held in different localities across the various Member States, especially outside the capital and large cities.	Medium. The running of events would require both human and financial resources, e.g. for promoting the events, printing materials, refreshments, facilitation, etc. The higher the number of events, the higher the costs.	Medium. Being based in a single location, the EHCS would need to identify possible meeting facilities and develop an EU-wide programme.	High. In addition to the costs incurred by existing structures, the EHCS would very likely also have to pay for meeting facilities.
	The development of guidance on how to participate in EU policy making processes.	Low. EU structures should be encouraged to jointly develop a guidance document on participation in EU policy making processes, for distribution amongst their members, which, in turn, could be encouraged to disseminate this on to other national and local CSOs.	Low. Some costs will be associated with the dissemination of the guidance document.	Low. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.	Low. The costs would be the same as for the existing structures.