

EUConsult Brexit Statement

Like many other European organisations, EUConsult has been watching the Brexit process over the past three years. We have held off providing advice and opinion, waiting instead to see which way the negotiations over the UK's withdrawal from the European Union would go.

We know that some British civil society organisations have already seen the effects of Brexit on their work, such as losing opportunities to access European funding, not being included in projects where previously a British organisation would have been considered essential, and having to curb unnecessary spend until the situation is clearer. [The Directory of Social Change estimated that in 2017 UK organisations received over £250 million in EU Funds](#), which is a significant amount to have to replace, or to absorb through restructures, relocations, etc.

While we know that Brexit is in itself a highly undesirable outcome, we also know that many organisations are not yet prepared for a Brexit impact. Civil society organisations need to undertake risk assessments, mitigation, new contractual or organisational arrangements, new tax arrangements, etc, depending on their particular needs and missions. Some UK civil society organisations may also wish to establish a foothold in the EU to mitigate against the worst outcomes. Equally important, civil society organisations in the EU working with or fundraising in the UK will need to understand the impact on their activities originating in the EU.

Civil society organisations will need to be fully aware of current official Brexit guidance and where possible current Brexit guidance for civil society (there is very little). We have been reviewing the available guidance and tried to collate some advice to civil society about Brexit, for which there are links provided below:

- **United Kingdom:** <https://www.brexitcivilsocietyalliance.org>
- **United Kingdom (UK Government):** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/five-ways-civil-society-organisations-can-prepare-for-eu-exit>
- **United Kingdom (UK Government):** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-guarantee-for-eu-funded-programmes-if-theres-no-brexit-deal/the-governments-guarantee-for-eu-funded-programmes-if-theres-no-brexit-deal>
- **United Kingdom (England & Wales):** <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/europe>
- **United Kingdom (England & Wales, no-deal):** <https://publications.ncvo.org.uk/no-deal-brexit-and-voluntary-sector/what-no-deal-brexit-means-charities/>
- **United Kingdom (Scotland):** <https://scvo.org.uk/projects-campaigns/europe-and-the-third-sector/resources>
- **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland):** <https://www.nicva.org/key-issues/brexit-beyond>
- **United Kingdom: Charities Aid Foundation:** <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2017-publications/brexit-and-its-impact-on-charitable-causes>
- **United Kingdom: Charities Aid Foundation (2):** <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2016-publications/a-stronger-britain-how-can-charities-build-post-brexit-britain>
- **European Union: National Brexit Information in Member States (not civil society specific):** https://ec.europa.eu/info/brexit/brexit-preparedness/national-brexit-information-member-states_en

Other interesting links:

Fundraising: <https://wonderful.org/blog/3159447f-8df1-4124-8210-b6c0ee0c7ecf>

Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) (Italy): https://www.ispionline.it/it/search-page?keys=brexit&type_i18n=All&field_0_ricerca_tid=All

We hope that this advice is either interesting or informative for you.

From a pan-European perspective that goes beyond the borders of the EU, we see Brexit as only one of a number of issues affecting civil society today:

1. **Reduction of democratic process across Europe:** the rise of populism across Europe is a challenge to the liberal concepts that underpin the accepted conventions operating in civil society. This attempt to refocus politics more narrowly on perceived exclusive population groups is undermining the work of many of our clients across Europe and challenging some of the assumptions behind the formation of civil society organisations

See:

<https://ecas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/populism-study.pdf> and

https://cepr.org/sites/default/files/events/papers/995_Populism%20and%20Civil%20Society.pdf

2. **Shrinking civil society space:** linked to the first issue above, some countries are bringing in laws and regulations to limit the activities and opportunities for civil society and social action in an apparent attempt to curtail dissent

See:

<https://europe.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=2558&LangID=E>

and

<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/fr/medias-ressources/112-news/2631-civil-society-reports-show-evidence-of-shrinking-civic-space-in-europe> and

<https://civitates-eu.org/safe-space-for-civil-society/>

3. **Looming recessions in a number of economies (regardless of the Brexit outcome, but could be exacerbated by it):**

See:

<https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/mohamed-el-erian-europe-has-70-chance-falling-into-recession-2019-8-1028458673>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/08/14/economy/recession-risk-economies/index.html>

Viewing Brexit in this context, it is only one of a number of events and trends that are presenting both challenge and opportunity to our members and their clients.

We know that even if the UK leaves on 31 January 2020, with or without a deal, it will simply be the end of the beginning in this process and there will be more difficult and challenging times ahead.

We believe that all of these challenges and opportunities further underline EUConsult's role as a pan-European membership organisation, focused on supporting our members to provide the highest quality support and influence to civil society organisations so that they are best places to respond to these social and development challenges.

Thank you,

The Board of EUConsult

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