

Mapping & Co-Shaping Event Content: Anticipating Futures for Civil Society Operating Space

Strategic Research Consultant - Terms of Reference

27 June 2022

1 Overview

The [International Civil Society Centre \(ICSCentre\)](#) is looking for a strategic research consultant to conduct a mapping and support event content preparations during the initial phase of its new initiative “*Anticipating Futures for Civil Society Operating Space*”. The initiative’s overall aim is to strengthen anticipatory capacities and future readiness of civic space-focused professionals in international and national civil society organisations. The mapping is a starting point of this project and will provide a basis for further activities. It will look at how states’ framings of crises impact civil society operating space, how recent/current crises can inform future scenarios, and what the gaps are in the sector that require collective approaches. The key insights from the mapping will be presented by the consultant at the International Civic Forum (ICF), the ICSCentre’s annual civic space platform, taking place in London, UK, on 2-3 November 2022. The consultant will further support the content preparations of the ICF by providing an overview of previous work and relevant actors in the field (possible event contributors) and identifying good practice from the sector that could be spotlighted during the event.

2 Background information

To create an enabling environment for civil society, the civil society sector needs to develop more anticipatory and proactive mechanisms to complement its reactive responses to civic space restrictions and changing operating conditions. The ICSCentre is therefore embarking on a three-year initiative to strengthen anticipatory capacities and future readiness of civic space-focused civil society professionals, both in international and national civil society organisations (CSOs). The initiative will create synergies between two Centre’s key communities: its [Scanning the Horizon](#) community of civil society futures thinkers and strategists and its [Solidarity Action Network \(SANE\)](#) community of civic space-focused sector professionals. Together these communities will increase their understanding of their crossover potential, engage in collaborative futures scenario exercises, workshop concrete organisational strategies to address scenarios, and build a set of tools to support the civic space community with required capacities.



The project aims to increase the signal-scanning and future-facing capacities of CSOs, in line with the following three main objectives:

- 1) Increasing the awareness and readiness of CSOs in addressing current and future challenges at the intersection of civic space and crises, including in the unpredictable 'polycrisis' context of climate change;
- 2) Offering a convening and collaborative space for civil society professionals to develop future scenarios in the context of civic space and crises;
- 3) Translating these scenarios into concrete strategies and strengthening capacities at the individual, organisational and sector level to be more futures-ready.

The first phase of the project (July – October 2022) includes a mapping exercise that will be conducted by a strategic research consultant. The mapping will provide a thorough basis for further activities, especially in identifying gaps that require collective sector approaches and initiatives. It will particularly inform the [International Civic Forum \(ICF\)](#), the ICSCentre's annual civic space platform to network, build trust and identify opportunities for collaboration on emerging issues. The ICF 2022 will take place in London, UK on 2-3 November 2022 under the initiative's headline "*Anticipating Futures for Civil Society Operating Space*" and will deal with complex future interlinkages between both state and civil society responses and capacity to manage crises (such as climate crisis, terrorism/extremism, pandemic, etc.) and the enabling environment for CSOs. The consultant will support co-shaping the content of the ICF 2022 by helping to identify contributors and examples to share, as well as presenting the key insights from the mapping.

Further details about individual project's phases can be found in [this accompanying concept document](#).

3 Scope of work and key tasks

Mapping of crises responses, impacts and gaps

The consultant will:

- 1) Draw out the range of potential connections between how governments frame and respond to crises, including complex, uncertain future events like climate disruptions, and the implications for civil society action and operating space.
- 2) Explore how states have pivoted to security framings in crises, the impact this has had on civic space and operating conditions, and the signals CSOs should increasingly become aware of.
- 3) Explore emergent opportunities for civil society out of previous crises – such as COVID-19 – which served to change or influence state perceptions, narratives and framings of civil society.
- 4) Outline previous and current work in the field on "civic space futures" (e.g. [International Center for Not-for-Profit Law's \(ICNL\) Civic Space 2040 initiative of 2020](#)) or initiatives which are already trying to improve signals/scanning intelligence around relevant thematic drivers. This will include a list/map of existing analysis, initiatives and relevant actors in



order to build on previous work, create possible synergies, and avoid “reinventing the wheel”.

- 5) Identify gaps that require collective sector approaches and initiatives.
- 6) Prepare the results of this mapping in writing (report of ca. 15 pages) or as a visualisation/map that can be shared with the ICF participants before the event. The exact format will be selected in a conversation with the ICSCentre.

ICF 2022

The consultant will:

- 1) Support the content preparations for the ICF by co-shaping the agenda and identifying experts that could contribute to the event.
- 2) Spotlight three to five good practices of how ICSSOs or CSOs have responded to crisis framings, show examples where they developed or applied anticipatory approaches on civic space (concrete steps to develop organisational skills and capacity to scan, prepare and pre-position better for emergent change in relevant thematic drivers) and draw out some insights on current challenges or barriers constraining organisations’ skills and capacity to do this. Ideally, the cases could be presented at the ICF by these organisations.
- 3) Present key insights from the mapping during the ICF to non-technical audiences and practitioners.

We suggest a combination of desk research and key stakeholder interviews to accomplish the outlined tasks.

4 Timeline and deliverables

- 25 – 29 July 2022: Kick-off (virtual) meeting and start of work
- 10 – 12 August 2022: Mapping framework, methodology and final format are presented and agreed with the ICSCentre
- 12 August – 14 September 2022: Mapping is conducted
- 1 – 2 September 2022: List of potential ICF contributors is submitted and discussed with the ICSCentre
- 15 – 16 September 2022: Draft of the mapping is presented and discussed with the ICSCentre
- 30 September 2022: Final mapping is submitted
- 1 – 31 October 2022: Content preparations for the ICF are undertaken
- 2 – 3 November 2022: Participation and presentation of the mapping at the ICF

We expect the overall consultancy to encompass up to 15 working days (e.g., 6 – 8 days for the mapping, 5 – 7 days for the ICF preparations and contribution).



5 Experience and skills/competencies

- At least a bachelor's degree in a relevant field (political science, social sciences, international relations or similar)
- At least 5 years proven experience conducting research and analysis (political or social science), with connections to foresight and civil society space (more specifically civil society's freedom to act independently, unrestricted and effectively)
- Experience of working with a wide range of civil society actors (ICSOs, CSOs, networks) and expert knowledge of the sector, ideally in strategy, organisational development and learning capacities
- Proven track record of drivers ('trends') and weak signals scanning and analysis, particularly through an intersectional lens, and ensuring these influences are incorporated into organisational strategies (overall, advocacy and/or programmatic)
- Thematic expertise in particularly relevant thematic drivers is an asset, such as: civic space, counter-terrorism and securitisation, mis- and disinformation and digital opportunities/threats for civil society, climate action and emergent civil society agency, influence of global China, etc.
- Ability to familiarise quickly with unfamiliar organisations and their work, and credibility to connect with them to maximise quality insights from relatively quick engagement
- Excellent written English and presentation skills, able to make complex concepts accessible to non-technical audiences and practitioners
- Ability to self-manage and meet project deadlines

6 Application

To apply, please send:

1. **Cover letter (no more than 3 pages)**, including:
 - A brief **description of your experience and expertise** in the field that illustrates your overall qualifications and capabilities for this scope of work, including **two examples of your previous comparable work**
 - A brief **description of your understanding of the scope of services and proposed methodology** for the work
 - Your **consultancy rate** (amount in EUR/day) and amount of working days
2. Your **CV**
3. **Two references** that can be contacted should you be shortlisted

to Eva Gondorová (egondorova@icscentre.org) and Miriam Niehaus (mniehaus@icscentre.org) by **15 July 2022 COB**.

We welcome applications from individuals, pairs or small teams who are interested in this consultancy work.