## Civic Space Cohort of the Summit for Democracy

### **Participation in decision-making processes**

Country lead: Norway

The participation of civil society in policy and decision-making processes is an indicator of a vibrant and inclusive democracy and contributes to the quality and effectiveness of laws and policies. Participatory approaches to decision-making help to forge a positive dynamic relationship between people and their governments. Effective participation in national decision-making processes requires and builds upon access to information, freedom of expression and freedom to associate with others and to hold peaceful assemblies.

CSOs contribute to promoting good governance, transparency and accountability of public authorities in different ways, and are increasingly active in promoting democratic participation at national and local levels. Safe, non-discriminatory, inclusive and transparent rules, channels and processes for participation and access to information allow civil society actors to contribute meaningfully and effectively in law- and policymaking.

CSOs are concerned about their access to and participation in decision-making processes. Concerns refer to a lack of adequate information about participation and consultation processes, a lack of trust between civil society and public authorities, a lack of feedback on what happened with the input provided, and different obstacles, including discriminatory ones, to accessing and participating in decision-making processes. Fast-track and emergency legislative procedures during the pandemic exacerbated existing issues.

The aim of this workstream is to agree on a short list (2-3) of possible joint commitments on how to strengthen civil society’s participation in national decision-making processes. After approval by the cohort, these joint commitments would then be presented at the second Summit for Democracy.

We would like to suggest the following commitments to provide foundation for the discussion, with openness to alterations and to include further recommendations:

1. The public, including civil society and national human rights institutions, should have access to draft legislations and be provided with a meaningful opportunity to provide input.
2. The public access to law making processes should build on procedures that provide for sufficient timeframes, procedural clarity and sufficient information in order to make the public participation meaningful and efficient.
3. The procedures should contain specific provisions applicable to emergency situations and making clear the relevant exemptions and derogation criteria under international law and relevant standards for law making procedures under such circumstances, providing the public with an opportunity to provide input, even during such emergencies.