



## For a vibrant democracy

A vibrant democracy – with broad opportunities for people to access information and participate – is the basis for social coexistence.

If we want to make our society and our economic system more sustainable, a ‘cultural’ change is also necessary: away from consumerism and

competitive thinking, and towards togetherness and social justice.

That is why commitment to promoting a diverse culture of discussion and decision-making is particularly important when working towards a sustainable society.



## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS: A CRITICAL – YET CONSTRUCTIVE FORCE IN A LIVING DEMOCRACY

A collective of 33 civil society organisations (environmental organisations, organisations for international solidarity, social justice and human rights), including the Mouvement Ecologique, joined forces at the end of 2024. The common goal: to stand up for a vibrant democracy and respect for the work of civil society.

The starting point for this initiative was the Caritas case, but also various statements by members of the government that have given the impression that the government is questioning the important role of civil society.

A press conference was held at Place Clairefontaine on 7 October 2024 to kick off the joint platform's actions. The central role of civil society in the functioning of our democracy was emphasised. A corresponding statement was drafted and widely circulated to stakeholders.

On Friday, 10 January 2025, a meeting was held between this alliance – which has since adopted the name Vočo ('voice' in Esperanto) – and Minister of State Luc Frieden. This was a follow-up to the action and the open letter sent in October. This meeting was very constructive and the Minister of State subsequently arranged for Vočo's views to be sought on two files (avant projet de loi on 'eviction' and the draft law on the right to demonstrate). A meeting with the Prime Minister to reform the current 'asbl law' is to take place after the organisations' position paper with reform proposals has been submitted.

**List of signatories:** Abram asbl; Amitié Am Sand-Amizero NGO; Amnesty International Luxembourg; ASTI; ASTM; Athénée - Action humanitaire; CELL; CID Fraen an Gender; CLAE; Comité pour une Paix Juste au Proche-Orient; Coopération Nord-Sud; Dignitas asbl; Greenpeace; Umweltberodung Lëtzebuerg a.s.b.l.; Enfants de l'Espoir; etika; Fairtrade Lëtzebuerg; FDH; Frëndeskrees Kamerun; Friddens-a Solidaritéitsplattform; Le Soleil dans la Main; Les Amis de Pirajà; Les Amis du Tibet; LIFE WG; Médecins du Monde; Mouvement Ecologique; natur&ëmwelt a.s.b.l.; Niños de la Tierra a.s.b.l.; partage.lu; Rokku Mi Rokka; Solidaritéit mat den Heescherten; SOS Faim mit der Unterstützung des Cercle de coopération des ONGD

## FOR BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR CITIZENS!

Access to information for citizens is regulated by the law of 14 September 2018 (transparent and open administration). Unfortunately, this is an extremely flawed law. This was known from the outset, so when the law was adopted, the Chamber of Deputies had already decided that the new law should be evaluated two years after it came into force.

Unfortunately, so far this has remained a promise, and in practice little has been done. That is why the Mouvement Ecologique continues to consistently advocate for the law to be improved in various letters, statements and discussions.

In 2024, a meeting was held on the subject with Minister of State Luc Frieden, the minister responsible for the issue. During the meeting, the existing shortcomings of the law were openly discussed. In 2024, the government then presented a reform text, primarily to improve journalists' access to information. It also provides for a number of changes to the law on 'administration ouverte et transparente', which affects citizens. In 2024, the Mouvement Ecologique conducted an initial analysis of this text, and an opinion will be adopted in 2025. The rough assessment is that the amendments go in the right direction, but they are far from sufficient.

As was revealed at a meeting of the relevant commission of the Chamber of Deputies on the subject, a 'note au formateur' with proposals for improving access to information was issued during the coalition negotiations. This is a document that was prepared by the relevant body of the previous government as a suggestion for the coalition agreement. The Mouvement Ecologique requested this document. After the Mouvement Ecologique did not receive any answers to its request in an initial phase and went to the 'Commission d'accès aux documents', the Ministry of State published this 'note'. This is to be seen as an absolutely positive step; the Mouvement Ecologique will monitor further developments in this regard.



## „COMMISSION D'ACCÈS AUX DOCUMENTS“ – AN IMPORTANT CONTACT POINT FOR MOUVEMENT ECOLOGIQUE

Unfortunately, the Mouvement Ecologique does not always receive a response when it requests documents or information from a ministry. This applies in particular to the Ministry of the Environment.

The law on transparent government stipulates that in this case, you do not have to go to court immediately to assert your right to a response, but can first turn to the so-called 'commission d'accès aux documents' (CAD). This then asks the ministry why the request has not been answered.

In 2024, the board of directors decided to forward all unanswered requests to this office.

The success of an intervention at this 'Commission' is remarkable: although the ministries do not always respond to the requests of the Mouvement Ecologique, they do take action as soon as they are contacted by the CAD. The consequence: via this 'detour' - and with the corresponding additional work, also for the CAD - one then usually receives the requested documents. Unfortunately, the Commission is only responsible for granting access to 'documents', but not for providing 'information', which the Mouvement Ecologique requests particularly frequently (e.g. about a ministry's position on a specific issue).

## FOR A MORE TRANSPARENT PARLIAMENT – PUBLISH DOCUMENTS!

In 2024, the Chamber of Deputies decided to start broadcasting various committee meetings live and to also publish them on the Chamber of Deputies' website at a later date – an extremely positive development, although it will certainly take some time before it is sufficiently well known and used.

The Mouvement Ecologique suggested that the Chamber of Deputies take a further step towards transparency. In numerous sessions, documents are presented, especially by ministries and government officials, and sent to the members of parliament. These are, for example, summaries of current legislation or planned changes to laws; documents on the implementation of various strategies, figures, etc. Interested citizens can listen to the relevant statements during the live broadcast, but the documents themselves are not made available online.

In a letter to the Chamber of Deputies, the suggestion was made to put this information online with the report of the meeting. Unfortunately, the Mouvement Ecologique did not receive a response to this request.

## STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENS' RIGHTS!

More than ever, building a sustainable, resilient society for tomorrow requires an open exchange, dealing with factual arguments, as well as developed civil rights and contemporary political education. Unfortunately, Luxembourg is far from achieving these goals. This makes the commitment of civil society and, in particular, the Mouvement Ecologique, all the more important.

That is why the question of 'civic society' is a recurring theme in the work of the Mouvement Ecologique.

In various legislative projects, dossiers... it repeatedly advocates a good information policy and broad public participation. It also advises citizens when they wish to obtain information about their civil rights or opportunities for participation.

