

Session June 2020

Let's build a better future together
Strengthening Participative Democracy and Civil Society when building the
Post-Corona World

Date: 22 June
10.00 – 12.30

During the crises provoked by Covi-19, the governments have taken extreme emergency measures, limiting civil rights and demanding a total compliance by their citizens. The end of the lockdown opens the period of the restauration of citizen freedoms and rights. The social relations and economic life start to be reinstated as well. The new rhetoric emphasises a “new normality”. However, this new normality never will be “normal”, while it imposes still limitations of civil rights and freedoms. In this process vast amounts of money shall be spent to mitigate the negative consequences of the lockdown and to rebuild our collective health, economies and social life.

There is a strong commitment to greening these measures, build a healthier environment and climate neutral economy - although voices warning against too many green policies are being heard. Moreover, we don't see so strong commitment to more social public policy. Celebrated heroes of the time of the hardest lockdown (employees in supermarkets, nurses and other staff with mainly low-income) are pushed into the background again. This context rather heralds a further decline of democratic society, with an imbalance of powers and with a weakening check and balance system. Will the civil society and volunteer's mobilization during the health crises continue in post-pandemic time?

What can we do to ensure that this transition period will not permanently damage CSOs and NGOs but will serve to use the drive of change to strengthen the civil society sector and to make democracy more participative? Will the bottom-up citizen initiatives have strong and substantial proposals to convince democratic institutions to review their mode of operation and decision-making? Will the reconstruction be based on a citizen-centred approach? Is and will democratic deliberation be endowed with an institutional form and sufficient power to influence the public policies at European, national and local level? What role CSOs should play in the democratic consolidation during the pandemic and in the post pandemic-period? Impacted themselves by the restrictive measures, are CSO coalitions able to propose a global vision of the changes needed (“global new deal”), leading to more equitable and equal society, based on inclusive growth and democratic rules?

We will try to find answers to what needs to be done to safeguard the multitude of NGOs and to give civil society a strong role in the process of rebuilding our public

policies, institutions and societies. We want to debate on how to make this “new normality” a “new reality” which will include diverse voices and opinions and will not replace, under a blanket of well-meaning good measures, the promise of freedom by a promise of security.

Draft program

Moderation: Gerhard Ermischer, VP of the Democracy Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee of the Conference of INGOs

Introduction: Anna Rurka – President of the Conference of INGOs

Key-speakers:

Alberto ALEMANNI, EU Law Professor HEC Paris, Founder, The Good Lobby

Vanja SKORIC, Program Director, European Center for Not-for-Profit-Law (ECNL)

Question / answer session

Contributions

1. Based on your experience, could you present some concrete impacts of the restrictive measures under state of emergency on CSO and NGO' activities
2. Regarding the various expertise present in the public debates during pandemic and post pandemic time, how CSOs and NGOs can reinforce their advocacy in order to make the public debate more diverse and in order to bring their perspective and evidence-based advocacy?

Participatory democracy : civil society response during pandemic and post-pandemic time

First panel :

Marco Schwarz, Policy Officer at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung EU Office, Brussels

Maharaj AKAASH, Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption

Cianán RUSSELL, The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)

Hakan ATAMAN, Civil Society Development Centre (STGM), Turkey

Pavel HAVLICEK, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

Iordanis CHOROZOGLOU, European Young Bar Association - Thessaloniki Young Bar and Trainee Lawyers' Association

Question / answer session

Second panel

Piotr SADOWSKI, Secretary General, Volonteuropa

Beata ZWIERZYNSKA, European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC)

Jean-Louis DURAND-DROUHIN, President, ESAN

Michel GRANGEAT, Chair of International Council on Shared Parenting, European Committee;

Question / answer session

3rd panel

Bénédicte COLIN, Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE)

Sören LENZ, Conference of European Churches (CEC)

Yasemin YÜREKLI, European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO)

Alice BARBIERI, Gender Equality Rapporteur of the Joint Council on Youth and member of the external relation team of the World Association of Girls Guide and Girls Scout.

Conclusive remarks by keynote speakers, panellists and moderator.