

Programme as of 161005

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY

Democracy in Europe: missing links (disenchantment, expectation and practice)

La Rochelle, 8-9 October 2016

Background

The first European Civic Academy will look into the complex questions raised by citizens' disenchantment, practice, and expectation with regard to democracy and in relation to the "democratic deficit" in Europe.

The vote for Brexit is the latest illustration of the risk of the disintegration of the European project.

For a long time now, democratic disenchantment has constantly been on the increase because of the growing gap between electoral promises and what elected representatives actually do, by the corruption that occurs where the vested interests of economic and political forces meet, by the lack of transparency of decision-making processes which affect peoples' lives, by growing social inequalities, by institutional disregard of popular mobilizations about access to rights, by the fear of exclusion, by growing poverty, and by growing state racism.

For an increasing number of the population, this leads to questioning democracy as a relevant instrument to make their aspirations and claims heard and to be taken into account. Regressive populism is blossoming on this fertile ground. Its leitmotif is denying equal access to rights for all.

While decreasing electoral participation is often an indicator of growing democratic disenchantment, we are also witnessing the mobilisation of citizens' to cast their votes, in last year's elections in Greece, Scotland or Catalonia.

Similarly, while social conflicts are on a globally decreasing trend, the economic crisis triggered massive democratic citizens' mobilisation, about a wide range of concerns and in forms of action from the local to the global level. These mobilisations around our values have an empowering effect, yet they remain fragmented, thematically and geographically.

There is a need for a better understanding of this combination of obstacles and opportunities in their complexities, and in their interactions, in order to overcome the fragmentation of forces for social and democratic change.

Programme

Saturday, October 8th, 2016

9.30 – 13.00 **Plenary**

IS DEMOCRACY A LUXURY IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

9.30 – 10.00 Welcome by **Jean-Marc ROIRANT**, President of the European Civic Forum and Chair of Civil Society Europe

Introduction by **Jean-Michel DUCOMTE**, President of the Ligue de l'Enseignement, **Jean-François MIGNARD**, Secretary General of the French League of Human Rights (LDH), **Francesca CHIAVACCI**, President of ARCI, **Conny REUTER**, Secretary General of Solidar.

10.00 – 12.00 Round table discussion moderated by **Raffaella BOLINI**, Vice-President of the European Civic Forum

The vicious circle of the erosion of rights, threats to democracy and the risk of the desegregation of the EU

- **How to react to the spreading of the idea that rights have to be secured for some by denying them to the weakest?**
- **How to prove to our people that an alternative to "There is no alternative" really exists?**
- **How to react to the belief that people's expression of democracy can actually destroy democracy, rights and our ability to live together?**
- **How to save our democratic and rights-based Europe?**

Speakers **Saskia SASSEN**, Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology, and Chair of the Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University, USA

Claudia WIESNER, Senior Guest Researcher, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence "Europe in Global Dialogue" and Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany

Martin SIME, Chief Executive of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Filip BALUNOVIC, Doctoral student at Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence, Serbia

12.00 - 13.00 Q & A with the audience

13.00 – 14.30 **Lunch Break**

These two series of four workshops will offer the opportunity to discuss selected aspects of the “missing links” around democracy that affect the activities of organised civil society.

14.30 – 16.30 **Parallel workshop sessions**

DEMOCRACY IN TRANSITION; RENEWING DEMOCRACY

Participation in decision-making - from local to European

Moderated by Sophie von Hatzfeldt (Democracy International)

With Beppe Caccia (Euronomade) Elena De Nictolis (LabGov Bologna), Laura Roth (Barcelona en Comu)

Democratic sovereignty and participation at the local level is spreading across Europe. Many municipalities have established innovative experiences of open dialogue, citizens' participation and co-decision-making. To what extent do these approaches offer answers to problems and manage to reach underrepresented social groups? How can good practice be shared with other municipalities across Europe (horizontal exchange)? Can we transfer the political experience gained right up to the EU level (vertical exchange)?

Strengths and limitations of emerging E-democracy

Moderated by Virgile Deville (Opensourcepolitics)

With Marie-Anne Cohendet (University Paris 1), Assya Kavrakova (ECAS), Ioana Valero (Civic Wise), Pierre-Louis Rolle (Open Democracy Now)

The use of tools made available by the Internet to enhance participation in the public sphere is becoming popular with citizens, institutions, politicians, civil society organisations ... The workshop will discuss the many questions that arise from these practices in order to focus on their strengths and weaknesses. It will also look at how these tools can be articulated with the other drivers of democratic processes.

Are NGOs still leading system change in society?

Moderated by Olivier Consolo (Utopia)

With Leida Rijnhout (Friends of the Earth/SDG Watch/Green10), Cristian Pirvulescu (Association Pro Democratia)

While NGOs (or traditional Civil Society actors) are very active and well skilled in field work, institutional advocacy, and campaigning, how are they currently positioned to drive system change in our societies? How is their relevance questioned by emerging forms of activism? What can NGOs learn from those new practices and approaches? Is there a space for joint networks and initiatives?

The decline of democracy and the rise of loneliness: how to fight fragmentation?

Moderated by Robert Manchin (Culture Action Europe) and Luca Bergamo (Deputy Mayor for Culture, Rome)

A workshop to exchange and develop a collective understanding of this specific moment in time in which the concepts of democracy and citizenship are challenged. Starting from an analysis of Worldpoll and Eurobarometer data on the rise of loneliness and the lack of trust in institutions and fellow citizens, participants will be discussing how civil society organizations can combine their strengths to emancipate our societies, starting from ourselves, our neighbours and communities, everyday experiences and individual versus shared feelings.

16.30 – 17.00

Coffee break

17.00 – 19.00 **Parallel workshop sessions**

DEMOCRACY SUPPORTED BY CITIZEN ACTION

Precariousness & social exclusion: is it our future?

Moderated by Joana Dias (Academia Cidadã)

With Haifa Tlili (Ufolep) , Marina Sarli (FairTrade Greece), Jeanne Dietrich (EAPN)

Precariousness is growing in Europe as a consequence of worsening labour conditions and the dismantling of the welfare-state. What kind of solidarity is developed or destroyed (family, community, institutions)? How can civil society contribute to the inclusion of people who are marginalised?

The erosion of freedom of movement : what is the impact on citizenship and democracy in Europe?

Moderated by Assya Kavrakova (ECAS)

With Verveine Angeli (Attac-France/Solidaires), Tamara Flanagan (New Europeans), Antoine Fobe (Your Europe Advice), Nora Siklodi (University of Portsmouth)

Freedom of movement is a symbol of open European societies and a pillar of our rights linked to European citizenship . However increasing restrictions affecting workers' mobility, measures taken in connection with security fears, as well as the possible consequences of Brexit, are challenging this right. Public debate has also raised controversial views on how it affects social contributions and benefits. Participants will discuss the complexity of the issues at stake. They will identify ways of preserving the right to freedom of movement while continuing to reinforce social rights.

The new European politics on migration: barriers, borders, and challenge to reception and integration

Moderated by Sara Prestianni (ARCI) and Frank Heuberger (BBE)

With Zrinka Bralo (Migrants Organise), Beppe Caccia (Euronomade), Fausto Melluso (ARCI), Mirko Schwärzel (BBE), Maria Vrijea (Transform)

The context is that of a reform of European policies which will restrict the right of asylum, the building of multiple barriers including outsourcing the handling of requests for asylum. The workshop will discuss the various possible models of reception and integration, highlight those which could support a real democratic change throughout the European space.

Building inclusive and cohesive societies through education

Facilitated by Conny Reuter (Solidar)

With Sahra Ryklief (International Federation of Workers' Education Associations), Brikena Xhomaqi (Lifelong Learning Platform), Réka Salamon (European Students' Forum AEGEE)

This workshop aims at sharing good examples of work dedicated to civic empowerment through education in Europe and beyond in the world, and to stimulate discussion on how CSOs can increasingly contribute to building inclusive and cohesive societies through education, in a contribution to reinforce democracy.

19.00 – 19.30

Pause

19.30 – 20.30 Testimonies

BUILDING HOPE WHERE GOVERNMENT POLICY THREATENS DEMOCRACY

Four actors will present snapshots of actions involving the mobilisation of civil society, sharing with us their opinion about what underpins these actions.

Mateusz KIJOWSKI, President of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy - Poland (KOD Polska)

KÖVES Nóra, Human rights expert with Eötvös Károly Institute - Hungary

Claudiu CRĂCIUN, Founding member of Demos - Romania

Marina ŠKRABALO, civic activist, GONG - Croatia

20.30 Dinner

Sunday, October 9th, 2016

9.00 – 11.00 **Plenary**

(RE)BUILDING DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY THROUGH CITIZEN ACTION

9.00 – 10.30 Round table debate moderated by **Dominique GUIBERT**, President of the AEDH – European Association for the Defence of Human Rights

Can our daily actions bring us together and address fragmentation?

How do civic associations and movements build legitimacy vis-à-vis citizens and institutions?

How can a European framework help to construct the struggle for equality, solidarity and inclusion?

What role for the civil society organisations in democratic (re)construction?

Speakers

Zrinka BRALO, Chief Executive of Migrants Organise

Jorgo RISS, Director, Greenpeace EU Unit

Mateusz KIJOWSKI, President of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD Polska)

Mary COLLINS, Senior Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, European Women's Lobby

10.30 – 11.00 Q & A with the audience

11.00 – 11.30 *Coffee break*

11.30 – 12.00 **Wrap-up and conclusions**

Susan J. SCHURMAN, Distinguished Professor, Department of Labour Studies and Employment Relations, School of Management and Labour Relations, Rutgers - the State University of New Jersey, USA

Jan Robert SUESSER, Vice-President of the European Civic Forum

12.30 *Lunch / End of programme*

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