



VĚRA JOUROVÁ

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Dear Ms Besozzi,

Thank you for your letter of 18 June 2020, sent on behalf of fifty platforms of civil society organisations & the European Public Services Union. President von der Leyen has asked me to reply on her behalf.

We recognise the important role played by civil society organisations during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

The key challenge for the EU's next multiannual financial framework is to provide adequate support for new and existing priorities, while also addressing the consequences of the recent pandemic as well as the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, which has so far been an important contributor to the budget.

The economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in modern times in terms of its scale, speed and impact. Despite the swift and comprehensive policy response at both EU and national level, the EU economy will experience a recession of historic proportions this year. The Commission has set out a bold and comprehensive plan for European recovery, which relies on the EU budget to mobilise investment and frontload financial support in the crucial first years of recovery. We have proposed to set up a new temporary recovery instrument 'Next Generation EU' to exceptionally raise money on financial markets and channel it through EU programmes and funds to underpin the immediate measures needed to protect livelihoods, get the economy back on its feet and foster sustainable and resilient growth.

Ms Carlotta Besozzi
Coordinator
Civil Society Europe

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The fundamentals of the 2018 Commission's proposals for a modern and flexible long-term budget tightly geared to the Union's priorities remains valid today. In order to achieve a swift agreement enabling the next long term budget and programmes to be operational from 1 January 2021, it is necessary to capitalise on the progress made in negotiations since 2018, and to factor in developments in the European Council¹.

However, given the high value added by the Rights and Values programme, I am pleased to inform you that, in the context of the adoption on 24 June 2020 of its proposal on the draft annual budget for 2021, the Commission proposed the restoration of the budget for the Justice, Rights and Values programmes, for the period 2021-2027, to the level of the 2018 proposal.

The new Rights and Values programme will remain an important instrument, under the next EU budget, to promote and protect common European values and rights as enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Civil Society organisations will be one of the main beneficiaries of the programme, which supports the activities of these organisations. The Commission greatly values the fundamental role that civil society plays in promoting open, democratic and inclusive societies. Europe needs a vibrant and diverse civil society to strengthen its democracies and help uphold the rule of law. The Commission will pay special attention to any attempts to pressurise civil society or to the shrinking of civil space.

Please be assured that the Commission will make every effort to promote the participation of civil society and to protect the common European values of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these important matters for our Union.

Yours sincerely,



Věra Jourová

¹ Most recently in the conclusions of 21 July 2020 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/07/21/european-council-conclusions-17-21-july-2020/>