WHEN THE OLD IS FAILING AND THE NEW STRIVES TO ARISE
Looking back and ahead: cohesive societies, inclusive citizenship

22-23 October 2015, Strasbourg
Council of Europe, Agora Building, room G3
1, quai Jacoutot

With the support of:

Europe for Citizens
Council of Europe
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arte
EUROPEAN CIVIC DAYS
Strasbourg, 22-23 October 2015

The European Civic Forum celebrates ten years since its creation in December 2005 in the Council of Europe premises. Ten years of campaigns, alliance building, debates, petitions to develop civic space, enable participation and build true civil dialogue. Ten years of attempts to bring about citizens’ voice in the European public sphere.

This conference will gather 150 civil society actors, scholars, representatives of institutions and media from all across Europe to take stock of political, institutional and social challenges facing Europe as reflected by the last decade experience and envision ways forward towards a revival of the European hope for solidarity, democracy and equal access to rights for all.

Building on the success of the former editions organised since La Rochelle in 2008 in the frame of the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU, the European Civic Days are a unique space to share experiences, to bring the European debate to the national and local level, and ultimately, to feed the European processes with grassroots challenges and concerns.
Programme

22 OCTOBER 2015
IS A EUROPE OF SOLIDARITY ACTUALLY POSSIBLE?

14:30 – 15:30 Opening session
Welcome
Jean-Marc Roirant, European Civic Forum President
Civic outlook on a European decade

Video screening ECF 10 YEARS

Call for Refugees Welcome against the Walls

Speakers
European Commission representative (TBC)

Antje ROTHEMUND, Council of Europe, Head of the Youth Department

Video screening Council of Europe

15:30 – 17:00 Round table: What civic drivers for a society based on solidarity?
Facilitator
Vladimir VASAK, journalist (ARTE)

Keynote
Daniele ARCHIBUGI, Research Director at the Italian National Research Council, and Professor of Innovation, Governance and Public Policy at the University of London, Birkbeck College

Within a European Union who rules mainly over economic, monetary and financial issues, where inequalities are on the raise, identities tighten up. How to (re)build hope against fear? How to reverse these regressive trends and bring about deep and sustainable change? What tools and what role for a European citizenship?
Cross talks

Society building: what role for education and media? Are we in need of new utopias?

Anna RURKA, President of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe

Jean-Michel DJIAN, Journalist, Editor in chief at France Culture

Marjolein CREMER, European Cultural Foundation

Marius WANDERS, Ambassador of the European Year of Development 2015 Alliance

Aziliz KONDRACKI, Confédération des Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture

Yulia PERERVA, Council of Europe, Programme coordinator – Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights

Fishbowl discussion with the audience

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<td>17:00 – 17:45</td>
<td>Networking cocktail</td>
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<td>18:00 – 19:30</td>
<td>European Democratic Citizenship Awards Ceremony</td>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Jean-Marc ROIRANT, ECF President</td>
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<td>Antje ROTHEMUND, Council of Europe, Head of the Youth Department, rewarding the laureate for Personality of the Year – Marsida BANDILI</td>
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<td>Vladimir VASAK, ARTE, rewarding the laureate for the Campaign of the Year – 100 thousand against the internet tax</td>
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<td>Iulia BADEA, Association of European Journalists, rewarding the laureate for Media Initiative of the Year – Comics for equality</td>
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<td>Mathieu CAHN, City of Strasbourg, Deputy Mayor for Events, Associative activities, Youth and Urban Cultures, Fight against Discrimination, rewarding the laureate for NGO of the Year – Youthnet Hellas</td>
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23 OCTOBER 2015
IS A MORE JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD HAPPENING?

9:30 – 10:30  Round table: What political changes to match societal challenges?
Facilitator  Vladimir VASAK, journalist (ARTE)
Speakers  Conny REUTER, Secretary General of Solidar
What’s social about business? Is social innovation the future of economy?
Kevin FLANAGAN, Activist and projects coordinator, P2P Foundation
Digital revolution: vector for democratic empowerment or social exclusion
Raquel FREIRE & Joao LABRINCHA, Activists and founding members of Citizenship Academy
The end of politics or towards different ways of doing politics?
Q / A with the audience

10:30 – 11:00  Coffee break

11:00 – 12:30  Time for questioning
Small groups discussions hosted by Piotr SADOWSKI (Volonteurpe), Valentin CHAPUT (Open Source Politics), CMJCF, Lana Simpraga (Initiatives for development and cooperation), Pauline LEJEUNE (Générations cobayes)

#1 Collaborative societies: end of hierarchies or hidden hierarchies?
#2 Connected societies: factories for androids or citizen subjectivity?
#3 Inclusive societies: a poetic licence or the possibility of a future in solidarity?
#4 Sustainable societies: marginal negotiations or utopia of the great change?

12:30 – 14:00  Buffet lunch

14:00 – 16:00  Time for building answers
Small groups discussions continue

16:00 – 16:30  Coffee break

16:30 – 17:30  Time for conclusions
Jan Robert Suesser, Raffaella Bolini, Cristian Pirvulescu
European Civic Forum Vice-Presidents
Background note

The European Civic Forum celebrates ten years since its creation in December 2005 in the Council of Europe premises. Ten years of campaigns, alliance building, debates, petitions to develop civic space, enable participation and build true civil dialogue. Ten years of attempts to bring about citizens’ voice in the European public sphere.

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Current events over the last years in Europe have proven these challenges and concerns to be multi-faceted. The management of the Greek crisis fed a feeling that the EU functioning is brought onto the edge of a post-democratic era, where “there can be no democratic choice against the European treaties”, as the European Commission President Juncker has claimed. The systematic crack down of the Hungarian government on European democratic values, Human rights and civil liberties is also sadly emblematic of a European deadlock. Many behaviours in response to the refugees’ crisis illustrate the EU’s incapacity to ensure respect of these values and effective access to fundamental rights. Mistrust and frustration ultimately feed the growing audience of xenophobic populism.

Major crisis have led in the past to radical change. Are shrinking democracy and respect for Human rights symptomatic of an upcoming systemic change? Are we facing the downfall of an outdated model? Can effective social and inclusive policies reverse the present fatal trends? Such are the questions and dilemmas that will guide us during these two days of discussions. Citizens’ organisations and movements are definitely instrumental in facilitating a progressive transition process, in scaling up from individual to collective, from local to global, from social to political. We need to imagine and see implemented new ways for the functioning of democratic institutions and governance systems. Otherwise the growing crisis faced by millions of citizens may soon lead to a new “barbarian” age.

The European project through the solidarity lens

In light of the above mentioned observations on the state of the European project, it has become strikingly obvious that the practice of “solidarity” did not positively evolve during the last decade, when the EU faced major changes, both in its functioning, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, and in its composition, with new member states joining the community, now composed of more than 500 million citizens.
What means equality and solidarity when Europe has to address the financial and economic situation of Greece and the social situation of the people living in Greece? What means solidarity when Europe has to address the consequence of migrations coming from countries hit by war, poverty and dictatorship?

Beyond the emotional reaction fed by the crisis, what can be people perception about the ways institutions pursue the objectives of equality and solidarity? What means the European project when European leaders are obviously tackling those issues against its claimed values and goals enshrined in Treaties?

The economic and social crisis which hit Europe in the recent years brought new forms of common living, unveiling citizens’ aspirations for better control on their social, political and economic environment. As opposed to top-down historic organizational utopias, the emerging models of self-organised initiatives propose bottom-up democratic approaches facilitating a fluid and open collective debate. What are the utopias behind these new forms of individual and collective engagement? What are the mechanisms at work to anchor them to reality? How can they, or should they, articulate with institutions?

Quite some interrogations as starting point for this debate...

From grassroots to policy and back again

Grassroots initiatives are experiments of a possible paradigm shift, and civil society, as an incubator, is nourishing its own expertise through these experiments. This accumulated expertise and understanding of societal challenges allow civil society to question the political changes to come. The connecting role of civil society for a more just and sustainable world will be highlighted through four societal dimensions.

Collaborative societies, based on human economy, are still “dirty laboratories”. The concept itself is well understood amongst civil society organisations, but institutions and policy-makers are yet to acknowledge its potential beyond marginal economical adjustments. Civil society must transmit to policy-makers the vision of collaborative societies that challenge the present economic rationale.

Connected societies are one of the facets of a “new democratic ecosystem”. Unless we let this ecosystem turn into a struggle for the fittest, the most market-oriented or the most authoritarian, we cannot rely on its self-regulation. Once again, civil society is at the forefront of safeguarding this ecosystem as a citizen-friendly zone. Because the issue needs global coordination, the role of public authorities both as passive defenders of online privacy or net neutrality and as proactive actors of new democratic processes is an issue to be addressed.

With the continuous rise of extremist and populist discourse in the public sphere, inclusive societies should be more than rhetoric in the institutional discourse. Civil society organisations are combining their energies to ensure Europe is an inclusive space, while strong antagonist forces are deploying efforts to build walls, to reject the most vulnerable out of solidarities’ circles and to revive exclusion and nationalist feelings.
Finally, principles of *sustainable societies* that meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs are at the heart of highly competing interests. The newly adopted development goals or the upcoming COP21 provides a platform to analyse what is at stake and to observe the divergence between parties. Civil society ceaselessly attempts to scale up its grassroots initiatives and to reach policy-makers in an environment highly invested by vested economic interests.

As a witness of societal challenges, as a catalyser for grassroots initiatives and as a connector between citizens and institutions, civil society is legitimate, and perhaps, responsible for being a disruptive and challenging player towards policy-makers.

Your active participation during the European Civic Days will allow us to convert this legitimacy into concrete outcomes!