

URSULA VON DER LEYEN

President-elect of the European Commission

Copy to

DAVID MARIA SASSOLI

President of the European Parliament

Subject: Civic space and dialogue with civil society within the portfolios of Commissioners-designate Vice-Presidents for Values and Transparency, and Democracy and Demography

Brussels, 16th September 2019

Dear President von der Leyen,

You published on September 10th the list and portfolios of Commissioners-designate to join your future team.

Despite the [demands](#) presented to you in July by Civil Society Europe - the European coordination for Civil Society Organisations, despite your declarations of commitment to strengthening European democracy alongside the fundamental rights and values proclaimed in the Treaties, despite ten years now that the European Parliament has repeatedly [called](#) for the full implementation of all the provisions of article 11 of the TEU, we sadly note you did not mandate any Vice-President for putting this into practice.

At a time when civil society space is in danger in many European countries (and beyond), as continuously alerted by civil society groups¹ and stressed by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency², we urge you to give a full and visible place to civil dialogue and explicitly mention this responsibility within the mandates of next EU Commissioners.

Based on the provisions of article 11 of the TEU and of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, we ask you to take into consideration amendments for the portfolios of Commissioners-designate Vice-Presidents for Values and Transparency, and Democracy and Demography (please see the amended mission-letters enclosed - “European citizens **and the organisations they belong to** must play a leading and active part in building our Union.”), in order to:

¹ [Civic Space Watch](#), Civil Society Europe [report](#) on Civic Space, [Berlin Agenda](#) (Civil Society demands towards the European elections 2019 and beyond), [Open Letter](#) for the new European Commission and European Parliament (International Civil Society Forum Bucharest 2019), State of civil society [report](#) by Civicus, EESC Liaison group with CSOs [Action plan](#) for EU civil dialogue

² Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU [report](#) 2018

- include **freedom of association and assembly**, alongside the freedom and pluralism of media, as indicator for democracy while assessing the implementation of EU values, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- establish a consistent **framework defining the relations between EU institutions and civil society**, including the organised civil society, in order to engage in all areas of EU action in an open, regular and transparent dialogue that will strengthen European democracy by giving voice and follow-up means to all civic actors so that the European Union that serves the common good.

Sincerely yours,



Jean-Marc ROIRANT
President of the European Civic Forum

The European Civic Forum is a transnational network of over 100 associations and NGOs across Europe working to promote civic engagement, thus contributing to the emergence of a European public sphere where the role and influence of civil society are fully recognised. We believe in a Europe grounded on Equality, Solidarity and Democracy and we connect civil society actors transnationally and cross-sectorally to participate in dialogue with the institutions, to advocate and campaign in defence of civil liberties and fundamental rights. Member organisations:

Academia Cidadã – Portugal • ADIF – France • Association européenne de l'éducation (AEDE) – Europe • Association européenne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (AEDH) – Europe • AEGEE – Europe • Animafac (+25 organisations) – France • Anne Frank's House – Netherlands • ANO pro Evropu – Czech Republic • ARCI– Italy • Asociace NNO – Czech Republic • Asociace Občanských Poraden – Czech Republic • Asociatia Pro Democratia – Romania • Association for Civil Society Development (SMART) – Croatia • Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) – North Macedonia • ATD- Quart Monde – France • A Praça – Portugal • ANACEJ – France • Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement - Germany • CAP Magellan – Portugal • Centre for Information, Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs (CNVOS) Slovenia • Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej - Poland • Centrum pre Europsku politiku (CEP) – Slovakia • CIDEM – France • CIPSI – Italy • Citizens Union Paremvassi – Greece • Civic Alliance – Latvia • CIVICA – France • Community Development Institute (CDI) – North Macedonia • Confédération des Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture de France – France • Culture et Liberté – France • Democracy International – Germany • Documenta – Spain • Europa Haz – Hungary • European Development Centre – Italy • European Institute Foundation – Bulgaria • European Network of National Associations (ENNA) – Europe • European Social Forum – Cyprus • Fondation pour la solidarité – Belgium • Fundacion CIVES – Spain • Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile – Romania • GONG – Croatia • Gruppi Solidarieta Internazionale - GSI - Italy • Inicijativa za Razvoj i Saradnju (IDC) – Serbia • Instytut Spraw Publicznych (ISP) – Poland • Interessenvertretung Gemeinnütziger Organisationen (IGO) – Austria • Jaan Tonisson Institute – Estonia • Jeunes européens – France • Johannes Mihkelson Centre – Estonia • Jeunesse au plein air (JPA) – France • Kesalukioseura ky – Finland • Kretakör Foundation – Hungary • La Liga Española de la Educación y la Cultura Popular – Spain • La Ligue de l'Enseignement – France • La Ligue Luxembourgeoise de l'enseignement – Luxembourg • Legal information centre for NGOs (PIC) – Slovenia • Legambiente – Italy • Le Mouvement Associatif – France • Les Francas – France • Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (LDH) – France • Maison de l'Europe Paris – France • Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne (MRJC) – France • L'interloque – France • Movimient Laic i Progressista – Spain • National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) – United Kingdom • Netwerk Democratie – Netherlands • New Europeans – United Kingdom • Non-Governmental Organisations Information & Support centre (NISC) – Lithuania • Nyt Europa – Denmark • Občan a demokracia – Slovakia • Ogólnopolska Federacja Organizacji Pozarządowych (OFOP) – Poland • Roma Democratic Development Association (SONCE) – FYROM • Rural Youth Union – Poland • Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) – United Kingdom • SPIRALIS – Czech Republic • Stefan Batory Foundation – Poland • TERA - Maison de l'Europe de la Charente – France • The ECI Campaign – Germany • The Women's Centre – United Kingdom • Volunteering Matters – United Kingdom • We are Europe – Germany • Youth Work Ireland – Ireland