



Draft document - 160729

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

La Rochelle, 8-9 October 2016

### Background

The first European Civic Academy<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> To register, please fill in the form here : <http://goo.gl/DObqzA>

# Draft programme

Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 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 **Nadia BELLAOUI**, Secretary General of the Ligue de l'Enseignement, **Françoise DUMONT**, President 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**, Political scientist, columnist for Al Jazeera Balkans, Serbia

12.00 - 13.00 Q & A with the audience

13.00 – 14.30 Lunch Break

## **14.30 – 16.30      Parallel workshop sessions**

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

# **DEMOCRACY IN TRANSITION; RENEWING DEMOCRACY**

- **Participation in decision-making - from local to European**
- **Strengths and limits of an emerging e-democracy**
- **Are NGOs still leading system change in society?**
- **The decline of democracy and the rise of loneliness: how to fight fragmentation?**

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?**
- **The erosion of freedom of movement : what is the impact on citizenship and democracy in Europe?**
- **The new European politics on migration: walls, borders, and challenges to welcoming and integration**
- **Building inclusive and cohesive societies through education**

20.00

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**, former journalist, working on migrants/ refugees' access to rights  
**Jorgo RISS**, Director, Greenpeace EU Unit  
**Aya CHEBBI**, International Board of CIVICUS  
**JUHASZ Borbala**, Hungarian Women's Lobby (tbc)  
**Jean-Marc SALMON**, Sociologist

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

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

12.30 Lunch / End of programme

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