

Launch of **ACTIVIZENSHIP #5**



**Civic Space Watch Report 2020
Stories from the lockdown**

**Policy debate and
Civic Pride Awards**

Hosted by MEP Pietro Bartolo (S&D)

**TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020
3:00 – 5:15 P.M. CET | ONLINE**

**European
Civic Forum** 

2020 has been characterised by the COVID-19 health emergency that produced consequences on our societies, economies and democracies that are unprecedented in Europe in times of peace. We have changed our life to protect ourselves and others. We have all been expected to act responsibly as individuals and as a community.

The need to prevent the spread of the contagion led to the imposition of strong restrictions to individual and collective freedoms. Some Governments took advantage of this exceptional situation to legitimate their attempt to concentrate powers in their hands but, even in countries where governments have been praised for their balanced approach, the situation of exception has exposed serious risks for European democracies, adding to the trend of deterioration documented in previous years.

2020 has also been characterised by an awakening of active citizenship to ensure at the widest possible scale effective access to basic rights that the crisis has put at risk. Many have found creative ways to be useful to their communities, to offer social and cultural tools against isolation, to volunteer for providing support to the weak and vulnerable which often happen to be the poorest, to act as watchdogs, and to propose societal alternatives. Civic space under the lockdown has been narrowed but, even under detrimental conditions, has shown a high level of dynamism.

The European Civic Forum, together with its members, has contributed to this dynamism and observed these trends through the [Civic Space Watch](#), a platform collecting resources on threats to fundamental rights as well as positive initiatives, including those aimed at countering these threats.

Prominent decision-makers and civic actors will share their feeling on the past year, their actions to mitigate the damage of the crisis. But they will mostly exchange on ways to strengthen democratic checks and balances in Europe, once exceptional rules will not be necessary.

The second part will reward groups of citizens, organised and non-organised, who responded to the narrowing of civic space under the pandemic circumstances.

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3:00 P.M. POLICY DEBATE

Welcome words	Pietro BARTOLO, MEP (S&D, Italy) Jean-Marc ROIRANT, European Civic Forum Co-president
Moderation	Alexandrina NAJMOWICZ, European Civic Forum Director
Presentation	Activizenship #5 Stories from the Lockdown
Debate	Tere BADIA, Civil Society Europe / Culture Action Europe Sandro GOZI, MEP (Renew, France) Juan Fernando LOPEZ AGUILAR, MEP, LIBE Chair (S&D, Spain) Joachim HERRMANN, Political advisor to Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice - <i>TBC</i>

4:15 P.M. CIVIC PRIDE AWARDS

Moderation	Raffaella BOLINI, ECF Co-President
Screening	Civic Pride Stories from the lockdown
Speeches	We are fair, Czechia Greek Forum of Refugees, Greece Women on the Road Foundation, Poland Inštitut 8. marec, Slovenia SEDOAC, the Active service domestic association, Spain The Wheel, Ireland Unteilbar, Germany
Closing remarks	Birgit VAN HOUT, Regional Representative for Europe, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The European Civic Forum (ECF) is a panEuropean network that brings together over 100 associations and NGOs across 28 European countries: a great variety of civic organisations ranging from big federations of associations deeply rooted in local constituencies, national platforms of NGOs uniting hundreds of thousands of NGOs across different sectors, human rights advocacy and campaigning organisations, but also smaller groups working at community level or engaging with the public on local issues.

The ECF connects civil society actors, institutions, academics and media through conferences, forums, alliances and campaigns, thus fostering a transnational expression of citizenship, europeanising civic participation. Within its regular activities, the ECF strikes a balance between grassroots outreach and ownership of its activities and institutional dialogue.

The **Civic Space Watch** is a platform collecting resources on threats to fundamental rights as well as positive initiatives, including those aimed at countering these threats. Launched in early 2018, the platform has so far gathered nearly 800 resources from dozens of local, national and European organisations active in 26 EU countries.

Pietro Bartolo, known as the «doctor of migrants» for his work on the island of Lampedusa, is an Italian gynecologist and coordinator of the health centre in the island. Mr. Bartolo has treated over 300,000 migrants and refugees rescued at sea and taken to Lampedusa throughout a career spanning three decades.

In May 2019, he was elected Member of the European Parliament. He was on the ballot in two electoral districts - the islands (Sardinia, Sicily) and central Italy - and won with over 270,000 votes. Bartolo became the symbol of an Italy open to migrants thanks to the film-documentary “Fuocoammare” by Gianfranco Rosi, which won the Golden Bear award at the Berlin film festival and was nominated an Academy Award for best foreign documentary. His story is also at the center of a book - “Lacrime di sale” (Tears of salt). He wrote a book, „Le Stelle di Lampedusa“, which inspired a 2019 movie „Nour“ from Maurizio Zaccaro.

He is now sitting in the S&D group and is a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. For the second successive year, Mr. Bartolo has accepted to host the Civic Pride Awards and policy debate that precedes them.

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