

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY 2022

Capturing the winds of change:

*How can democratic civil society
drive systemic change?*

10-11 November 2022
Scuola Normale Superiore
Firenze
Italy

VENUE:

Scuola Normale Superiore
Palazzo Strozzi
Piazza degli Strozzi
50123 Firenze
Italy

ORGANISED BY:



WITH THE SUPPORT OF:



IN THE FRAMEWORK OF:



Co-funded by the
European Union

HOW CAN DEMOCRATIC CIVIL SOCIETY DRIVE SYSTEMIC CHANGE?

Large-scale crises have repeatedly affected Europe and the world in recent decades, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis the most recent examples. These multifaceted crises showcase the systemic nature of the challenges we face today: climate change and the related natural and humanitarian disasters, social injustice and rising inequalities, and the long-term consequences of conflicts.

During the Covid crisis, we witnessed a widespread popular desire across Europe for deep, structural change to ensure decent living and a sustainable future for all. Democratic civil society has been at the forefront, raising the alert on issues to be tackled, and delivering services to people in need. But we have also witnessed societal despair caused by socio-economic hardships and uncertainty for the immediate future. These are two sides of the same coin: on the one hand, hope and solidarity are in evidence; on the other, fear and pessimism towards the future are on the rise.

The war in Ukraine exacerbated the worst in humanity but we also witnessed immediate and widespread popular opposition to the war and solidarity to those fleeing the invaded country. At the same time, in too many instances these acts of solidarity have been selective based on race and ethnicity. The political responses and narratives in relation to the war also show a paradox: securitisation and militarisation are receiving a new push to answer the need of building an inclusive space for long-lasting peace and a shared future between people.

The climate crisis also poses its challenges. Tackling the huge unfolding environmental and social consequences, particularly extreme in the global south, requires immediate and radical action. But we need to rely on and trust democratic mechanisms and consensus-building dynamics, which is particularly challenging in the current climate of deep polarisation and soaring mistrust.

As a result of these crises that affect our daily lives, the wind of change is blowing. It could blow in a progressive direction, with the common good of all people at its core, or in a regressive one, along the path of destructive nationalism based on exclusion, xenophobia and reactionary politics, serving the powerful and leaving many behind. Too often civil society finds itself in a reactive mode, having to oppose the direction of the change, instead of being in the forefront, driving it. In the face of many challenges and few, sometimes overlooked victories, there is also a challenge of sustaining civic mobilisations and energy.

How can we sustain mobilisations when democracy and the urgency of the issues at stake seem to be following different timeframes? How can we be resilient when we experience many defeats? What are the factors that can support the creation of progressive change in society and in policy-making? What lessons can we learn from civil society's successes? How can we conceive of "victories" in a way that takes into account the non-linear path of progressive change? What skills, capacities, resources and infrastructures does civil society need to achieve its goals in a coherent manner?

PROGRAMME

10 November 2022

14:30 **ECF board meeting**

17:00 **Introduction and welcome to the event**

Jean Marc Roirant Co-President, European Civic Forum

Donatella della Porta Dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Director of Centre of Social Movements Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

17:30 **Plenary discussion** Then and now: 20 years since the European Social Forum

Rafaella Bolini, Co-President, ECF

Lorenzo Zamponi, Research Fellow, Centre of Social Movements Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

Moderated by Giada Negri, Research and Advocacy coordinator, ECF

- **How can we sustain mobilisations and civic resilience when democracy and the urgency of the issues at stake seem following different timeframes, when we experience many defeats and challenges?**

20:00 **Celebratory dinner with the 2022 Civic Pride Awards Laureates**

11 November 2022

09:20 **Keynote** on the discussion paper

Donatella della Porta, Dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Director of Centre of Social Movements Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

- **How can we conceive of “victories” in a way that takes into account the non-linear path of progressive change, including setbacks and defeats? What skills, capacities, resources and infrastructures does civil society need to achieve its goals in a coherent manner?**

10:20 **Plenary** on the discussion paper

Laura Sullivan (TBC), Executive Director, We Move Europe
Representative of the environmental movement (TBC)

11:20 **Coffee break**

11:40 **Small group discussions** What lessons can we learn from civil society's successes?

Group A Substantial outcomes: What are the factors that can support the creation of progressive change at the policy level?

Ireland Ailbhe Smyth (TBC) Together for Yes coalition

Europe Sarah Chander (TBC), Reclaim your Face campaign, EDRI

Group B Procedural outcomes: What effects can we produce on the functioning of the political system?

Poland Karolina Dreszer, Our Ombudsman (Nasz Rzecznik) initiative

France Nathalie Tehio, Policy Observatory in France

Group C Resistance and cultural hegemony: What are the factors to create power and agency to shape the collective imagination in a progressive direction?

Italy Victoria Oluboyo, Human rights activist; member of Parma City Council

CEE Louisa Slavkova (TBC), Sofia Platform Foundation

13:00 **Lunch break**

14:00 **Keynote**

Albena Azmanova, Professor, Brussels School of International Studies, University of Kent

14:20 **Small group discussions Civil society and political representation**

Group A To make or not to make the electoral jump? What can we learn from the experience of those who decided (or not) to join the electoral political competition?

Croatia Teodor Celakoski (TBC), Možemo!

Spain Luca Gervasoni (TBC), Novact

Group B How to oppose an illiberal government

Hungary Veronika Mora, Civilisation coalition

Slovenia Nika Kovač (TBC), Institute 8 March; Go Out and Vote campaign

Poland Klementyna Suchanov (TBC), Polish Women's Strike

Group C How to oppose the far-right's influence on the agenda of our institutions

Bulgaria Denitsa Lyubenova, Youth LGBT organisation Deystvie

Denmark Lisa Blinkenberg, Amnesty International Denmark

Denmark Julie Rosenkilde, Nyt Europa

Moderated by Grigorij Meseznikov, Institute for Public Affairs Bratislava

15:50 **Coffee break**

16:10 **Groups report back to plenary**

Conclusions

Jan Robert Suesser, ECF

Donatella della Porta, Scuola Normale Superiore

17.00 **END**

ABOUT THE EVENT

European Civic Academy (ECA)

ECA was launched by the European Civic Forum in 2016 to build bridges between civil society and academia. It provides a space for civil society actors and academics to exchange and to identify priorities and possibilities for strengthening efforts to enhance civic and democratic spaces in Europe.

ECA 2022 is organised in cooperation with the Centre on Social Movement Studies (**Cosmos**) of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence. It brings together laureates from past editions of the Civic Pride Awards to discuss with leading civic actors and academics lessons learned from their inspiring mobilisations and victories.

This year's event will also take place in the framework of **2022Firenze**, an event marking the 20th anniversary of the first European Social Forum in Florence, Italy.

2022Firenze

The European Social Forum (ESF) was a regular conference held by members of the Global Justice Movement. Just one year after the harsh state repression at the Genoa Social Forum, and despite repeated attempts to criminalise the movement, in November 2002 the European Social Forum was born in Florence, bigger, broader and stronger. It was welcomed by an open, supportive, committed and courageous city.

Now is not about celebrating the past, but about keeping alive a memory that can help us to move toward the future.

Florence was a moment of great strength and convergence of social movements and collective actors coming from all over Europe: a similar moment is very much needed today, in the face of the immense and dramatic challenges of the present, starting from the need to raise a strong and unified voice for peace and against war on a European scale.

From 10 - 13 November 2022, European social movements and collective actors will gather in Florence as a step towards reconstructing a network of communication, collaboration and possible convergence able to face the tragic times we are living in: war, environmental crisis, increase of social and gender inequalities and democratic crisis.

Overcoming the great geographical and thematic fragmentation that has characterised mobilizations in recent years is now more necessary than ever, and the very process that will lead us towards "Florence 2022" can become an essential part of this reconnection.

The first two days of the Forum are dedicated to the self-organised and self-financed activities put in place by the different national and European networks, with the aim of involving as many activists as possible from all over Europe. Then, on 12 - 13 November, all participants will gather in a large and common European discussion meeting.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

The **European Civic Forum** is a pan European 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, or smaller groups working at community level or engaging with the public on local issues around the democratic values of Equality, Solidarity and Inclusiveness.

The **Centre on Social Movement Studies** (Cosmos) is a network based at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence. It focuses on social movements as part of broader contentious politics. It promotes theoretically-driven empirical analyses on forms, dimensions, causes and impacts of social movements, in established democracies as well as authoritarian regimes. Particular attention is given to social movements as promoters of democratisation processes.

REGISTER NOW!

For more information, please contact:
contact@civic-forum.eu | civic-forum.eu | +33 1 80 05 19 12



Co-funded by the
European Union