



Recommendations of the Civil Society Days 2019

The challenges Europe is facing today are unprecedented. A rise in nationalism, driven by a loss of citizens' faith in the European project, is threatening to overturn democratic values and undermine social and political stability. At the same time, the scale of the environmental crisis, with the climate emergency and unparalleled biodiversity loss, points to a systemic failure of the underlying predominant economic model. The legitimate concerns over climate change and the environment on the one hand, and democratic values on the other, were at the top of the agenda of many voters in the recent European elections. The outcome of these elections, to some extent, is a direct translation of the urgency felt among many European citizens, in particular the youth. These voters point to the urgency of addressing our numerous economic, social, environmental and political challenges.

The Civil Society Days 2019, which focused on Democracy and Sustainability, were thus a very timely occasion for civil society organisations to address these key issues at six workshops and two plenary sessions.

Around 250 citizens from across Europe, with backgrounds in civil society, policymaking, business and education participated in this year's event, which was prepared by 16 European civil society networks in cooperation with the EESC.

This key civil society conference addresses the following recommendations to the European institutions.

For a Participatory Democracy

Vision

Because in order to achieve a sustainable democracy its participatory dimension must be enhanced, citizens must be empowered and civil society organisations (CSOs) must be protected. Institutions therefore have to take an unambiguous stance against stigmatisation and criminalisation of civil society and support its different actors that stand and act for democratic values and fundamental rights both at grassroots and at transnational level.

MEPs should work to empower citizens, especially young people, and the civil dialogue has to be implemented centrally and peripherally as per art 11(1) and art 11(2) TEU. These actions would bridge the gap that currently stands between citizens and their representatives by making the decision-making process more accessible and inclusive. Rural and peripheral areas should be given particular attention to restore a public sphere and infrastructure of dialogue and discussion, as it is in these areas that people feel especially abandoned by current politics.

Proposed actions:

Actions	Partners
Financially support CSOs by creating and making more accessible funding programmes for projects that mainstream diverse civic activism and training programmes that aim to strengthen the capacity of CSOs.	European Commission
Support the great contribution of CSOs to democracy by implementing an EU Democracy Semester entailing a democracy scoreboard and an annual monitoring instrument to assess the state of democracy, fundamental rights and openness of the civic space across EU Member States.	European Commission
Provide long-term commitment to protecting and promoting academic and artistic freedom, including the provision of means to protect artists and academics at risk, in accordance with EU values and EU law (in particular art. 2 of TEU and art. 13 of ECHR).	All EU institutions
MEPs should implement participatory democracy mechanisms, such as citizens' panels, citizen assemblies, consultations and e-tools, to reach out to under-represented groups and allow citizens to contribute ideas and suggestions for improving policies and actions at local, national and European levels.	European Parliament
A formal committee on citizenship participation should be created and become a continuous structured space for MEPs and CSO representatives to open up the legislative process to citizens and CSOs at all levels of participation (e.g. decision-making, follow-up etc.), and not only consultations.	European Parliament European Economic and Social Committee
MEPs should exploit Information and Communication Technology (ICT) more and co-create new digital solutions to include citizens – especially young people – in decision-making processes. MEPs should open their institutional reports to crowdsourcing citizens' ideas and have more online policy discussions with citizens (e.g. webinars).	European Parliament
Parties that turn against the Fundamental Values as enshrined in art.2 TEU should be excluded from their political parties at the European level and political groups in the European Parliament.	European Parliament
A handbook should be created, based on the Members States' legal obligations vis-à-vis EU law and the ECHR, to enable systematic monitoring of the violation of artistic and academic freedom of expression (EACEA).	European Commission

For a sustainable Europe: climate-neutral and green, fair and social, strong and economically vibrant

Vision

A paradigm shift and a systemic approach are needed to address today's unprecedented challenges. Sustainable Development, seen as a people-centred project with an economy that works for society to deliver prosperity and an environment that provides quality of life, must be at the heart of the future of Europe. The future European economic model must be centred on social and environmental justice to achieve a sustainable democracy. By accomplishing this shift, elements like quality of employment, social protection and social equality are essential and need therefore to be protected and enhanced. Moreover, good practices such as democracy at work should be enhanced and supported as they have a beneficial impact on civic democracy, economic performance, the reduction of inequalities, sustainability, and job quality.

Proposed actions:

Actions	Partners
Commit to fiscal justice and facilitate the implementation of a plan to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance by adopting the qualified majority system on taxation matters (e.g. corporate/environmental taxes).	All EU institutions
Deepen the EMU creating the fiscal capacity for the EU to introduce automatic stabilisers, such as the European Unemployment Reinsurance scheme.	All EU institutions
Pass hard legislation to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights (e.g. Framework Directive on adequate minimum income).	European Commission
Develop a framework to consistently implement the existing tools for democracy at work already entailed in the <i>acquis communautaire</i> to empower workers and enforce their rights.	European Council
Draft an opinion on democracy at work, based on the evidence that democracy at work and civic democracy are mutually reinforcing.	European Economic and Social Committee
Support, including financially, CSOs working on wellbeing and post-growth economics.	All EU institutions
Change the Treaty in order to change the Stability & Growth Pact (SGP) to a Sustainability & Wellbeing Pact (SWP); give the EESC & COR back the power they had in the Maastricht Treaty. Give the EIB & ECB a mission to work on money as a public social good, tackling the debt trap & currency innovation. Also, promote a GLOBAL GREEN NEW DEAL.	European Council
Create a DG for Wellbeing & Future Generations under the first VP. This DG would also incorporate DG GROW and ECFIN. It would deal with NEW economic models, targets & indicators and create a wellbeing budget.	European Commission

