

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY

NGOs as Drivers for Enhanced Civic and Democratic Spaces in Europe

Brussels, 30 September – 1st October 2017

[Factory Forty](#), rue des anciens étangs, 40

1190 Brussels

After a successful first edition in 2016 which gathered about 200 activists from social, human rights, culture and environment organisations from all over Europe to discuss with high level academics complex questions raised by citizens' disenchantment, practice, and expectation with regard to democracy in Europe, the **European Civic Academy** has the ambition to become the space for civic activists in Europe for exchange and learning on current challenges faced by civil society. The second European Civic Academy will provide space for civil society actors to discuss with academics and identify priorities and possibilities for action research collaborations related to the role of CSOs in enhancing civic and democratic spaces in Europe.

Academics and activists will share insights on key findings of Civil Society Europe & Civicus report and survey on civic space, such as increased polarisation in society, decline in support of authorities for NGOs to promote human rights, lack of structural consultation with CSOs, funding conditionality, legislations and administrative decisions reducing civic space, unintended effect of transparency laws, lobbying acts reducing access to decision making or shutting down critical voices, smear campaigns, criminalisation of solidarity, reduced trust in intermediary bodies vs dialogue with individual citizens, as well as seek solutions to these new challenges.

The discussion will focus on three different strands: 1) the impact of NGOs on democratic processes, 2) their ability to drive social change, and produce public opinion and on how civil society and informal citizen's movements can work together beyond fragmentation.

The objectives of this European Civic Academy are three fold: (1) mapping civil society needs in terms of research priorities; (2) enable civic actors to gain knowledge about existing research, methodology and approaches to inspire a renewal of their social and political action; (3) increase awareness among academic researchers about civil society needs and priorities and identify collaborative opportunities for future research.

Draft programme

Saturday 30 September

9:00 - 9:30 Welcome Coffee & Tea

9:30 - 11:00 Opening session in plenary

Jean-Marc Roirant, CSE President

Short Introduction by Izabella Toth, Concord Europe on current challenges faced by NGOs

Two key note speakers to set the scene and provide a critical perspective on civic and democratic spaces in Europe, civil society action and areas for reform

[HÅKAN JOHANSSON](#), Professor in Social Work, School of Social Work at the University of Lund, Sweden (tbc)

Speaker to be invited

11:00 - 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 - 13:00 Parallel workshops part I

Parallel workshops will help to debate more in depth some of the themes and brainstorm on priorities for research

NGOs impact on democratic processes (spaces of checks and balances, holding institutions to account, challenging policies etc.)

Theoretic input: [ROSA SANCHEZ SALGADO](#) is Assistant Professor of European Public Policy at the Department of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam

Speaker to be confirmed, *Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, KU Leuven*

Discussion moderated by Jorgo Riss, Head of Greenpeace European Office

NGOs impact on society (agency power in driving social change, creating social bonds, "humanising" economy, be present in the media, etc.)

Theoretic input:

[MARTA SOLER GALLART](#), Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Barcelona and Director of CREA - Community of Research on Excellence for All.



The European Coordination for Civil Society Organisations

Discussion moderated by Gabriella Civico, European Volunteer Center

Organised civil society and informal citizen's movements: working together beyond fragmentation

Theoretic input:

Theoretic input: [SANDRA LAUGIER](#), Professor of Philosophy, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, Paris, France

Discussion kick-off with LEX PAULSON, Democracy 2.1

Moderated by Niccolo' Milanese, European Alternatives

13:00- 14:30 Lunch

14:30 - 16:00 Parallel workshops part II

16:00 - 16:30 Coffee Break

16:30 - 18:00 Workshops proposals for research priorities

Sunday 1st October

Plenary discussion

9:30 - 11:00 Results from workshops: discussion in plenary

11:00 - 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 - 12:45 Takeaways for research and action priorities & inspiration for next steps

Reaction by [VEDRAN DZIHIC](#), senior researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs and lecturer at the University of Vienna

Conclusions by organisers