



European networking meeting at the initiative of the European Movement-Italy

Empower Citizens for the future of Europe

Sesto San Giovanni (MI), May 11-12, 2018

Conclusions

Premise

The building-site of the EU will be re-opened ten years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon to take the steps forward that are necessary to complete the EMU including the fiscal union, give a binding content to the Social Pillar, secure the range of Freedom, Security and Justice, reform and harmonize the migration and the asylum seekers policies, assure the external security including a common defense policy.

It is undoubtedly necessary and urgent to change the course of the EU for many reasons: the very long financial and subsequent economic and social crisis, the Brexit, the rise of Euro-hostile movements, the intrusion of the “illiberal democracies”, the planetary instability, the epochal phenomenon of migration from South to North more than one century after the massive migration from East to West, the challenging of the Sustainable Development Objectives.

All the roadmaps proposed by the EU institutions and the national governments are based on the same criteria but access to the EU building-site is denied to the citizens in an oligarchic and non-transparent system.

We, as representatives of eighteen civil society networks, reached a common point of view on the need to protect and enhance European values, secure coherence between EU actions and values as fixed in the EU Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN agreements and Treaties.

We are in the most challenging position in our existence as a Union, but we have never had greater opportunities, greater innovations or a greater understanding of one another. Our youth is more cosmopolitan and can connect the culture of their countries to a global European identity. Technical discoveries and developments allow the EU to evolve rapidly, and better now than later, to develop sustainable answers and solutions to unemployment, which is one of the main sources of social turbulence and conflicts. We continue in pursuance of a Europe based on democratic values, fundamental rights and the rule of law while maintaining Europe’s a model of society for the rest of the world.

We pledge the following three priorities and the next steps for the EU:

The respect of the rule of law

The rule of law is at the core of the EU system. It means and requires the respect of legality, the equality of citizens, the legal certainty, the independence of judiciary, the accountability of the decision makers and, last but not least, the protection of Fundamental Rights.



The rule of law has been conceived as the main common value of the EU and its respect is binding for the Member States and the candidate Countries. Contrary to the Spinelli Draft Treaty in 1984 giving the competence to certify the violation of the rule of law to the Court of Justice, the Treaty of Lisbon attributes this power to the political and arbitrary decision of the European Council acting unanimously.

We welcomed two different and parallel actions: a European Citizens' initiative (ECI) addressed to the European Commission and a petition addressed to the EP in order to create an efficient juridical instrument in the framework of the Area of Freedom, Justice and Security involving the Court of Justice, the national and European Parliaments, the European Agency of Fundamental Rights and the Civil Society stakeholders having a vested interest in the respect of the rule of law.

The multiannual financial perspectives

The public budget is the key instrument to assure public goods to the citizens. It should be founded on a double principle of "no taxation without representation" and "no representation without taxation" with the consent of citizens.

The negotiations on the next multiannual financial perspectives have started the 2nd of May 2018 with the proposals submitted by the European Commission to the Council and the EP in view of an agreement to be reached before end 2020 on the expenses and revenues but as well as the rules related to the EU financial programs.

We ask - as an urgent matter – the European Commission and the EP:

- To re-establish the five-year programming of the Delors Package-I, which is more coherent from an economic point of view and more democratic.
- To introduce in the negotiations the method of the participatory budget, through three main steps: thematic Conventions and hearings ("agora") organized by the EP committees; general and European Convention of citizens before the end of the negotiations preceded by thematic "citizens' juries"; e-democracy consultations on the rules related to the EU programs.
- To assure that the financial priorities related to the expenses are coherent with the Objectives of Sustainable Development Goals unanimously adopted by the Member States in 2015 in the framework of the Agenda 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement.
- To introduce a qualitative and quantitative priority to their own resources giving an autonomous fiscal capacity to EU and to attribute a complete co-decision power of the EP in the multiannual financial perspectives (expenses and revenues).

EU democracy, representative, participatory and empowering

a. Citizen consultations

By having a consultation process fostered by the Commission, it is likely that the process is going to be transnational and conducted on a supranational level. Nonetheless, some concerns were raised.



The most criticised aspect is the use of an online platform, which is not suited to reach out to all, especially in less digitalised countries. Furthermore, the content of the questions are not only too complex, but also lacking in some crucial aspects, for instance the reform of the EU and citizenship.

It is not clear what the aim of this process is. This can be problematic and might decrease participation. Yet, it has been stressed that some fundamental criteria must be respected. The process must be participative, inclusive, pluralist and respects democratic principles. We observe with preoccupation the lack of involvement of the EP in this process, the only democratically accountable institution in the EU.

We recommend that such engagement of citizens should:

- Be available and attractive for all 450 millions of citizens in the 27 Member States.
- Be carried out through deliberative face-to-face, online and media consultations.
- The citizens' inputs should be brought to develop genuinely European citizens' policy proposals by using representative citizens' meetings and online mechanisms across Europe that allow a systematic dialogue, continuous citizens' follow-up and transparent decision making.
- The citizens' inputs should be available in due time before the beginning of the electoral campaign for the European Parliament.
- Continue to be practised, not only in the run-up to the European elections in 2019, but also on a regular basis as to bring the EU institutions closer to the citizens.
- The policy proposals developed and prioritised by the citizens must be finalised both in the policy planning of the Commission and the EP.
- Such an additional democratic feature for deliberative involvement must be systematic and remain independent, building on the civil society in all its diversity and be carried out in firm agreement with the EU institutions (Commission, EP, Council).
- Independent mechanism for funding must be developed, linked to the future budget for citizens and combined with revenues from external sources.

b. Empowering

We recommend to set up a framework of citizens empowering democracy, including EU referendum, access to information, access to justice related to the infringements of European values (*recurso de amparo* and *Bundesverfassungsbeschwerde*), whistleblowing protection, a budget and public deficit monitoring scheme at EU and Member States levels, supported by digital revolution (i.e. block chain).

Next step of the European networking meeting

- European Citizenship
- EU democracy applied to the reform of the Treaties