

OUR EUROPE. OUR CONTRIBUTION. OUR FUTURE.

Conclusions

of an international civil society conference

for the promotion of a citizens-centered Europe of the future

Rome, 15 February 2018

Within the frame of the „Practice solidarity and shape Europe” project supported by the Europe for Citizens programme an agora-type international civil society event was organised in Rome, Italy on 15 February 2018 under the title „More than a declaration: the Commission’s White Paper on the future of Europe”. The meeting was hosted by the European Movement Italy and all the 10 project participating countries were represented among the 52 participants.

Several documents including President Juncker’s State of the Union Address of 2016 and 2017, the Rome Declaration adopted on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the result of the discussion initiated by the Italian members of the European Economic and Social Committee together with “The 6th Scenario” of the European Movement Italy were used to stimulate and enrich the debate.

As the result of intensive exchange of opinions in plenary and working group sessions participants came to the conclusion that

1. a broad discussion is needed to decide what course Europe should take by 2025; until now reactions to the 5 scenarios of the Commission’s White Paper have not reached the anticipated result; concerted efforts including more systematic and energetic citizen’s contributions are needed bringing their bottom-up approach to the process;
2. discussion per se is useless and counterproductive; the well-known EU generalities and outdated modalities should be forgotten and replaced by concrete, action-oriented and down-to-earth proposals and initiatives easily understood by ordinary citizens;
3. the current grant scheme of the European Commission available for civil society organisations should pay special attention to and support initiatives using non-conventional, innovative methods; funds available within the Europe for Citizens programme should be increased by 65% during the remaining 2014-2020 MFF period;
4. civil society organisations especially those affiliated to Europe-level networks or umbrellas are inclined to talk to the „already converted” citizens; the challenge is to reach out and engage in debates the marginalised, the non-interested ones even with hostile attitudes; the safe walls of a conference room will not create the necessary atmosphere for such open debates;
5. a reinvented, less bureaucratic and more user-friendly European Citizens Initiative (ECI, collection of 1 million signatures) can significantly promote debates on the future of Europe;
6. the civil dialogue mechanism of the Commission together with other major activities, eg. civil society days, festivals, etc. should be used for the promotion of discussion on the future of Europe;
7. Europe’s future are in the hands of its citizens thus it is crucial to increase turn-out with positive messages at the European Parliament 2019 elections. As a new element, a window of opportunity a European list should be set up; CSOs are ready to present a first proposal to stimulate the debate on this issue;

8. instead of the current disorder and cacophony on the future of Europe debate (who is doing what) there should be a single Commission-managed entry point where programmes, contributions, developments, reports, best practices and other relevant info are available; participants of the Rome event express their readiness to feed in their experience into such a broader system.

Participants appreciated the positive and creative atmosphere of the conference and expressed their thanks to the host organisation, the European Movement Italy.

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