

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY

2021

REBUILDING TRUST IN DEMOCRACY

SESSION III - CONVERGENCE:
ALL FOR A BETTER WORLD,
BUT ALL FRAGMENTED?

OCTOBER 27, 2021
3:00-6:00 PM CET
ONLINE

ORGANISED BY:



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ABOUT

The European Civic Academy was launched by the European Civic Forum in 2016 to connect and build bridges between civil society and academic agendas, to provide space for civil society actors to discuss with academics and identify priorities and possibilities for collaborations related to the role of CSOs in enhancing civic and democratic spaces in Europe. The objectives of the 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 strengthening and a renewal action framework;
- (3) increase awareness among academic researchers about civil society needs and priorities and identify collaborative opportunities for future research.

Three sessions have been organised so far: in 2016 in La Rochelle (France); in 2017 in Brussels; in 2019 in Slubice (Poland). It allowed exchanges, but not yet the building of a strong linkage between the civic actors and the academic world. The editions to come shall benefit from the cooperation process that has developed between ECF, Civil Society Europe, Solidar and the Collegium Polonicum Foundation.

During this fourth edition of the European Civic Academy, we will bring together leading academics and civic actors to discuss obstacles and ways forward for civic organisations and social movements in the current context, characterised by growing distrust in democracy and divisions inside our societies.

Read the takeaways from the [first two sessions here](#).

SESSION 3: CONVERGENCE: ALL FOR A BETTER WORLD, BUT ALL FRAGMENTED?

27 OCTOBER, 15:00 - 18:00 CET, ONLINE

Democratic civic actors usually share similar values and aspirations for a just and sustainable world; however, they often consider the issue they deal with as the entry point to achieve a different and better society and world and the most urgent to tackle. As the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the systemic connections of the multiple crises the world is facing, it highlighted the urgency for new approaches to look at each other and work together, including the intersectionality of each issue at stake.

The mistrust, competition and self-sufficiency that sometimes characterises relationships between civic actors with different theories of change and ways of organising are obstacles for developing convergences. In this regard, in the last year, both the experiences of Black Lives Matter and the Polish Women Movement have been able to transform a one-issue movement in a space of convergence for large parts of the democratic civil society in their own countries, and they both have been a sign of counter-tendency to fragmentation. In some European countries and in other continents the pandemic brought different social actors to converge around the issue of “care”, as a shared vision for projecting a new society.

- Is convergence of democratic agendas the best path to systemic change? How to prevent from creating hierarchies of needs, issues and fights? Are there any attempts to connect/unite thematic agendas, to overcome fragmentation? What obstacles do they face? What can we learn from experiences of mutual contamination and convergence?
- What are the relations between movements, organised civil society and other forms of democratic activism - conflict-cooperation, trust/mistrust? How are the different actors discussing this issue? Does this dialectic contribute to any contamination, debate or change between different concepts and practices towards a better world?

PROGRAMME

- 15:00 **Welcome:**
Jean-Marc Roirant, Co-President of the European Civic Forum
- 15:05 **Setting the stage:**
Raffaella Bolini, Co-President of the European Civic Forum
- 15:15 **Keynote**
Richard Youngs,
Senior fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Europe; Professor of International Relation at the University of Warwick, UK.
- 15:35 **Discussion**
With
- **Jaša Jenull**, Slovenian Friday protests
 - **Julie Pascoët**, Senior Advocacy Officer at European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
- Moderated by Giada Negri**, European Civic Forum
- 16:05 **Breakout groups***
- 17:25 **Coffee break**
- 17:35 **Closing session**
Rapporteurs from the small groups share insights from the discussions (3 min. each) – not a summary of the discussion but the elements of agreement and disagreement and areas for future reflection.
- Moderation** and reactions by **Alexandrina Najmowicz**, Secretary General of the European Civic Forum
- 17:50 Conclusion of the 2021 European Civic Academy by **Jan Robert Suesser**, Vice president of the European Civic Forum
- 18:00 **END**

*BREAKOUT TOPICS

16:05 – 17:25 CET

Each group is hosted by one academic who presents the findings of their research or by an activist who reflects on their experience (20 minutes) and then moderates a session of Q&A with the audience to discuss how the research and experience reflects (or not) the reality on the ground of other participants. The ECF will share previous research of the academics with registered participants ahead of the event to facilitate the preparation and discussion. One activist-rapporteur will follow the discussion and fill in a harvesting document collecting observations on areas of agreement, areas of disagreement, questions and insights for future research and action.

- 1 Towards a society of care:** How are social movement across Europe approaching the need to build convergence among different democratic agendas amidst the COVID-19 crisis?
Host: **Anastasia Kavada**, University of Westminster
- 2 Uniting all for a Just Transition:** how to promote a unifying approach across diverse stakeholders to overcome the differences in methods to promote social justice?
Host: **Andrea Casamenti**, SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation
- 3 Towards an ecology of social movements:** how can we build capacity for working across difference and diversity within our movements and civil society?
Host: **Gee & Ilaj Zaremba**, ULEX project
- 4 Intersectionalism: How is the environmental movement approaching the integration of racial justice, social justice and gender equality in its narrative and action?**
Host: **Shenna Sanchez**, Friends of the Earth
- 5 How has the health crisis catalysed and accelerated prior and deep-rooted mutations of civic engagement?** Learning from the French case study
Host: **Floriant Covelli**, Institut français du Monde associatif

ORGANISATIONS

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.

Foundation for Collegium Polonicum strives to encourage various forms of citizens' activity, strengthening pro-social attitudes, development of an awareness and involvement amid civil society. The Foundation's mission is based on an active cooperation with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland) and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) (Germany). We aim to build the bridge of understanding and cooperation between NGOs, local governments, universities and the society.

Civil Society Europe (CSE) brings together 29 European networks of civil society organisations (CSO) working towards regenerating the European project around the shared values of Equality, Solidarity, Inclusiveness and Democracy. Our main objectives: to facilitate and enable horizontal and vertical dialogue between European civil society organisations and policymakers and help strengthening CSOs in their activities and relations with the institutions. The organisation was founded in December 2014 in Rome at the close of the European Year of citizens as an initiative of organisations that had worked together in the European Year of Citizens Alliance.

SOLIDAR is a European and worldwide network of Civil Society Organisations working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. With over 60 member organisations based in 29 countries (24 of which are EU countries), member organisations are national CSOs in Europe, as well as some non-EU and EU-wide organisations, working to advance in Europe and worldwide.

**Please REGISTER for the event
by Tuesday 26 October 2021**

For more information please contact:
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