



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL MIGRATION and HOME AFFAIRS

Directorate A: Strategy and General Affairs

CIVIL DIALOGUE MEETING

28 November 2018

Minutes

The Civil Dialogue group is made of civil society organisations and meets regularly in the framework of the **Europe for Citizens programme**. This was the second meeting in 2018, the first one took place on 8 June. **32 organisations** attended this meeting, most of them being beneficiaries of an operating grant from the programme (see list of participants attached).

1. Introduction

Ms Marta CYGAN, Director, DG HOME-A, Strategy and General Affairs, European Commission.

M. CYGAN welcomed the participants. She stressed the role of this group to keep up with the dialogue tradition between the Commission and the key stakeholders on the implementation of the Europe for Citizens programme. This dialogue is very beneficial as it makes possible real exchanges of experiences and good practices.

At a crucial moment for the Europe for Citizens programme – the next MFF to be prepared, European elections coming up – she announced that this is a very “political” meeting.

She welcomed the presence of Commissioner Avramopoulos who will address his political message on the programme and its successor, the Rights and Values programme.

As during the previous meetings, she confirmed the good cooperation between the Commission and the European Parliament. She announced the presence of Ms Bodil Valero, Member of the European Parliament rapporteur for the LIBE Committee on the Rights and Values programme to present the state of play of the negotiations in the Parliament.

She also welcomed the presence of a representative of the Economic and Social committee.

The information round on the preparation for the European elections in 2019 is also on the agenda, with the participation of Mr Mester, Head of unit of DG Communication.

The agenda is approved.

2. The Europe for Citizens programme and the importance of the Civil Dialogue,

Mr. Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

Mr Avramopoulos commended the civil society organizations for their work at grass roots level to engage EU citizens.

The current political context dominated by populist narrative and raising of xenophobia are putting at stake the European values. The migration and security crises have shown the

difficulties to defend our European values. He emphasized the need to defend these values and the role and added value of the European Union in helping and supporting Member States to prevent terrorist attacks, to strengthen the external borders, and managing migration flows.

In this context it is extremely important to involve European citizens in European politics and shape the EU's political agenda. The Europe for Citizens programme is a very sound instrument to connect citizens with Europe, through town twinning or celebrating remembrance. Civil society organizations have a role of intermediary and should address citizens' expectations. The Commission will continue to support them through the successor programme of Europe for Citizens in the period 2021-2027 under the Rights and Values programme, which is regrouping current activities around the European values, rights and citizenship and will ensure an even higher added value of these activities and promote EU values.

In view of the forthcoming European elections, Commissioner Avramopoulos invited the participating civil society organizations to join their forces and create platforms to build a counter narrative against fake news. This can only be done based on concrete results achieved by the EU such as continuing to save lives in the Mediterranean, the reduction of the number of irregular arrivals and the increase of security and prevention of terrorist attacks.

There is need for improving but more generally, he admitted that the EU has difficulties in presenting the results to the citizens. However, it is not possible to take democracy for granted and the Commission together with the civil society organizations should be active in promoting its values towards its citizens. He welcomed the ongoing initiatives at national level to prepare for the European elections. But he insisted on the need for coordination and for liaising with the Commission and the Parliament in the coming months.

Commissioner Avramopoulos thanked the CSOs and invited them to keep working for all citizens.

1. The Rights and Values Programme - state of play

Ms. Bodil VALERO, Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE Committee) - Rapporteur for the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Rights and Values programme

Ms VALERO underlined the importance of the new Rights and Values programme which is the result of broad consultations with the civil society organisations. She said that anything that promotes the values of Article 2 TEU of the Treaties should be eligible referring to the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of laws, respect of human rights, etc. However, it was not possible to have this article as legal basis for a legislative proposal. The LIBE committee report also proposes to increase substantially the programme budget (EUR 500.000.000 for the specific objective citizens participation and engagement, to nearly EUR 2 billions, EUR 1 974 457 000, for the whole programme). The LIBE committee has also added a new strand to the programme which is about the rights and values only.

The Rights and Values programme will be supervised by three committees in the European Parliament: the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), the Culture and Education Committee (CULT), and the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM). CULT and FEMM have exclusive competence in their area and therefore LIBE has

to take into account their amendments. Another issue under discussion is the possibility to sanction those countries that do not respect Article 2 of the Treaty. She recalled that there is a need to strengthen the dialogue with civil society organizations which should be interactive and not only providing information. On national contact points, she stressed the need for these centres to be independent, whether they are based in national government or in civil society organisations.

Questions/Answers session:

ICLS stated that the European elections will be a good opportunity to use more incisive means of communication, not only by pushing people to vote but also to vote well. EU should be more reactive towards those migrants not complying with the rule of law who should be judged and send back home.

Fundació Solidaritat - University of Barcelona pointed out that countries that do not comply with Article 2 of the Treaty are countries where civil society should receive more support.

European House considered that the changes suggested for the future programme should be addressed still today and not waiting for the next MFF. Moreover, some representatives from the Council should attend the Civil Dialogue meetings.

Ms VALERO agreed that there is a need to mobilise civil society for the European elections. On migration, the European Parliament seeks a common asylum system where each Member State takes its responsibilities. All EU countries should play solidarity in this area. More attention should be given to the analysis of the root causes, like escaping from war poverty, or climate change.

M. CYGAN confirmed that DG HOME is working on common asylum. The Commission will also invite a representative from the Council to attend the next Civil Dialogue meeting.

Civil Society Europe acknowledged the efforts made by the Parliament to increase the budget for the future programme and to increase the outreach to organisations working on other fields. However, the Rights and Values programme should not oppose different organisations based at different levels (local, national, regional, transnational) and should also make sure that all levels will benefit from funding. **CEMR** asked for a clarification on future beneficiaries and requested a reference to local and regional entities, as these are crucial stakeholders as well. **EUROCLIO** asked how civil society organisations could help in the negotiations with the Council and to have more information on the distribution of funding. **Centre European Robert Schuman** questioned if operating grants under the remembrance strand will be maintained. **Friends of Europe** questioned what is the objective of the discussions between the various EP committees and if it is the concept of power sharing in terms of policy decision. He invited to think differently given the gap between citizens and the EU.

Ms VALERO considered that a certain flexibility should be kept in the legislation in order to allow for good implementation. The other EP committees want to keep their exclusive competences and she understands that. However the final aim is to have an overall budget increase for the programme. On the support that civil society organisations could provide, she invited the participants to campaign and to voice the importance of the programme. This is the right time to do it, as during the electoral campaign potential MEP candidates would listen to these messages. It is also extremely important to join forces. On the organisations participating in the programme, the MEPs tried to facilitate the access for small civil society organisations. Most of them do not apply because it takes too much time. CULT will decide on matters

related to remembrance and operating grants.

P. Chantraine, DG HOME, Deputy Head of Unit A1, presented shortly the state of negotiations with the Council. Three meetings took place in the Working Group of the Council. The structure of the Commission proposal has not changed. The budget is not discussed in this Working Group. National contact points will broaden their scope of activities. Council is expected to adopt its position in December. After that, the Presidency could come to present this position to the next Civil Dialogue meeting.

To the question of the **Robert Schumann Foundation** on the next agenda of the European Parliament and if the budget would be agreed before the European elections, **Ms VALERO** replied that the vote in the LIBE Committee will be on 10 December. The vote in the Council is scheduled for December. Negotiations will start in January 2019. The aim of the rapporteur is to have the text voted by the European Parliament plenary session before the end of this legislation.

2. European Elections: update on Commission's campaigns and EuropeProtects

Mr. Jens MESTER, Head of Unit DG COMM.A.2, Corporate services Interinstitutional relations, visual communication, framework contracts, European Commission

M. MESTER first underlined that in communication terms next year's elections should best be referred to as European elections, as they will determine the course of Europe's future, not only the shape of a single institution. He updated participants on the EU-branded corporate campaigns of the European Commission (InvestEU, EUandME and EUprotects) and invited participating organisations to help disseminate the publicly available material from the respective campaign pages.

According to the last Eurobarometer on democracy and elections, just released this week, the most important issues to motivate citizens to go to vote are: to be better informed about the EU and what it is doing for them, more young people and women candidates on the lists. It is therefore important to convey the concrete examples, based on facts and using emotions, to show how the European Union invests, empowers and protects. The aim is to empower them to take informed decisions about Europe's future. Citizens should also be informed on practical details on how to vote (via the YourEurope portal and the forthcoming web page of the EP). An effort should be done should be made at national level on that and the Commission's Representations in Member States are at the disposal of civil society to join forces.

Commission staff will also be mobilised through SMARPS, a social media tool. Also the outreach activities of the Commission have been strongly increased: Over 1200 Citizens' Dialogues have already taken place under the Juncker Commission. The College will adopt a progress report on on-line consultations and on the results of citizens' dialogues as well as the citizens' consultations, to be submitted to the December European Council. An action plan on how to fight disinformation has also been prepared. DG COMM has set up an internal network for detecting fake news.

Questions/Answers session:

European Civic Forum asked how to fight disinformation when it comes from Member States themselves. **European Volunteer Centre** inquired whether any check mechanism had been put in place in order to make sure that nationalist and populist language and messages are not used. **EUROCLIO** highlighted the role of such portals as the Teachers' Corner and the importance of education to address children as future EU citizens. The campaign message

should not be focused only on “everything positive” about EU but also about challenges. They expressed their readiness to support the Commission and offered advice. **IEP** pointed to the need to have not only facts and figures but also a good argumentation on how to address Euroscepticism. The Commission should provide a training on how counternarrative can be built. **Republikan Institute Budapest** queried about mythbusting and fighting disinformation and asked how to support the dissemination of information.

M. MESTER first explained that there are different approaches to counter disinformation depending on the type of attack. If the EU is attacked with lies, as recently on the responsibility for the bridge collapse in Italy, the Commission will definitely react quickly and forcefully. The Commission is also fighting lies in media for example. At national level, the Representations in the Member States have developed specific tools (“Decodeurs de l’Europe” in France or “Vero e falso” in Italy) which list the most common myths and fake news around the EU. He recognized that the idea to organize a training is interesting and could be explored. He also explained the complementary role of various parts of the Commission in detecting, preventing and reacting to disinformation. However, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution for every disinformation circulating. On what to do and how to help, he pointed out that the communication around EU should be effective, pro-active, fact based and using emotions much more than in previous campaigns. DG COMM is also improving the tools and outreach to schools and universities. Moreover, he invited the participants to be in contact with the Commission Representations in the Member States as everybody is willing to work together.

Friends of Europe, supported by **CEMR** and **European Movement International**, insisted in having a one-day event organized to mobilise all relevant actors, sharing information and instruments to be used. The Commission should mobilise civil society.

M. MESTER underlined that different local contexts in the EU need to be taken into account when stepping up mobilization and outreach efforts.

European House warned the participants that Member States will not flag EU issues in this campaign and it will be difficult to put EU values at the top of the agenda. **Civil Society Europe** regretted that this group was not involved in the launching of the electoral campaign but confirmed that civil society organisation networks could be of use to create connections and to spread the messages. **Friends of Europe** pointed out that the Commission should coordinate, not centralise the campaign. **Community Media Forum Europe** confirmed their support to the EU campaign and asked for materials and links to be sent to their partner organisations. Contact addresses should also be shared in case of specific questions. **ICLS** doubted on the possibility to counter fake news by reacting centrally on social media through monitoring and shared responses.

Mr Mester promised to circulate links to the relevant campaign material.

3. How operating grants beneficiaries will mobilise for the next EU Elections?

DG HOME invited this time some civil society organisations to inform the group about the initiatives running or planned to launch for European citizens.

Ms. Mihaela Onofras, European Association for Local Democracy, ALDA, *Mr. Dharmendra Kanani*, Friends of Europe, *Mr. Julian Plottka* Institut für Europäische Politik, *Ms. Iga Kamocka*, Robert Schumann Foundation, *Mr. Milosh Ristovski*, Young European Federalists Europe gave a presentation of what they are doing to mobilise for the European elections.

Their presentations are attached.

4. Conclusions

M. CYGAN thanked the participants for the interesting meeting and their active participation.

M. CYGAN confirmed that citizenship issues are taken seriously by the European Commission, notably in the raising Eurosceptic, populist and nationalist context in some Member States. By including values and rights in a single programme, the Commission intended to have give them an ever more prominent and visible place in EU priorities. She insisted that support to the citizens and to civil society organisations and to the Civil Dialogue group will be preserved and continued to be a priority within the next Rights and Values programme.

On the campaign for European elections, **M. CYGAN** invited the participants to use the Civil Dialogue network to be informed about events and to share information. This can be also achieved through a common platform, which would allow setting up a Civil Dialogue community. DG HOME will inform the Civil Dialogue on further steps.

ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION	
AVRAMOPOULOS Dimitris	European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship
PETROVIC Milica	Member of Cabinet - Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship - Communication Advisor
DG HOME	
CYGAN Marta	Director, Strategy and General Affairs
CHANTRAINE Philippe	Deputy Head of Unit, Inter-Institutional Relations and Citizenship
MORMILE Daniela	Policy Officer, Europe for Citizens
CORMAN Marie	Policy Officer, Europe for Citizens
LAMBOT Carine	Assistant, Europe for Citizens
TOSIC Marijana	Assistant, Inter-Institutional Relations and Citizenship
BENEDETTO Giuliana	Trainee
CATALANO Claudio	Trainee
RUHR Maxim	Trainee
DG COMM	
MESTER Jens	Head of Unit, Corporate services, Interinstitutional relations, visual communication and framework contracts
ATUTXA SARRIA Xabier	Policy Officer, Corporate services, Interinstitutional relations, visual communication and framework contracts
DG JUST	
ZOIA BOLZONELLO Francesco	Programme Manager
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	
VALERO Bodil	Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE	
SERAFINI Karen	Liaison Group with CSOs - Relations with Organised Civil Society and Forward Studies
EACEA	
COZZOLI Anna	Head of Sector, Europe for Citizens
VAN MALDEGHEM Marie	Assistant, Europe for Citizens

PARTICIPANTS	
AMADORI Manuela	Active Citizenship Network
BARABAS Miklos	European House
BARTOVIC Vladimír	EUROPEUM
BESOZZI Carlotta	Civil Society Europe
BISLAND Elisabeth	European Policy Centre
BONACQUISTI Giulia	Trans European Policy Studies Association
BRAUD Maurice	Association Jean Monnet
CIVICO Gabriella	European Volunteer Center
COTTERELL Vanessa	European Movement International
GILMORE Andrew	Institute of International and European Affairs
GRATZ Julie	Centre européen Robert Schuman
HVIDS Mads	European Movement International
IBBOTSON Natasha	Friends of Europe
JOVANOVIĆ Dragana	Community Media Forum Europe / Friends of Srebrenica
JUVANON Marilyne	Association Jean Monnet
KAMOČKA Iga	Polish Robert Schuman Foundation
KANANI Dharmendra	Friends of Europe

KLUCZKA Aleksandra	European Youth Forum
LEVEQUE H��l��ne	Euradio (Radio Europ��enne Nantaise)
LOPEZ BADELL Oriol	Fundaci�� Solidaritat – Universitat de Barcelona
MARCHESONI Ettore	Association of Service Civil International
MAURICE Eric	Fondation Robert Schuman
NAUGHTON Catherine	Social Platform
ONOFRAS Mihaela	Association of Local Democracy Agencies
ORLANDINI Guido	Intercultural Communication and Leadership School
PLOTTKA Julian	Institut f��r Europ��ische Politik
POTH-M��GELE Angelika	Conseil des Communes et R��gions d'Europe
QUENEHEN Pierre	Institut Jacques Delors
REUTER Katja	Social Platform
RISTOVSKI Milosh	Young European Federalists
SESTOVIC Vladimir	European Civic Forum
STEGERS Steven	Euroclio - European Association of History Educators
STUCHL��KOV�� Zuzana	EUROPEUM
T��TH Csaba	Republikon Foundation
WANDER Susanne	Protestant Church in Germany (EKD)
WELLING Daan	International Debate Education Association