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The Interdependence of Democracy and Social Cohesion

**Forum for the Future of Democracy
2011 Session**

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PREFACE

Although Europe is in the throes of a deep economic, social and political crisis, the European model can serve as a source of inspiration for other world regions for its insistence on the interconnectedness of democracy and social cohesion. This is Europe's value-added; if Europe is to continue playing a global role in our now multi-polar world, it has to ensure that democracy and social cohesion go hand in hand.

In the same vein, the Council of Europe considers social cohesion to be essential for the fulfillment of the Organisation's three core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Divided and unequal societies are not only unjust, they also cannot guarantee stability, or 'deep security' in the long term.

However, globalisation and other developments carry the risk of weakening the human bonds of solidarity and shared responsibility. The emerging pattern of a fragmented society, with rising inequalities and an increasing number of people reduced to living on the margins of society, poses one of the greatest challenges to social cohesion in Europe.

In the light of the scale of the challenges facing Europe and beyond, the theme of the 2011 Forum 'The interdependence of democracy and social cohesion' was most timely. Europe needs a comprehensive political strategy to protect social cohesion. Preserving social cohesion during an economic downturn is a political choice. In fact, it is not a choice, but a necessity, if Europe is to succeed in preserving the democratic and social model which has been built over the past sixty years.

This publication includes expert presentations, workshop summary reports and recommendations on the themes and issues explored during the Forum.

The location of the 2011 Session in Cyprus, a country at the historical crossroads of three continents, provided an appropriate setting to include the perspectives of some countries of the Arab Spring. ²

CONCLUSIONS BY THE GENERAL RAPPORTEUR OF THE FORUM

Constantinos Phellas

Professor of Sociology and Dean of the School of Humanities, Social Science & Law, University of Nicosia

1. Europe is passing through turbulent times of financial, social and political crises. It is evident that many people have lost faith in politics and politicians but not in democracy itself. This Forum has addressed the important interdependence of democracy and social cohesion and discussed changes that have to take place if Europe is to get through these crises in a way that is not socially and politically destructive.
2. The widespread political apathy of recent years is now being accompanied by new manifestations of civic engagement and political activity. There is a window of opportunity to take advantage of the energetic mobilisation of people from all backgrounds and different walks of life.
3. Europe's shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as the European social model have brought many benefits to its populations over the years. Europe is currently challenged to revisit and reinvigorate its social and democratic model - based on solidarity - and continue to offer benchmarks and innovative examples of social, economic and territorial cohesion.
4. The European model remains a source of inspiration for other world regions. Reaffirming its vitality helps Europe to continue playing a meaningful role as a global actor.
5. The location of the 2011 Session of the Forum for the Future of Democracy in Cyprus, a country at the historical crossroads of three continents, is an appropriate setting to applaud the Council of Europe's commitment to the nascent reforms in countries of the Arab Spring and to encourage the exchange of expertise and good practices in response to requests from their authorities.

Recommendations

1. Build upon the recent mobilisation of people across the European continent and beyond to foster and promote constructive political engagement in democratic processes and support the use of new and alternative forms of democratic expression and participation, amplified by social networks, as a complement to representative democracy.
2. Embrace diversity and tolerance as a strength of society, honouring each person's right to multiple identities and recognising this as a prerequisite and condition for a vibrant and thriving society. Anchor diversity in communities through quality education, starting from an early age, and develop appropriate tools to that effect, for example local diversity charters and new forms of partnerships. The Council of

Europe's report on 'Living Together' is a starting point for a deeper debate on these issues.

3. Promote awareness in public administration of people's socio-cultural specificities and needs and strengthen institutional and administrative capacity and commitment to effectively manage diversity.
4. Direct social investment towards those groups of the population who are most vulnerable and incorporate them into structures of participation and shared social responsibility at all levels of governance. This could empower and strengthen such groups' sense of belonging and increase the resilience of society in the face of political, economic and social crises.
5. Take resolute action against populist, extremist and discriminatory discourse and action, possibly by launching a Council of Europe campaign on this issue.
6. Enhance collaboration and co-operation among international organisations to address the effects of the financial and social crises and promote their democratic accountability.
7. Engage with politicians and political parties in order to address the democratic disconnect between them and the people they represent.
8. Support the democratic transition in neighbouring regions by opening up the Council of Europe's structures and activities, taking into account the recent experiences gained from the Partnership for Democracy status of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Euro-Arab Cities Forum of the Congress.

OPENING ADDRESSES

H.E. Demetris Christofias

President of the Republic of Cyprus

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Cyprus in order to participate in the 2011 Session of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy. We are very pleased to see such an array of high level representatives of Governments, Parliaments, Local and Regional Authorities and civil society ready to embark on a fruitful discussion on strengthening democracy, political freedoms and citizen-participation in member states.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the High Level representatives and experts coming from the Southeastern Mediterranean region, in view of the important events that are taking place there, including the struggle for democratic transformation. With very close political and historical ties with most of these countries, Cyprus, which is a neighbouring state and also a member of both the European Union and the Council of Europe, is in a unique position to act as a bridge between these organizations and the countries of the region. The development of the Southern Dimension within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy will be one of the priorities of our Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the second Semester of 2012.

The topics to be discussed in the Forum are high on the agenda of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. Strengthening the representation and the democratic participation through public dialogue and civic engagement is a priority, as well as a challenge for all the member states of the Council of Europe.

This year's theme which is the "*Interdependence of Democracy and Social Cohesion*" acquires particular importance since these two concepts are put to the test by the severe, global financial and social crisis and the interrelated pressures faced by our governments and institutions. These challenges are, amongst others, aggravated by political tensions, ethnic conflicts, environmental degradation, illegal immigration, xenophobia and intolerance. These pressures have eroded the social fabric of our societies.

Democracy and social cohesion are interrelated since you cannot have one without the other. The core values of the Council of Europe, human rights, democracy and the rule of law are a *sine qua non* for safeguarding social cohesion and ultimately the well-being of our citizens. Democracy cannot remain a static concept but it must be an ever evolving process able to tackle the new challenges.

Achieving social justice, democratic security and sustainable development is the ultimate goal and the result of our commitment towards achieving social cohesion.

Minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization can only be achieved by strengthening solidarity and shared responsibility and by avoiding the division of society, imposed by social inequality and poverty.

In meeting these challenges, we need to empower people to actively engage in the democratic process. Democracy must remain a system that allows people to fully enjoy their civil and social rights and freedoms and lead a dignified life, allowing them in turn to contribute to public life.

As President of the Republic of Cyprus, but also as the negotiator of the Greek Cypriot community, I try my utmost to convince the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community that in a real, united, democratic and federal Cyprus, democracy and freedoms must prevail. Otherwise, a solution without democracy and without the implementation of these freedoms creates conditions for turmoil.

However the democratic process and all its benefits can never be successful unless they take place within conditions of security; security within states as well as between states. One must never have to choose between democracy and security. Security without democracy could amount to autocracy. Democracy without security could lead to anarchy.

Today, the security environment continues to be extremely volatile. Disregard for international law in the behavior of states certainly contributes to aggravating existing pressures. Foreign policy, apart from national interests, must have as its main goal, the cultivation of friendly relations between states. The international community must find the way to ensure the implementation of the norms and principles of international law which in itself will contribute to creating a more secure environment amongst states.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the co-organizers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Cyprus and the Council of Europe for the excellent organization of this Forum. Allow me to also wish all participants a very productive dialogue, as well as a pleasant stay in Cyprus.

Thorbjørn Jagland

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

The theme of this year's Forum for the Future of Democracy, "The Interdependence of Democracy and Social Cohesion" could not be more timely. Right now Europe is not only facing a very serious financial and fiscal crisis. We are starting to see the impact of this crisis on social cohesion as well as on public trust in our democratic institutions.

The impact of economic crises is always most acute for people who are already in vulnerable situations and at risk of exclusion. I am thinking here in particular of those in precarious employment situations or living in economically fragile regions, or elderly people, migrants and Roma.

And let me add a word on Roma in particular. Their situation, in a number of European countries, is a test of how civilised and how humane our societies are. And it is a test in which we have not yet deserved a passing note, to say the least. If we allow that the current economic circumstances slow down the efforts to improve the social integration of Roma, the consequences would be disastrous, not only for Roma, but for societies as a whole.

The present financial crisis is unprecedented in its scope. Radical measures are being taken in many countries to try to balance public budgets. This is both necessary and understandable. But at the same time, countries are running a high risk of seriously undermining the European model of social cohesion.

There is a widespread perception that social and economic justice is being neglected in an effort to safeguard the interests and profits of the financial sector. Our democracy is undermined by the growing incidence of poverty. Young people especially are reacting to the different forms of exclusion and discrimination which they encounter in political and economic life. One only has to look at the staggeringly high figures of youth unemployment in most European countries to realise the extent of the disconnection (June 2011: Spain: 44.3%; Greece: 36%; Italy and Ireland 28.6%; Portugal: 27.8%; UK and France: 20%).

We need to take these manifestations of young people's frustration very seriously indeed. It is a common misconception to consider children and young people as "the future", or as "citizens in the making", who can wait until their turn comes. More and more of them complain about the "Prince Charles syndrome". But young people are citizens now, with rights and with responsibilities as well as with expectations and competences.

It is worthwhile taking a close look at the different expressions of discontent. They feature a varied mix of new and alternative forms of democratic practice. To take one example, young people are extremely active behind new forms of democracy to be found in the 'network society', as can be seen in the recent youth protests in Europe and also in the uprisings of the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring demonstrated again how strong the

quest for freedom is. There is no freedom without democracy. There is no democracy without the confidence that it can change people's lives for the better.

And democracy and human rights are also necessary for sustainable economic development. The Indian Nobel prize winner for economy Amartya Sen claimed that no substantial famine has ever occurred in any country with a relatively free press. It is not difficult to prove this argument.

While the freedom of expression may be irritating to some, its absence is always harmful to all in the society. Without critical voices, there are no safeguards and no defence against blunder and abuse in the exercise of power, with inevitable negative political, economic, and social consequences.

I am pleased to see that this Forum will be an occasion for an open dialogue between political representatives and young people who are active in peaceful youth protests, be they called "Indignados" or "Génération précaire".

When we think about ways to fight the crisis, we must reject policies which weaken social cohesion and fight the crisis through social cohesion, by investing in social rights and in intercultural dialogue.

The Intercultural Cities programme, jointly run by the Council of Europe and the European Union, has found that successful interculturality has tangible economic benefits. Cities with successful policies of intercultural dialogue seem to enjoy higher levels of economic growth than other cities.

It is not the remit of the Council of Europe to solve the economic dimension of the present crisis. But in addition to balancing budgets, Europe needs a comprehensive political strategy to protect social cohesion: Preserving social cohesion during an economic downturn is a political choice. In fact, it is not a choice, but a necessity, if we want to preserve the model of the society which we have built over the past sixty years.

The Council of Europe can make an important contribution to issues of social cohesion in a social rights and human rights perspective, in particular relating to youth, ageing, inter-generational solidarity, migration, education and the fight against extremism and hate speech. All this will help us to achieve the 'deep security' which I have suggested should be an objective for the entire Council of Europe space.

The social and intercultural implications of the crisis that we are witnessing at this time underline the pertinence of the analysis and recommendations contained in the report by the Group of Eminent Persons on "Living Together".

The conclusion of the report is very clear on two points. One, that our societies are very diverse; and two, that we are not very successful in managing that diversity. The report contains very specific recommendations on how to do better, on how to transform diversity from a potential threat to a real benefit for our societies.

For me personally, the most urgent priority is to deal with the parallel societies. People who live beside each other are always at risk of living against each other. What we need to do is to create societies in which people will live with each other. Everyone is entitled to maintain his or her identity, this is a part of our richness, of our strength, but this should not happen without or even at the expense of what holds us together as a society; of our common values which are embodied in and protected by the European Convention on Human Rights.

And let me add another thought. When we speak about parallel societies we usually think of ethnic or religious communities, but in fact, such parallel societies are much more diverse.

Look at the financial oligarchs for example. People who seem to be the least affected by the current economic crisis, even if they are not completely without responsibility for its emergence, to put it very mildly. One very often has the impression that they operate in accordance with their own rules and principles and that “solidarity” within that group is much stronger than solidarity between the group and the rest of the society. And that, in my book, is the definition of a parallel society. But let me reassure you, I am not advocating any revolutionary action. I simply suggest that these people should accept their part of responsibility, for the crisis we face and for what needs to be done to overcome it.

The location of this conference in Cyprus, at the historical crossroads between the Western and the Arab parts of the world, is an appropriate setting for me to renew the Council of Europe’s commitment to the reform countries of the Arab Spring, to share its experiences at the request of their authorities.

I wish this 7th Forum for the Future of Democracy every success and expect its conclusions to be taken up by the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe and to inspire the preparation of next year’s Second Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion in Istanbul and the first edition of the Council of Europe’s International Strasbourg Forum for Democracy in October of next year.

Kostyantyn Gryshchenko

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Cypriot authorities for their warm hospitality and professional organisation of the Forum for the Future of Democracy.

The metronome of the current world affairs swings faster than ever. Our globalized world becomes increasingly interdependent and dynamic. In this environment, the Council of Europe which embraces the entire continent, needs to rethink its unique role, objectives and goals; in order to respond to the modern challenges in a more consolidated and efficient manner.

Such transformations are already taking place in the framework of the ongoing reform of the Organisation. Last year the Committee of Ministers adopted a mission statement for the Forum and new guidelines for its operation. The key point of the decision is based on a desire to strengthen the impact of the Forum and its contribution to the Council of Europe's activities concerning the issues of democracy. Let me express my confidence that these two days of discussions which are about to begin will be a major step in this new approach.

The theme of interdependence between democracy and social cohesion has always been a central one for the Council of Europe. We can't deny the link between social cohesion and democracy, because any socially unprotected person cannot enjoy in an appropriate way his or her fundamental democratic rights. Thus, social cohesion is a necessary requirement to achieve the Council of Europe's fundamental goals of promoting democracy, defending human rights and the rule of law throughout Europe.

In view of the Forum debates on the building democracy and fostering social cohesion I would like to remind about two important documents of the Council of Europe: it is the Strategy for Social Cohesion and the Action Plan for Social Cohesion. Both of them were adopted in 2010. These documents aim to help our governments to put into practice their political commitment to social cohesion.

Today, social cohesion is understood as being the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. This fundamental idea is clearly reflected in comprehensive reforms which are now underway in Ukraine. These reforms are aimed both at social and economic transformations and will finally result in strengthening the democratic system in the country and increase social cohesion within its society. Obviously, it is important to secure that systematic and consistent change, profound modernization of the state should be developed in parallel to a social content increase. This is among the primary goals of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine which remains a positive example of the profound expertise and practical assistance provided by the Council of Europe for its member states in different fields, including social cohesion.

The broadest possible access to fundamental social rights, such as the right to housing and to health is the cornerstone of the common values we share within the Council of Europe. How can we claim to have a genuine democracy without the effective enjoyment of these rights, where all individuals find their place in the community and contribute to political, social and cultural life? How can we talk about effective and active citizenship while poverty and exclusion are threatening growing sections of the population in our countries?

Our common values are currently under a dual threat from the financial crisis which is having a very serious impact on the Council of Europe member states and from the breakdown in solidarity and the social fabric. Our organisation could not ignore these threats and has taken various steps to address them. By way of example, I would like to mention the holding in September of a meeting of the young people and youth leaders, whom I welcomed myself to Strasbourg, where they had come to express their views and share their experience regarding access to social rights in Europe.

I could also refer to the preparation of guidelines and a declaration on Local Government in Critical Times: Policies for Crisis, Recovery and Sustainable Future, submitted for adoption at the 17th session of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government (Kyiv 3-4 November 2011).

I am pleased that the “Living Together” report presented by the Group of Eminent Persons at the 121st ministerial session in Istanbul in May, and devoted to promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue in Europe, will be a reference work for this Forum’s discussions. For its part, the Committee of Ministers is currently working on follow-up to this major report, on the agenda at its meeting on 26 October.

By bringing together representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society, the Limassol Forum offers us a unique opportunity for considering the issue of the interdependence between democracy and social cohesion on a cross-sectoral level.

I am confident that your discussions will produce innovative ideas about the ways in which our Organisation can promote democratic societies in Europe which seek to strengthen the ties of solidarity between its members. This debate, which is vital to the future of our societies, does not just concern Europe. It also resonates at a global level.

In conclusion, I would like to refer to the Arab Spring, which has been in progress for almost a year. This movement reminds us of the universal desire of peoples for freedom and social justice. It has led to closer contacts between several Mediterranean countries and the Council of Europe. Indeed, the Committee of Ministers is currently considering the possibilities for co-operating with these countries to support them in their democratic transition. Before closing, I should like to extend a particular welcome to those participants coming from the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

Lenia Samuel

Deputy Director General, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

It is a great pleasure to be here at the Council of Europe's Forum for the Future of Democracy on behalf of the European Commission. It is also a great pleasure for me to see so many friends from Cyprus and the Council of Europe with whom I worked closely before I joined the Commission.

The Council of Europe and the European Union share an absolute and unwavering commitment to the values of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Union has drawn gratefully on the work of the Council of Europe - for example, in defining human rights - and I have no doubt that it will continue to do so. Indeed the Council of Europe played an essential role in developing the idea that the rights which ensure political democracy are not enough by themselves to create truly free societies and that they need to be buttressed by civil and human rights, rights which, in the words of Franklin Roosevelt enable people to enjoy freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Our discussions today take place at a particularly difficult time – we have all seen the impact of growing dissatisfaction among the citizens of the world with the state of politics, the economy and even with society itself. The message is clear: things must change.

The promotion and implementation of civil rights is a key element to ensure democracy. But I also believe that we cannot achieve a fully democratic society unless we also promote equal access to economic and social rights.

Economic and social rights are too often taken for granted - and yet, even today, they are clearly at risk for many people bearing the brunt of the impact of the financial crisis. If we take the EU as an example, unemployment remains stubbornly high and there are still unacceptable numbers of people living below the poverty line. And there is a feeling among many that the very cohesion of our societies is at stake. However, this is by no means just a European challenge; it is a global one.

Coming from the European Commission, I would like to share with you some of the ways that we have been tackling these challenges. The first thing to say is that the crisis has shown us just how important Europe's social model is. Indeed, without it, the impact of the crisis would have been much worse.

This has been recognised in 'Europe 2020', our new strategy over the coming decade to transform the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, which lays a strong emphasis on Europe's social dimension. One of its key priorities is the fight against poverty and social exclusion. For the first time we have an EU wide target for poverty: Heads of State and Government have agreed to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. But, to achieve this we will need concerted effort

on the part of the EU, the member states and stakeholders across Europe, including the social partners and the civil society.

Almost all member states have now put forward specific national poverty reduction targets. And although they might not be as ambitious as one would have hoped, this will, I'm sure, lead to greater visibility and debate in the public arena as to what needs to be done to make a difference.

At EU-level, the Commission has put in place a European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion to support member states' efforts. The Platform recognises that poverty and social exclusion has many causes, often interconnected and that if we are to tackle these issues successfully we need to adopt a holistic approach. Its success will also depend heavily on a partnership approach with the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

Over the years we have also seen an increasing demand for social intervention. This has in turn led to a growing awareness of the need to explore new approaches, improve the cost-effectiveness of social policies and make better use of evaluation. To support this, the Commission recently announced a 'European Initiative on Social Innovation', which will help testing and scaling up innovative solutions to address emerging social needs.

We are also planning a number of initiatives for next year, which focus on the key social challenges Europe is facing. In particular, we will be looking at child poverty and the transmission of disadvantage across generations, as well as action to promote the active inclusion of those furthest from the labour market and homelessness. This is all part of ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities; that everyone has the chance to develop their full potential – something that I think is part of a democratic society.

Nonetheless, it is clear that in these tough economic times with severe financial constraints things are going to be difficult. But, it is vital that we recognise that social spending is not just about taking corrective action. It is about investing in the future – it is about investing in our very society's cohesion.

At EU-level we have a number of financial instruments at our disposal to support our aims, including the European Social Fund. Earlier this month, the Commission presented a proposal for the legislative package for cohesion policy for the period 2014-2020, which includes some important changes to the ESF, including a greater focus on social inclusion.

Social dialogue is also an expression of a fully functioning democracy. It allows change to be addressed and economic and social goals to be combined through consensus and avoiding conflict. The involvement of social partners is all the more important to sustain possible economic and social reforms, and to ensure that economic development goes hand in hand with job creation and decent work – an important element in ensuring both economic and social cohesion.

The EU gives high priority to civil society and its organisations when it comes to supporting democracy building. This includes in our external assistance where we lay

great emphasis on assisting civil society to develop greater cohesion in working on human rights, democratic political participation and representation and in developing equal participation of men and women in social, economic and political life. We want to assist civil society in third countries to open up and to become an effective force for dialogue and positive change, through cooperation among local civil society organisations and local stakeholders – and this is where the social partners and an effective social dialogue can play a vital role.

The European Union and the Council of Europe have a long history of successful cooperation. We have worked together very closely in the framework of joint projects, many of which relate directly to the themes of the Forum for the Future of Democracy. One good example is our cooperation in the framework of the Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Facility where one of the priorities is to support free and fair elections in the six target countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

Enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the electoral administration increases the confidence of voters in the system. And in turn confidence building in institutions will lead to a better involvement of voters in electoral process, which is a pre-condition for full participation in public and political life.

I hope that this close and productive cooperation continues well into the future. I look forward with great interest to the discussions over the next two days and to sharing our experiences in strengthening representation and participation as a vital means of promoting democracy across and indeed beyond Europe. This is a time when we all need to work together in a positive and determined spirit to give new life to the democratic ideals in which we all believe.

Andreas Christou

Mayor of Limassol and Head of the Cypriot delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

I am pleased to welcome you to Limassol and it is an honour for me to open this conference on behalf of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. At this time - when democracy is spreading across the southern Mediterranean - the question of the interdependency of democracy and social cohesion has never been more relevant.

Social cohesion is the glue that holds democratic societies together. In Europe today, this glue is being diluted and weakened by the uncertainty that our citizens feel about the financial situation at the European level, the national level but also the local and regional level where the financial austerity measures are actually felt the most – citizens are feeling the impact through the cuts to their public services.

The importance which the Congress attaches to this issue comes as no surprise. It is clear that in a society as a whole, attitudes and practices fostering social cohesion must begin in local and regional communities, in our cities and our regions.

I am talking about promotion of equality, access to social rights, intercultural and interreligious dialogue within and between communities, integration of migrants and other foreign residents, eradication of discrimination and governance through partnership and dialogue - all these issues are factors in achieving the overall goal of social cohesion, and many of them are on the political agenda of the Congress.

It is my belief that the current financial uncertainty, across Europe and the world, has contributed to a crisis of confidence in the democratic process and is increasing the fragmentation of society. The recent riots in England, as well as the demonstrations across Europe show that citizens believe their voices are not being heard by their elected representatives. I hope that this Forum will debate this crisis of confidence and will give concrete conclusions on what can be done to halt and reverse it.

The Congress is contributing to the debate on social cohesion and democracy. The 21st session of Congress (18-21 October 2011) has the special theme of living together in dignity. At this session we will examine ways to increase citizen participation and foster education for democratic citizenship, and will adopt relevant recommendations and resolutions. We will be debating the new forms of citizen activism and urban violence as well as the situation of Roma as a challenge for local and regional authorities. These are all priority topics in Europe today, and the Congress is taking steps to address them at the local and regional level.

Our most recent action in this regard was the Summit of Mayors on Roma in Strasbourg on 22 September, in response to the worsening situation of the Roma population in Europe and the need to mobilise local and regional action to improve it. The Summit provided an opportunity for local and regional elected representatives, institutional partners, Roma organizations and other civil society partners to meet face to face to

discuss the current problems and possible solutions. The participating municipalities and regions pledged to establish a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion and set up a core group to build this new Alliance.

Another social cohesion topic which the Congress believes is a priority issue in Europe is inter-faith and intercultural tensions. In March this year we held a debate on this issue and adopted a resolution and recommendation on how local authorities can meet these challenges. In this regard, the Congress continues to provide its support to the European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policy, known as the CLIP network, which was launched in 2006 and which is working closely with the Intercultural Cities programme, another municipal network, to monitor manifestations of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

Moreover, we have also recently adopted a resolution on the integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Indeed, we have observed that the transition to adult life is a very unequal process for young people. In this resolution, we have notably invited local authorities to provide accessible and meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged youth and to promote their social integration. As a follow-up, the Congress is co-operating with the Directorate of Youth and Sport on the ENTER! Project to prepare a recommendation to governments on access to social rights for these young people.

Finally, the Congress is a strategic actor of a global process initiated by the Council of Europe. We extend the action of the Council of Europe at the local level, as a part of a transversal approach. For example, following the creation of the methodological Guide to the Concerted Development of Social Cohesion Indicators by the Directorate General of the Council of Europe, the Congress in partnership with the city authorities in Mulhouse, has developed concerted social cohesion indicators, in order to examine how local and regional authorities could implement in practice the principles contained in the guide. This partnership permitted many practical recommendations for local authorities.

To sum up, I would say all of the themes and various aspects of social cohesion which will be discussed over these two days are of direct importance to local and regional authorities and for the Congress.

I would like also to stress once again that the crucial role of local and regional authorities in creating social cohesion must be taken on board in the drafting of national policies and local budgets.

I strongly hope this conference, which I wish every success, will give due account to the local and regional dimension of our efforts to improve the lives of the population of Europe through creating a more cohesive and democratic society which listens to their voices.

INTRODUCTORY PANEL DEBATE I - SUMMARY

Fighting the crisis without undermining social cohesion: can Europe meet the challenge?

Introduction

The first Introductory panel debate was chaired by Soutiroula Charalambous, Minister of Labour and Social Insurance in Cyprus and moderated by Michalis Attalides, Rector of the University of Nicosia. The panelists for this topic were: Anne Brasseur, Chairperson of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; Mary Daly, Professor, Queen's University Belfast, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work and Elizabeth Spehar, Director of Americas and Europe Division, Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations and focal point on issues relating to democracy.

The panelists suggested that the importance of social cohesion is an ongoing process of developing a society of shared values, equal opportunities and active citizenship. The purpose of social cohesion is to harmonise social diversity and social rights and maintain this harmony in times of crisis.

The panelists agreed that the challenges facing social cohesion today come mainly from globalisation, demographic change, migration and cultural diversity, political changes, and economic and social upheavals. Social cohesion should create the conditions to enable people to benefit from globalisation, migration and cultural diversity by reducing the risks associated with the above-mentioned challenges. . In these times of crisis, it is particularly important to ensure that social cohesion is not abandoned.

Fighting the crisis and its effects on social cohesion

The term “crisis” is currently used quite loosely to describe all that is wrong in the world since 2008: financially, economically, governmentally, socially and even philosophically. Part of solving a problem is to understand it correctly and the crisis should be recognised as a consequence of policies and trends predating 2008. These trends include: increasing numbers of people living in poverty; unemployment and social unrest; astronomical public and personal debts, mistrust of politicians and a lack of democratic participation. Without underestimating the effects of the crisis so far, one cannot guarantee that we have seen the full fallout of these trends.

How have the countries in Europe dealt with the crisis so far? Several countries face huge debts and as a consequence, their governments have introduced massive cuts, including to welfare programmes that were designed to secure access to social rights. Restricting social spending seems to be considered an easy solution which enables countries to cope with the urgent effects of the crisis.

What is the rationale behind this approach from the governments? Governments respond to the crisis through policies which encourage economic growth. The growth model assumes that there is no limit to growth and that if we do not achieve growth it is because we are doing something wrong. An inherent element of this model is a disaffection for

the welfare state which is seen to be ‘anti-growth’ and creating all kinds of disincentives, traps and costs which render people passive and non-productive.

The panelists stressed that, historically, the European social model has been a broad-based one, inspired by principles other than growth and profit, such as social justice and solidarity. This is a model which aims to give a strong social rights basis to citizens, thereby actively contributing to strengthening democracy.

People are suffering the consequences of the crisis and their reaction has been a growing mistrust in politicians and institutions. Social cohesion is threatened by the lack of participation of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised, whether caused by economic exclusion, lack of political know-how or an unwillingness to participate. This means that politicians can be elected by putting forward policies that appeal to ever-smaller sections of the population.

Recent waves of people voicing their complaints, particularly the young, share a common sense of being abandoned by their governments. Governments should not see citizen mobilisations as a threat, but rather as an opportunity to refresh and rejuvenate the democratic system. Politicians have most to gain from ensuring that people feel that they are an important part of society; participation enables members of society to contribute to, and influence, both the policy development and decision-making processes in matters that concern them. The political response to the crisis should help reestablish social cohesion by closing the gap between decision makers and their sovereign, the people.

Can Europe meet the challenge?

The participants agreed that governments must avoid the trap of applying easy solutions by restricting social spending, but rather they should address the problems at their roots and adopt a more long-term strategy which will prevent social and political division.

Taking a social cohesion and democracy perspective, the first real threat is the lack of governmental attention to what is happening in people’s lives. The Parliamentary Assembly¹ has suggested that in order to address the crisis in representation, the political relationship between society and the authorities must be approached in a different manner. Citizens are not satisfied with a democratic system isolated in a set of institutions that are elected every two, four or six years. Participatory democracy should offer a process in which all people, and not only nationals, are involved in the conduct of public affairs at local, regional, national and European levels.

It was noted that a recent motion² suggested that “governments should give citizens a say in if, how and when the state debt should be cut.” Budget cutting alternatives which do not directly threaten social rights and the European welfare state should be shielded in order to protect vulnerable groups. The human rights perspective should be the primary

¹ Doc. 12279, “Democracy in Europe: crisis and perspectives”, June 2010, http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/20100601_Democracy_e.pdf

² Doc. 12633, “Austerity measures – a danger for democracy and social rights”, 6 June 2011 <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc11/EDOC12633.htm>

criterion when conducting parliamentary scrutiny of public policies and deciding on budgets, in particular in the social and health field.

The panelists recognised that while it is necessary to balance the budgets of over-indebted states in the medium and long-term, it is also important that this be done in a manner which respects citizens' human dignity, as well as their democratic and human rights, including social rights.

Employment was acknowledged as an essential precondition of social cohesion. Access to employment offers economic growth and productivity as well as a key route out of poverty and social exclusion. An interesting tool in this respect is the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work Agenda³ which encourages employment policies to focus on enhancing conditions of social cohesion. Ways to achieve this include safeguarding the fundamental rights of employees and the quality of work, strengthening infrastructures and improving skills, and providing incentives and counselling in order to facilitate the employment of persons at risk of social exclusion.

The participants also emphasised the importance of good governance and the active involvement of all stakeholders. They insisted that the tools to tackle the crisis already exist and these include reinforcing international and intergovernmental organisations as well as using new social media technology.

In conclusion, it was noted that if the social aspects of the crisis are addressed this will trigger a chain reaction of processes which will renew and redeem democracy and people's trust in democratic institutions. Similarly, fostering people's involvement and empowerment in democratic processes would rejuvenate Europe's social model.

³ International Labour Organization , "Decent Work Agenda", <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/decent-work-agenda/lang--en/index.htm>

INTRODUCTORY PANEL DEBATE II - SUMMARY

South-Eastern mediterranean: building democracies that nurture social cohesion

Introduction

The moderator of the second introductory panel debate was Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the panelists were Kamel Besbes, Professor and former Dean of Monastir University and former Deputy Mayor of Monastir, Tunisia and Andreas Gross, Chairperson of the Socialist Group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The panel debate offered an opportunity for the participants to examine the specificities of democratic development in the south-eastern Mediterranean, Tunisia in particular, and to consider how the post-revolution transition period in the Arab world could be channeled to foster greater social cohesion.

Revolution and democracy

The participants began by analysing the concept of revolution, which by definition is an action, possibly violent, triggered by a strong desire to bring down a political regime and claim new social values. Thus, in theory, a revolution should lead to strong social cohesion if it is transformed into a precise goal, such as gaining independence. But in practice, the panelists underlined that revolution can also mean a risky decline of authority and a rise of incivility and increasing individualism. This can pose a threat to social cohesion in countries where it was already fragile before the uprising. The participants mentioned the need to pay special attention to diminished resources, weakened authority and a sense of frustration in the transition period and consequently the need to develop quick and effective responses.

The countries struggling for freedom today have suffered for a long time from social and economic problems, such as unemployment, particularly among young people, urban poverty, the absence of democracy and, in some cases, failed efforts of regional development and decentralisation. It was suggested that this situation is due, *inter alia*, to weak governance structures, particularly at local level, marginalisation of citizens and the limited role of the population in local development.

The recent events in the Arab world have shown that the local and regional dimensions of development are the cornerstones for the changes that people are hoping for. The nature of the Arab Spring illustrates the primacy of a bottom-up approach.

The example of Tunisia

Part of the debate was devoted to looking at Tunisia's transition towards a democratic system and their attempts to build social cohesion. During the transition period both society and governments have tried to maintain the fragile state of the new administration until the elections. At the same time, the media has used its new found freedom of expression to blossom and confirm the democratic commitment of Tunisian society.

Emerging democracies need to pay special attention to the political class and to civil society because in the absence of a constitution it is they who can help establish consensus and confidence through legitimate transitional methods.

However, democracy alone does not automatically ensure a cohesive society. At the same time there is a need of a strong legal framework at national level and practical implementation at the grassroots. National policies and strategies can only be tailored to their citizens' realities if they offer tangible results at local level.

If wished by the countries concerned, the Council of Europe has a role to play in helping to strengthen social cohesion in the emerging democratic states. For example, the Intercultural Cities programme run jointly by the Council of Europe and the European Commission offers a successful example of advancing good practices in intercultural relations.

Another example, involving the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, is offered through the Euro-Arab Cities Forum launched in 1984 in Valencia, Spain and which advances the process of Euro-Arab dialogue at local level. Initially the Euro-Arab dialogue was conceived as a dialogue for peace, but today it is also a dialogue for emerging local and regional democracy. This activity offers an example of creating synergies between the two shores of the Mediterranean in order to share experience and channel possible co-operation.

Seizing the momentum created by the Arab Spring, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is now proposing to organise a third Forum of Euro-Arab cities in 2012. Its objective will be to pursue a coordinated response of European cities in assisting the democratisation process in the Mediterranean.

WORKING SESSIONS

Theme 1: Empowerment and participation: key elements for democracy and social cohesion

Working session 1A: Issue paper

Promoting and enabling broad democratic engagement by empowering all members of society

Hugh FRAZER

Department of Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland Maynooth

*Introduction*⁴

The starting point for this issue paper is the belief that the greater the democratic engagement in public affairs by all sections of society, the greater the legitimacy, inclusiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of a country's democratic systems. The legitimacy of democratic structures depends on maximising inclusion and participation and giving full recognition to the rights of all citizens to inclusion in shaping the political process and the decisions that affect their lives. If some sections of a society find that the political system is remote from or irrelevant to their needs or if they feel excluded and powerless and lacking the skills and knowledge to enable them to participate in the decisions that affect their lives then democratic engagement is diminished, social cohesion is undermined and people's fundamental rights are curtailed. It also leads to poor policy making as the failure to involve those affected by policy decisions in their formulation, implementation and monitoring results in less effective policies and programmes. To ensure strong democracies it is essential to empower people to participate and influence the decisions that affect their lives and to have control over those who make decisions on their behalf. Thus this paper does two things. First, it briefly identifies some of the barriers that disempower people and hinder their democratic engagement. Secondly, it identifies key issues that arise from this analysis and suggests how they can be addressed.

Barriers to empowerment

In order to identify what is needed to empower all members of society so that they can engage in democratic processes, it is first necessary to identify what causes disempowerment and what are the barriers to engagement. The following is a brief summary of six key barriers.

a. Poverty, inequality and social exclusion

The extensive literature showing how poverty, inequality and social exclusion leads to disempowerment and disengagement and alienation from democratic processes can only

⁴ This paper draws mainly on two sources. These are: first, the lessons learned over the last decade of combating poverty and social exclusion in the European Union and empowering the inclusion of those who are on the margins of society; secondly, recent experience in Ireland on empowering marginalised groups and communities and promoting greater democratic engagement. Some key sources are listed at the end.

be very briefly summarised here. As the European Anti Poverty Network has shown (EAPN, 2009), living in poverty can mean that people become isolated from family and friends. They lack hope and feel powerless and excluded with little control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives. They often lack information about the supports and services available to them. They frequently experience problems in dealing with bureaucracies and accessing essential services. They experience stigma, prejudice and lack of respect which further isolates them. Access to their fundamental rights is limited and they become trapped in poverty. They often lack the skills, knowledge and information necessary to engage with institutions.

As a result, poverty and social exclusion limit people's ability to engage in democratic processes in three particular respects. First, they undermine people's skills and self-confidence to engage with policy makers and to express their opinions as equals and to participate in making decisions and implementing them. Secondly, because life can become a day to day struggle to survive, there is often little time, energy or resources left to engage with democratic processes. Thirdly, democratic processes often seem very remote and irrelevant and people do not engage not because they are apathetic but because they do not think that their concerns and voices will be listened to. They feel disengaged from the democratic process and powerless to influence it.

b. Discrimination, racism, prejudice and a lack of respect for rights

A second key factor is racism, discrimination, prejudice and a lack of respect for rights. This leads to the marginalisation of some individuals and groups such as migrants and ethnic minorities and their isolation from the society in which they are living. It also often leads to poverty and social exclusion and to feelings of alienation and powerlessness. As with poverty, this can mean that people find themselves without the information, skills, self-confidence, resources, organisational means and sometimes the language to engage effectively in democratic processes.

c. Narrow and exclusive political structures

A third factor that disempowers people is when democratic systems are very narrow and exclusive and when many people do not feel that the processes of formal democracy offer them enough influence over political decisions. Participation is undermined where people feel that they only have a token or "formal" role in the democratic process but no real influence over the outcomes that affect them. Thus democratic engagement is severely undermined where involvement is just limited to periodic elections and where day to day decision-making appears to be largely controlled by powerful elites and decisions seem to be taken in a top-down manner and often largely in the interest of elites. The exercise of the right to vote should be only one part of a cycle of political participation in democratic governance.

d. Poor and inaccessible public services

A fourth factor which increases marginalisation and disempowerment is when some groups in society have poor or limited access to essential public services (e.g. health, education, housing, social protection and social services) and when public services are

delivered in ways that limit participation and involvement. Disempowerment can also be increased when public services are not universal and significant groups in society opt out of public services which then become residual and second class services used mainly by those who are marginalised and excluded.

e. Weak civil society

Where there is a lack of strong civil society organisations, particularly NGOs, or where these organisations do not have a strong participative culture or where their role in civil dialogue is unrecognised by the state, then the opportunities for those experiencing exclusion is curtailed. So supporting and building a strong, inclusive civil society is an essential prerequisite for participation.

f. Over dependence on the market and lack of a culture of solidarity

More generally, a political and societal culture that becomes overly dominated by a market ideology can undermine collective social solidarity and increase the marginalisation of some groups. If people are seen primarily as consumers, workers or clients rather than as citizens, then respect and understanding of the collective contribution that people can bring to well-being is undervalued and an undue emphasis is put just on people's earning or buying power. This can reinforce the marginalisation and disempowerment of those who lack such power.

Facilitating empowerment and overcoming barriers to democratic engagement

Arising from this brief survey of barriers, seven interconnected issues can be identified. First, how can democratic structures be made more relevant, accessible and inclusive? Secondly, what do countries need to do to combat poverty, inequality and social exclusion and promote social rights? Thirdly, what specific programmes can be put in place which will work directly to empower those who are living in poverty and to ensure a strong and inclusive civil society? Fourthly, how can a strong and inclusive civil society be ensured? Fifthly, how best can discrimination and racism be countered and gender equality and respect for migrants' rights be supported? Sixthly, how can public services be delivered in ways which make them inclusive and empowering? Seventhly, how can countries build a culture of solidarity and inclusion? Some ways of addressing these seven issues are briefly elaborated below.

a. Developing more inclusive, participative open and accountable democratic structures

The ways of ensuring that democratic structures can become more participative and inclusive can be grouped into two broad categories. First, there are measures aimed at enhancing the openness, accountability and inclusiveness of formal representative democratic systems so that they are more accessible and relevant to people who feel powerless and excluded. Secondly, there are measures to complement representative democratic structures with participatory democracy through developing participatory/deliberative forms of citizens' engagement in public governance and

enhancing democratic participation by fostering the advocacy role of civil society organisations, civics/ethics education in all school levels and a diverse media.

Some of the ways that have been suggested to make formal representative democratic systems more inclusive include: limiting the power of the executive and unaccountable bodies and emphasising the power of parliament and local government; creating mechanisms whereby citizens, including those who are marginalised and excluded, can have a direct and focused say over political decisions and policies (e.g. through the right to initiate legislative processes); limiting and making visible the inputs of interest groups into the political process; requiring increased accountability and visibility of elected politicians; increasing information to citizens on how to influence and participate in democratic processes (e.g. establishing democracy resource centres at local authority level where people can access information and advice to navigate their way through the democratic system; organising voter registration campaigns; and organising Voter Education-Active Citizenship programmes, especially for excluded groups and communities).

The role and benefits of participatory democracy has been well summarised by the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform):

“The primary objective is to engage all people in the fabric of society, and ultimately promote social cohesion, solidarity and social justice, creating a better quality of life for everyone. Participatory democracy also aims to achieve quality services for people that are better targeted to their needs. Participatory democracy creates public space for discussion and therefore gives people more ownership of decisions. It aims to engage with disengaged people who are not politically active (e.g. those who do not vote), nor active in associations, creating a more active citizenship. It sets people as actors in all areas of life, extending the concept of citizenship beyond the conventional political sphere (e.g. involving users in the provision of services, involving parents in schooling, etc)...By involving people to intervene, participatory democracy can produce solutions that are effective and legitimate, and go beyond traditional political divides. In that sense, it strengthens the legitimacy of decision makers/services providers since their decisions will be based on the real views of people. Participatory democracy therefore aims to improve trust and accountability” (Social Platform, 2008).

The types of measures that can enhance inclusive participatory democracy, especially at local level, include: requiring regional and local authorities to establish structures in all policy areas which will involve social partners and civil society organisations in the planning, delivery, coordination and monitoring of policies; making wider use of local plebiscites; and providing local citizens information and advice services which support and provide information to citizens on how they can engage in the democratic process.

Over the last decade the EU’s social inclusion processes had given considerable emphasis to promoting greater participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in policy making processes, including the organisation every year of an Annual Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty organised by the Commission and EU Presidency. Much

good practice has been identified on what is needed to make participation effective and there is a growing demand for the Commission and member states to agree guidelines and minimum standards on the effective involvement of stakeholders (including people experiencing poverty) in all phases of the preparation, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of social inclusion policies (see for instance EAPN 2009, Frazer and Marlier 2010 and Inbas and Engender 2010). The importance of participatory democracy has also been reinforced with its recognition in Article 11 of the revised Lisbon Treaty.

b. Reducing poverty, inequality & social exclusion & promoting social rights

There is only space to briefly summarise the key elements necessary to reduce poverty and social exclusion. Lessons from the EU social protection and social inclusion process between 2000 and 2010 suggest that ten factors are important in developing effective social inclusion strategies (see Frazer et al, 2010). These are: strong political leadership which prioritises social inclusion objectives; systematic mainstreaming and integrating of social inclusion objectives into all areas of national and sub-national policy making; the use of ex-ante and ex-post social inclusion and equality (including gender equality) assessments of the impact of all policies on social inclusion and equality; a commitment to promoting social rights for all; the availability of in-depth analysis supported by quality and timely data; a strategic evidence-based approach based on clear objectives and targets; a balance between universal and targeted approaches and between prevention and alleviation; effective arrangements for the involvement of key actors in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes; effective delivery arrangements at local level; and effective monitoring and reporting arrangements.

In terms of policies it is clear from the EU experience that, given the complex nature of poverty, a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach, involving integrated and coordinated actions across a range of policy areas is required. In particular the EU process has actively encouraged member states to adopt an active inclusion approach. This has emphasised that effectively empowering people to become active participants in society and the labour market requires the implementation of a comprehensive social inclusion strategy combining in an integrated way adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services (see European Commission, 2008b)⁵.

c. Programmes to empower marginalised individuals and groups

As well as overall social inclusion strategies there is also a need for specific programmes which will work directly to empower those who are living in poverty and to ensure a strong and inclusive civil society. In this regard supporting community development, community education and community arts projects can play a crucial role. Community development is based on working with and supporting groups of people. It enables them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence so that they can develop an analysis, identify priority needs and issues and address these through collective action. Professional

⁵ The EU process has also highlighted the importance of a comprehensive and integrated policy for the social inclusion of children and families should combine: policies to ensure an adequate income both through work and social protection; access to and participation in services, the development of effective care and protection policies; and the promotion of access to and participation in social, cultural and recreational activities (see Frazer and Devlin, 2011 and Frazer, Marlier and Nicaise, 2010 for more details).

community work practice emphasises empowerment, social justice, promoting equality and anti-discrimination and participation. It particularly promotes the involvement of groups who experience social exclusion, marginalisation, and discrimination in decision-making, planning and action at all levels from the local to the global (see for instance Community Workers Cooperative, 2010). The important role that can be played by community development was highlighted in the Budapest Declaration which was agreed by community workers, researchers, funders, policy makers and representatives from governments, civil society organisations and community groups from 33 countries across the European Union and beyond, who attended the ‘Building Civil Society in Europe through Community Development’ Conference in Budapest in 2004. They defined community development in the following way:

“community development is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy. It seeks the empowerment of local communities, taken to mean both geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organising around specific themes or policy initiatives. It strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks; and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. It has a set of core values/social principles covering human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity, and a specific skills and knowledge base”.

The role that adult and community education can play in empowering people who are disadvantaged and in complementing and working with community development and other initiatives is well documented (see for example Aontas, 2005). With its emphasis on the needs of the learner and its creative methodologies it can create space for meaningful engagement for many people who are marginalised and excluded and give them the opportunity to continually learn and develop their skills and capacities. It is also education that keeps its focus on empowerment through group solidarity and co-operation, collective participation in decision-making processes, the insertion of human rights perspectives, recognition of community, and the generation of policy and practice lessons in addressing exclusion. It supports and resources dynamic models of personal, social and community development, and challenges discrimination. Likewise promoting participation in community arts projects and cultural activities can be very important in empowering excluded groups and communities and encouraging democratic participation. Community arts can help to build skills and self-confidence, enhance self-esteem and identity, overcome cultural diversity and discrimination, create employment opportunities, increase access to information and services and promote social integration. It can also contribute to a community development process and be a means for disadvantaged groups and communities to explore and highlight issues that affect them (see Centre for Public Policy 2005 and Moore 1997).

d. Building a strong and inclusive civil society

Support for community development, community education and community arts projects will gain in impact if there is a strong civil society and a commitment to its involvement in policy making. This means establishing a clear legal framework and providing adequate resources to support the participation of NGOs. It also involves formal recognition of the right to meaningful involvement at all stages of decision making (i.e. policy design, implementation and evaluation).⁶

e. Tackling discrimination and racism; guaranteeing gender equality and respect for migrants' rights

As highlighted earlier, racism and discrimination, particularly when combined with poverty and social exclusion, leads to the isolation, segregation and disempowerment of minority groups, particularly some ethnic minorities and migrant groups. Experience suggests a range of actions that are necessary to ensure that minority groups are empowered to engage in democratic systems (see for instance Crowley, 2010). First, there is a need for strong political leadership which provides a positive vision of ethnically diverse and inclusive societies characterised by equality, including gender equality. Secondly, it is essential that strong equality and anti-discrimination legislation is in place and is rigorously enforced and monitored. Thirdly, legislation should be backed up with national strategies to combat racism, with programmes to support the integration of minorities, with public services that give particular attention to the needs of minority and at risk groups and with programmes of intercultural education which promote a belief in solidarity and equality and a respect for difference and diversity. It is also important to support community development and community education projects (see above) which prioritise migrant and ethnic minority groups and support them to act collectively to assert their rights and to change unjust social conditions through awareness raising, participation, education and collective actions (see for instance MRCI, 2008).

f. Developing inclusive and universal public services

Accessing public services is fundamental to ensuring people's social rights and to their empowerment. The EU's social inclusion and social protection process and particularly the focus on active inclusion has emphasised the importance of access to high quality public services. As the Social Platform has emphasised, social cohesion and respect of human dignity can only be achieved if people have access to quality public services that respond to their needs, particularly social and health services. Thus investing in such services so that they are accessible, affordable and adapted to people's changing needs is essential to ensure greater participation in society. It is also essential that public services give particular attention to ensuring that they are delivered in ways that reach those individuals and groups who are most isolated and excluded and that their needs are met in ways which empower them. Public services should develop codes of practice and develop

⁶ The EU funded *Mainstreaming Social Inclusion* project developed a useful spectrum of the interaction between those in a position of authority and those in a subordinate role, for example, between government and citizens. The spectrum ranges from the provision of information through consultation, participation to joint decision-making or co-determination (Combat Poverty Agency, 2006).

staff training programmes to ensure access for and the involvement of marginalised groups.

g. Building a culture of solidarity and inclusion

Creating a climate in which the empowerment and participation of all is prioritised requires building societies whose culture emphasises values such as equality for all, solidarity between all sectors of society, accountability from those in power, participation by people in decision-making and environmental sustainability (see for instance *Claiming Our Future 2010*, *Is Feidir Linn 2009* and *Spring Alliance 2010*). This will mean rebalancing our models of development away from an over-reliance on the market place and competition towards an understanding of the economy as part of the social system, working in the service of society and for the human and social development of a sustainable and inclusive social system. It will also mean actively promoting a culture of solidarity and equality through civic education programmes in schools.

Pointers for Forum conclusions and outcomes

- All countries should seek ways to increase the openness and accountability of representative democratic structures to those experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- All countries should put in place formal systems and set standard for promoting participatory democracy alongside representative democracy.
- As developing effective policies to reduce inequalities and combat poverty and social exclusion is essential to empowering people to engage democratically, countries should set targets and objectives for reducing poverty and social exclusion and should mainstream social inclusion objectives across all policy areas and introduce social impact assessments to ensure that all policy areas contribute fully.
- All countries should invest in community development, community education and community arts programmes aimed at marginalised and excluded groups so as to give individuals the skills and self-confidence to participate in democratic processes and to organise collectively to ensure that their voice is heard in policy making.
- All countries should establish a clear legal framework and provide adequate resources and support to encourage the participation of NGOs in policy making.
- All countries should put in place and enforce strong legislation and systems to promote fundamental rights and develop programmes to counter racism and discrimination and promote tolerance and respect for diversity.
- Civic education programmes promoting the values of solidarity and equality should be developed in schools.
- Affordable, accessible and high quality public services should be developed for all citizens and public services should develop codes of practice and develop staff training programmes to ensure access for marginalised groups.

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Working session 1B: Issue paper

Enhancing civic dialogue and social solidarity for the well-being of all

Guy Standing

Professor of Economic Security, University of Bath, England and co-president of Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN)

Introduction

We are in the moment of crisis in the global transformation, which is analogous to Karl Polanyi's *Great Transformation* of the 20th century. The neo-liberalism that drove the disembedded phase of the transformation, known as 'globalisation', sought to create a global market society in which principles of commodification were extended in every feasible sphere of life, including the educational system, family life, occupational development and social policy.⁷ It reached its moment of nemesis in the financial crash of 2007-2008, since when it has been staggering, opening up some ugly political scenarios.

Globalisation was a period of *re-regulation*, not de-regulation, and regressive redistribution, with income shifting in favour of capital, and in which various forms of inequality were intensified, while economic *insecurity* became pervasive. It created a risk society, in which risks and uncertainty were transferred to citizens, while being vastly increased. Crucially, a key tenet of the neo-liberalism was a perceived need to dismantle all forms of collective body and, thereby, all forms of *social solidarity*.

The subsequent crumbling of collective institutions of bargaining and representation was no accident; it was explicitly desired by the economists and others who were the spiritual guides and engineers of the globalisation era, notably Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and their colleagues in the Mont Pelerin Society.⁸

A neo-liberal market system is not the same as the liberal market economy envisaged by Adam Smith and others. It places primary emphasis on *competitiveness* and *individualism*. Collective bodies are depicted as anti-trust, inherently monopolistic and rent-seeking. But the drive to dismantle such bodies in the globalisation era had a deeply ideological objective, weakening the representation and bargaining capacities of vulnerable groups and groups wanting to moderate market forces.

The context of this paper is the aftermath of the three decades of globalisation, in which politics has been shaped by the *class fragmentation* that has taken place, and in particular by the emergence of a global precariat. The remit for the paper is consideration of forms of democracy that are feasible and desirable in the 21st century, across Europe and globally. The premise is that democratic innovations must accord with the emerging class

⁷ Commodification may be defined as making an activity or good subject to market forces of supply and demand, without a sense of *agency* or voice to override market forces.

⁸ For an analysis of their views and influence, see G.Standing, *Work after Globalisation: Building Occupational Citizenship* (Cheltenham and New York, Elgar, 2009), chapter 1.

structure of society, and they must enable the most vulnerable groups to participate democratically in those spheres of most importance to them.

Class Fragmentation and the Precariat

During the globalisation era, a process of class fragmentation took place that has posed a set of challenges for democratic governance. At the top, in terms of income, alongside traditional representatives of capital, an *elite* of absurdly affluent and powerful figures emerged as global citizens, able and eager to influence governments wherever they could. For several decades, the elite, stretching from the multi-billionaires in Silicon Valley to the oligarchs in Russia and Ukraine, encompassing the hedge-fund managers, property tycoons and so on, have dominated political discourse. No prospective prime minister or president in a European country has risked offending them, and almost all politicians rush to court them. This elite is effectively detached from any nation state and, unless it favours their long-term interests, is detached from national or local democracy. From time to time, one of their ilk falls foul of the law. But curbing their collective political and economic power should be a central objective of any democratisation.

If the re-embedding phase of the global transformation is to occur, it will be about re-regulating in favour of new forms of social solidarity, about reconstructing social protection in favour of the emerging *mass* class in the economic system and about redistributing the key assets in favour of it, as a way of reversing the historically remarkable growth of inequalities in the globalisation era.

In terms of income, wealth and political influence, the group that is below the elite and other representatives of financial and productive capital is the *salariat*, those with above average incomes but also with a wide array of enterprise benefits and long-term employment security. This group is shrinking and is under fierce attack, affected by the financial crisis, austerity packages and the extension of labour market flexibility into their ranks. Nowhere is this more the case than in Greece, although the salariat is shrinking elsewhere as well.

Although many in it are at risk of falling further down in society, some of the salariat have already joined the third class grouping to have emerged as a social force, the *proficians*, those with bundles of technical and emotional skills that allow them to be self-selling entrepreneurs, living on their wits and contacts, usually opportunistically. This group is growing but is relatively small, while being fairly liberal if tending to be politically conservative, since they want low taxes and few obstacles to their money making.

Below the salariat and proficians in terms of income is the old manual working class, the *proletariat*, which has been dissolving for decades. One can almost say that the democracy built in the 20th century was designed to suit this class, as was the welfare state in its various forms. Trades unions forged a labourist agenda, and social democratic

parties tried to implement it. We may be exaggerating slightly, but that agenda has no legitimacy in the 21st century, as the industrial proletariat has become part of our history.

Below the dissolving proletariat a new class has been emerging: the *precariat*. It is a class-in-the-making. It is internally divided, just as the proletariat was initially internally divided and in several respects remained so. Its internal division is what makes it the new *dangerous class*, and which makes an understanding of it so crucial to debates about democracy.

Essentially, the precariat consists of millions of people who have insecure jobs, insecure housing and insecure social entitlements. They have no secure occupational identity, and do not belong to any great *occupational community* with a long-established *social memory* that could give them an anchor of ethical norms. Being urged to be ‘flexible’ and ‘employable’, they are induced to act opportunistically. Mostly they are *denizens*, not *citizens*, in that they have a more limited range of effective rights than citizens.⁹

The precariat can be divided into three main ‘varieties’, all of which are detached from old-style political democracy and who cannot easily relate to 20th century *industrial democracy* and *economic democracy*, as promulgated in Scandinavia, for instance. The first variety are those who are drifting from working-class backgrounds into a zone of precariousness, the second, those emerging from the schooling system over-credentialised for a flexi-job life on offer, and the third are the *denizens*, migrants and others, such as the criminalised, who are in a status that denies them the full rights of citizens.

In general, the precariat is cut off from the classic circuits of capital accumulation, and from the logic of collective bargaining between corporations or other employers, as capital, and workers, as stable providers of stable labour. The precariat cannot see itself represented in any existing class-based political party, including social democratic parties, and cannot relate to old notions of *fixed workplaces*, the pillar of industrial democracy as conceived in the 20th century, and even beforehand.

The precariat is not an underclass or a *lumpenproletariat*. If it were, it might be possible to dismiss it as a political fringe, consisting of sad misfits who can be treated as suffering from social illnesses, to be ‘re-integrated’ in society. Governments have been tempted to treat it in this way. This may succeed in lessening disruptive behaviour for a short time but it will not succeed for long, because the socio-economic structure, institutions and policies will merely reproduce the phenomenon.

This does not mean that part of the precariat is not drifting into what might be called a *lumpen precariat*, unable to survive in the milieu of precarious jobs, skills and living, many drifting into gangs, bag ladies and addicts of one kind or another. However, it is

⁹ see G.Standing, *The Precariat – The New Dangerous Class* (London and New York, 2011).

essential to appreciate that the precariat is a group that is desired by global capitalism. While there has always been those living a precarious existence, today's precariat is an integral part of the production system, with distinctive relations of production and consciousness of specific insecurities. This is why it makes sense to depict it in class terms and why we should think of what has been happening in our democracies in terms of the precariat. It is a dangerous class precisely because all three varieties or components in it are disengaged from conventional 20th-century political discourses.

Commodification of Politics – Thinning of Democracy

Those who believe in democracy must confront two ugly trends – the commodification of politics (and politicians) and the thinning of democracy. The thinning of democracy refers to a trend towards less active involvement in political activity, notably in participation in political parties, the membership of which has shrunk to a tiny proportion of the figures of earlier decades. It is reflected in the declining turn out at elections, particularly in most European elections. It is also reflected in the low percentage of young people bothering to vote, thereby shifting the median voter to the elderly, which in turn induces many politicians to favour them. Those politicians observe that it is mainly the elderly and the middle-class that votes, and so they pander to their norms.

The thinning of democracy also refers to the shrinking spheres of democratic governance, including the transfer of many issues from political control to control by experts or interests which happen to be favourable to powerful groups in society. For example in 1997, the new British Government transferred responsibility for monetary policy from Parliament to the Bank of England, thereby reducing democratic accountability in a major sphere of economic policy, and incidentally privileging financial capital by enabling it to look after its own interests. Other governments have done something similar.

More worrying still, across Europe the *regulation of occupations* – our working lives – has been transferred from groups inside their occupations to finance ministries or externally-dominated committees, complemented by a growing policing role for the undemocratic World Trade Organisation and the European Court of Justice, which is required to apply market principles, not democratic or social solidarity principles.¹⁰ One could give numerous other examples of the thinning of the social architecture of democracy.

As for the commodification of politics, it arises from the demise of the class politics of industrial capitalism, the growth of inequality in which the elite have been able to shape politics through its money, and the emergence of the professional occupation of 'politician', whose goal is to be funded and elected as a means of launching a money-making career. The modern aspiring politician needs to sell himself or herself, usually

¹⁰ For an analysis of how this has been happening, see Standing, 2009, op.cit.

after a period in a party think tank as a *rite de passage*. The ability to raise money and to employ public relations specialists, who can repackage a voice and an appearance, and produce sound bites and body language, is not just part of the commodification of politics; it thrives on political infantilisation of the populace.

Many people understand intuitively what is happening. This in itself contributes to the thinning of democracy as they witness a game of marketing unworthy of their sustained attention. The millions in and near the precariat do not feel allegiance to old-style social democratic parties and they are structurally opposed to – or suspicious of – christian democrat or patrician conservative parties that represent elite, middle-class and salariat interests. This makes the precariat politically footloose, nomadic politically just as they are in everyday life. Just as many are increasingly social and economic denizens, so they are denizens politically as well, denied effective rights because they have no body to represent them in the political mainstream.

In brief, there are three directions in which factions in the precariat could turn. We might characterise these as *atavistic-populist*, *anarchic detachment* and *idealistic-progressive* (or *utopian-progressive*). Across Europe, each of these is gaining ground.

The *atavistic-populist* trend is displayed in the growing support for neo-fascist parties and populist demagogues, in which elements of the elite have played on fears among national precariat groups to depict government as alien and to see ‘strangers’ in their midst (migrants, the Roma, Muslims, etc.) as the immediate cause of their insecurity. The *anarchic detachment* mode is displayed in anomic, anti-social behaviour, in the fires of England’s cities, in social illnesses and a loss of faith in politics in general.

The *idealistic-progressive* direction is displayed in the Euro May-Day parades that have taken place in at least 25 European cities in recent years. Sadly, so far, the mainstream media, international bodies, mainstream social scientists and political leaders have not been listening to this third stream, or have given the impression that they have not heard.

Democracy and Schole

One of the greatest challenges for 21st century democracy is the widespread loss of *control over time*, particularly within the precariat, and the resultant erosion of what the ancient Greeks called *schole*, meaning both learning (schooling) and *leisure*, defined in terms of active deliberative participation in the public sphere of the *polis*. The problem is that the precariat is neither prepared for *schole* – being increasingly offered a commodified schooling that de-emphasises culture, history, fine art and subversive knowledge – nor energised or motivated to participate in the constructive life of politics. Instead, it is supposed to labour flexibly, to shop, to consume and to play.¹¹

¹¹ Once infantilised politically, they can be confronted with simplistic questions in polls and asked to give quick un-deliberative answers, which become “the public view”. Then politicians can parrot what their ‘constituents’ want to hear. If this is not a prescription for democratising prejudice, one cannot think of any better.

To understand this, we should recall the Greek distinctions between labour and work and between play and leisure. In the 20th century, social democrats fell into the trap of elevating *labour* to a pedestal, fostering what Hannah Arendt feared, “the jobholder society”. All work that was not labour disappeared from statistical representations of life, and was marginalised in social policy, which has always been dominated by social scientists steeped in the labourist traditions and values. Most egregiously, the work done mostly by women, ‘care work’ and ‘housework’, disappeared from statistics. To this day, mainstream social scientists, particularly men, adhere to this artificial and sexist practice.

The practice is becoming even more indefensible, because in a tertiary (service-based) market society, there is a steady growth in what should be called *work-for-labour*, a wide variety of work activities that must be done or should be done in order to function in a market economy, in flexible labour markets and in dealing with bureaucratic structures impinging on our lives. The precariat has to do a disproportionately large amount of this work-for-labour, even though politicians disparage them as “workless”, or suffering from “a culture of worklessness”, as many middle-class politicians put it.

What has this to do with the democratic challenge, the democratic deficit and thinning democracy? Quite simply, there is an intense competition between demands on our time. In a commodifying society, there is incessant pressure to labour and to consume, to shop and to labour more productively or more intensely. To be lazy is a modern sin. This is a route to societal stress, a sort of materialistic madness. All great cultures have needed people to have some time for laziness. Aristotle was the first great thinker to enunciate this point, saying that *aergia* (laziness) was essential for *scholē*. We need to struggle for both.

People pressured to labour intensely, and to do a lot of work-for-labour, are likely to find themselves spent mentally and physically exhausted. Meanwhile, the market society offers limitless play or entertainment, passive mindless (relatively undemanding) uses of time, much of it in front of electronic screens. It is a modern version of the Roman ‘bread-and-circus’ existence for today’s plebs. Let them watch football and avatars!

The outcome of the squeezing of leisure is a *collective attention deficit syndrome* and, worse still, the possibility that those subject to this process will be susceptible to populist sirens luring them onto the political rocks, through occasional mass rushes of anarchic discord and their equivalent rushes to support populist demagogues offering a neo-fascist vision or a crazed evangelical message imparted by charismatic leaders.

We have seen the spread of neo-fascism across Europe, as well as in North America and Japan. It is gaining ground around us and it is dragging centre-right political parties and aspiring politicians further to the right, thereby concealing the extent of the drift to the far right. It is not true that all or even most of the precariat is going that way, or that it is only from within the ranks of the precariat that support for neo-fascism is coming. Indeed, it

may be that the most vehement support for such populism is coming from those who *fear* falling into the precariat or who fear what the precariat might do to their material comforts.

The deficit in *schole* is contributing to the accelerated commodification of politics and the rightward drift of electoral attitudes and behaviour. From this nightmarish imagery, one should surely be drawn to think of how *schole* could be strengthened, or how *deliberative democracy* could be revived or enhanced.

Building democratic responses

I would like to suggest three policies, which must be developed from the perspective of the precariat, all of which should strengthen *schole* and revive or enhance *deliberative democracy*.

First, we need a movement to achieve a *democratic governance of occupations*, of work in its richest sense. In the middle ages, for several centuries, work and social relations across Europe were shaped by the guilds. They were flawed, being hierarchical and prone to rent seeking, but they created and supported communities in which codes of ethics and social solidarity were embedded. They were displaced in industrial society, replaced to some extent by trade unions, but they continued to play a role in setting standards. In the globalisation era, occupational self-regulation has been displaced by state-dominated licensing and technocratic governance in favour of employers and consumers, in the process splintering occupations and contributing to a decline of occupational social mobility.¹²

At present, many in the precariat are systematically denied entry to many occupations, and are denied avenues for social mobility. For instance, qualifications gained somewhere are not recognised for entry to a craft or profession in other places. Overall, systems of state regulation of occupations have been quietly blocking social mobility for those entering the lower rungs of occupations. We need to establish Europe-wide social principles of regulation based on values of social mobility, social solidarity and social equity with the voice of the precariat involved in every aspect of the democratic governance of work..

The second proposal addresses social policy, which has become increasingly interventionist and directive, embracing more and more spheres of life and becoming more moralistic. Instead of welfare policies being guided mainly by the relatively simple function of compensating for the “temporary interruption of earnings power” or by principles of social insurance, social policy has become driven by *libertarian*

¹² Occupations are commodified if they lose the capacity to reproduce themselves and have the capacity to self-regulate removed and deposited in the market or in institutions set up to dictate to practitioners how they must behave in a market way. For a discussion of how occupations have been commodified in the globalisation era, see Standing, 2009, op.cit., chapter 6, pp.147-79.

paternalism, or the new school of thought known as *behavioural economics*. This is a threat to freedom.

Behind these moves is a deeply ingrained utilitarianism, by which the norms and the happiness of a perceived majority are given precedence. The drift of social policy to behavioural nudging is giving enormous discretionary, if not arbitrary, power to bureaucrats, commercial surrogates and ‘experts’, lurking behind their politicians. Social policy is becoming part *panopticon*, with dataveillance supplementing surveillance and prison guards, and part *therapy*, manipulating people’s minds, with cognitive behavioural therapy being a popular fad loved by utilitarians.

The way to arrest this drift to social engineering is to demand that the voice of those most subject to the steering and most in need of assistance should be firmly inside the agencies and institutions responsible for social policy.¹³ At the moment, we are seeing the opposite, with the privatisation and commercialisation of social policy. We need a movement for the democratisation of social policy.

The third proposal is one to achieve two needs in our globalising market societies – socio-economic security and deliberative democracy. People who are chronically insecure make bad democrats. Psychologists have taught us that people who are very insecure lose a sense of *altruism* and a sense of *social solidarity*; they also become *intolerant* and thus prone to support discriminatory and punitive measures against ‘strangers’ or people who are presentable as not-like-me.

The proposal is that we should work towards giving everybody in European societies basic income security, through provision of universal monthly grants for all citizens. This is the only way of providing basic security in an open market economy; social insurance cannot reach the precariat, and means-testing assistance leads remorselessly to coercive workfare. What is needed is a universal basic income as an economic right. Such a universal stabilisation grant, with tax clawed back from the affluent, would pump money into the economy in recessionary periods and withdraw it during economic booms.

While the grants should be unconditional and universal, there should be a *moral condition* attached to them, which is that, on signing on to become entitled to receive the grant, each person should sign a moral commitment to vote in national and local elections and to participate in at least one public local meeting each year, at which all registered political parties could be represented and be quizzed by the public.

The justification for this set of proposals is that we are suffering from a growing deliberative democracy deficit, and need to find the means of shifting time from labour, consumption and play to political participation. Deliberative democracy in which the precariat plays an integral part is essential if social cohesion in Europe is to emerge. We

¹³ This is not achieved by governments putting nominal “community leaders” on boards or committees. It must be a collective, democratic voice.

are a long way from that. The inequalities and divisions across Europe are destabilising as well as socially and economically unjustifiable.

Unless the cries from the precariat are heard and incorporated into a new politics of paradise, the stirrings that have been heard and seen in the streets and squares of Greece, Spain, England and elsewhere will only be the harbinger of much more anger and upheaval. Extending deliberative democracy could be a means of defusing the tensions that are building up.

Summary - working sessions 1A & 1B

Empowerment and participation: key elements for democracy and social cohesion

Joseph Joseph

Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Greece

Introduction

This summary presents the main findings of the two working sessions held within the theme “Empowerment and participation: key elements for democracy and social cohesion”. They addressed the two overlapping topics “Promoting and enabling broad democratic engagement by empowering all members of society” and “Enhancing civil dialogue and social solidarity for the well-being of all”. The programme reproduced in Appendix indicates the participants in each working session.

The following presents a summary of the main topics addressed in the panellists’ presentations and during the ensuing debate.

Defining participatory democracy and social solidarity

Democracy is often thought of primarily as a voting process with an institutional aspect but the panellists argued that democracy goes far beyond selecting political leaders or policy, it is in fact a way of life, something to strive for. Democracy is about being willing to participate in the creation of the society one lives in, acting to develop ideas about what society should be like, and trying to put them into practice. Democracies should help facilitate the engagement of people in public affairs by providing opportunities, allocating resources and fostering skills.

The participants argued that the concept of social cohesion has become so watered-down that it is not sufficient for a definition of social solidarity. The bottom line is a notion of human rights and whether social rights are considered an integral part of human rights. If this is the case, then social solidarity means, in effect, active social rights created through real exchange and living together in dignity, respect and solidarity.

The role of civil society in building social sustainability and raising awareness of the consequences of policymaking and policy implementation is crucial. Policymakers and civil society must ensure that the voice of the most vulnerable groups of citizens and non-citizens are heard and that their needs and concerns are taken into account.

Social exclusion as a barrier to democratic engagement

The panellists noted a series of factors which impede democratic engagement and social cohesion:

- Poverty, inequality and social exclusion which limit the ability of people to engage in the democratic process by undermining skills, imposing time constraints and generating feelings of disengagement and powerlessness;

- Economic and social disparities between rich and poor tend to weaken the human bonds of solidarity and shared responsibility, thus undermining concepts, perceptions and practices of welfare, solidarity and social cohesion.
- Discrimination, racism, prejudice and lack of respect for rights lead to marginalization of individuals or groups and are often accompanied by feelings of alienation and social exclusion;
- Narrow and exclusive political structures leave people feeling that they only have a token role in the democratic process, but no real influence over decisions;
- Poor or restricted access to essential public services limits participation, thus increasing marginalization and disempowerment;
- Weak civil society, especially a lack of effective NGOs, and a feeble participative culture curtail opportunities for participation;
- Absence of a culture of solidarity and a corresponding over-emphasis of economic and market forces tend to undermine collective social support and increase marginalization of some groups who are seen as consumers and workers rather than as citizens.

The crisis and the creation of a new precariat class

The social implications of the current economic and financial crisis have changed the nature of the already problematic democratic engagement of members of society. The solutions adopted by governments to deal with the crisis are particularly affecting the more vulnerable groups of society such as the poor, disabled, youth, elderly, migrants and minorities.

The first problem facing these sections of society, collectively named the precariat by Guy Standing, author of the issue paper for working session 1B, is that they are divided amongst themselves and cannot find a shared voice to express their concerns. Secondly, they have insecure jobs, insecure housing and insecure social entitlements and, most importantly, they have a more limited range of effective rights than the rest of society.

In an attempt to address the current crises, governments have turned to short-term solutions, such as budget cuts from discretionary services in the private sector, voluntary agencies and from services destined for youth and elderly. In many countries there is no mandatory legal framework for these services, so such cuts are legal, but the effects on social inclusion and human rights can be devastating. Governments need to be more aware of the long-term devastation wrought by their short-term solutions. The panellists emphasised the need for inclusive and universal public services, especially health and social services, which are accessible and serve the needs of disadvantaged groups in ways which empower them.

Using democracy to reinforce social cohesion

A close look at democratic expression reveals that higher voter turnout does not necessarily reflect a broad democratic engagement of all members of society. The objectives of policies to promote democracy should not be solely directed towards voter turnout, but rather should deepen its legitimacy and inclusiveness.

In today's societies, citizenship is a status rather than a practice of political involvement. For many groups, having citizenship does not mean being represented in the decision-making process, nor does it enable the citizens to take action to change that. Civil society organisations in cooperation with local governments should ensure the empowerment of vulnerable groups and help ensure that their voice is heard. Empowering people to participate in the political process enhances social cohesion by giving recognition to the rights of citizens to influence decisions which affect their lives.

Education for democratic citizenship, a strong and diverse media and widespread access to information technologies offer important tools for enhancing participative democracy and cultivating a culture of dialogue and social solidarity.

Concluding remarks

The participants underlined the need for democratic innovations. These must be in accordance with the changing structure of society, and they must enable the most vulnerable groups to participate democratically in those spheres of most importance to them. Legal frameworks should ensure that human rights are respected and that all social groups are able to their concerns and are not excluded from the decision-making processes.

Issues of interdependence of democracy and social cohesion should be addressed in the context of the current social, political and economic crisis facing Europe and beyond. Indeed, the current financial crisis could be seen as providing an opportunity for strengthening solidarity and social cohesion through a re-examination and re-confirmation of the European social and democratic model.

Civil society is a major actor in politics and democratic engagement and should be further strengthened by upgrading the level of social concern and sensitivity, redefining the meaning of activism and providing impetus and legitimacy for collective action outside formal political structures.

Theme 2: Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion

Working session 2A: Issue paper

Creating and improving processes for participation by all members of society

Anna Coote

Head of Social Policy, new economics foundation (NEF), London

Introduction

This paper looks first at processes for participation and considers how different methods can be matched to different purposes. It then considers what makes participation effective for members of society as well as for public authorities. Next, it examines the opportunities for participation in service design and delivery, with particular reference to 'co-production'. Finally, it focuses on how all members of society can participate effectively.

Processes for participation

The scope and intensity of participation may range across a spectrum from passive to active and from powerless to powerful. The table below sets out some examples of different approaches to participation. As it indicates, different methods can be matched with the nature or purpose of the exercise: the 'how' is best determined by the 'why'. People may be involved in different roles, for example as actual or potential consumers of services, as co-producers of a shared intervention, as citizens shaping or defending a common good, or as advocates or agents of change.

There is an important distinction between the first four levels of participation and the final one. The former assume that power remains with an official body, which initiates the process and chooses the method (which includes the option of choosing to co-design the method with participants). Here, the motivation is likely to be about building consensus, generating political support, managing conflict, improving the quality of decisions and actions in the public realm – or a combination of these. Where people take direct control, this may be to fill a vacuum where there is no official presence or activity, or where the motivation is to challenge an official body that is resisting change: in this case, conflict is a driver of empowerment and change, rather than something to be managed.

Electronic media offer new means of participation and open up new opportunities. These include spreading information, consulting and mobilising people through blogging, twitter feeds, social media, podcasts, real-time on-line discussions and web-based question and answer sessions; on-line surveys and voting; electronic town meetings and 'crowd sourcing'. New mobile technologies make it possible for many more people in many more places to exchange information, to air their views, to participate in decisions and to join others in shared actions. Alongside these potential benefits, there are severe problems of unequal access (see below). In any case, it would be unwise to underestimate the extent to which these technologies could change the character of democracy in general and participation in particular.

Processes for participation		
Intensity/extent of participation	Approaches and methods	
	Approaches	Examples of methods
1. Informing	Information is provided directly to individuals and groups by post, or via electronic or conventional media	Public information campaigns Advertising Public service broadcasting Dissemination through social media
2. Consulting	People's views are canvassed about possible policies or actions, where they may be asked to consider options and make recommendations to others, who retain power to make the final decision	Opinion polling; qualitative and quantitative research; meetings that are open to the general public or for invited groups only, including neighbourhood forums and citizens' panels; interactive electronic communication such as crowd sourcing
3. Co-producing	Shared decisions and actions by individuals, professionals and others, pooling different kinds of knowledge and skill, to meet objectives that are jointly defined	Deliberative dialogue by citizens' juries; asset-based community development; time banking and other models of reciprocal exchange; co-produced services; participatory budgeting and planning
4. Delegated power	People are given resources and responsibility for deploying them to meet objectives agreed with those who delegate to them.	Local groups or neighbourhood forums are given devolved budgets and/or are commissioned by public authorities to achieve specific outcomes; individual service users are given control over budgets designated for their care.
5. Direct control	People decide for themselves to take action to achieve objectives they have defined.	Independent community-based actions and campaigns; transition towns movement; revolutionary action such as those described as the Arab Spring.

What makes participation effective?

The quality of participation may well depend on who decides on the scope and intensity of participation, who determines what processes are deployed and whose interests are taken into account in these decisions. This in turn depends on how power is distributed among members of society. A useful starting point for creating and improving processes

for participation is for all those involved to have a strong grasp of the range of methods available, including their strengths and limitations. It is important for individuals and groups who are likely to be affected by the decisions or actions in question to have a say in deciding which methods are deployed, and for bodies initiating participation to be clear and transparent about their underlying intention.

The lists of approaches and methods set out in the table above are indicative rather than definitive. How strongly the methods in the right-hand column of the table achieve the scope and intensity in the left hand column will depend on how they are played out in practice. Thus, a ‘citizens’ jury’ may be an example of ‘thin’ participation if jurors have inadequate time or information to deliberate fully, or have little or no control over the agenda, or find that their conclusions are wholly or partly ignored by the authority making the final decision. Similarly, delegating power to people who use public services by giving them control over the budget allocated to them (for example, for social care) may in fact leave individuals in a state of isolation, burdened with responsibility for making poorly-informed decisions while the value of their ‘personal budget’ diminishes over time.

The point here is not that some methods are ‘bad’ and others ‘good’ but that people on all sides need to know what the purpose is, why they are participating and what is the range of possible outcomes. If people expect to be actively engaged in making a decision and then find themselves treated as objects of opinion research (for example), they will feel disempowered, disconnected and probably also seriously misled. When people have such contradictory experiences, the chances of their accepting, trusting or actively supporting decisions and/or actions are likely to be undermined.

‘Consultation fatigue’ is an increasingly common problem in some countries, where people find they are often consulted, but rarely see any sign that their views have been taken into account. As a result, they lose confidence in the process and ultimately become cynical and disengaged. There will be similarly counter-productive effects if communities are told they will be ‘empowered’ to take direct action and then find that they have been left to fend for themselves without sufficient capacity or resources to take action that is meaningful to them.

Effective participation depends on a wide range of factors. Sometimes, individuals act as catalysts or there is a shared history of organisation that helps to galvanise action. It is therefore hard to generalise, but the following factors are more likely than not to help ensure that participation is meaningful and works to the benefit of those involved.

Some ingredients of effective participation

- Clarity and transparency: everyone knows what the participation is for, what contributions they can make and how, and what are the possible outcomes.
- Inclusion: everyone with an interest in the decision and/or action has equal access to the processes of participation. Purpose matched to method: all those with an interest have a say in which approaches and methods are used in order for the method to be appropriate for the purpose of participation
- Capacity and control: those who participate have the capacity to do so and share control over the process and the agenda.

- Information and time: participants are well-informed about the issues at stake and have enough time to participate fully.
- Mutual respect: it is understood between the participants that everyone has something of value to contribute.
- Feedback: participants receive honest and transparent reports of decisions in which they have participated, how these are interpreted and what actions are subsequently taken.
- Investment: Adequate resources are committed to ensure that participation is inclusive; that all participants are properly informed and have capacity to contribute on an equal footing, that sufficient time is available and that the desired outcomes of shared decisions and actions are achievable.

Participation in service design and delivery: towards co-production

A participatory approach to defining and meeting social needs in a modern democracy provides a powerful counterpoint to the neoliberal approach of marketising services. Within the neoliberal paradigm, individuals become customers or consumers who choose from a range of services on offer from providers who may be in the public, commercial or non-profit sectors. Competition between providers is supposed to raise the quality of services and lower prices. Yet there is no evidence that this approach can deliver services to all on an equitable basis according to need, especially where commercial providers have stronger incentives to satisfy their shareholders than to improve the lives of those who need their services. Furthermore, the combination of choice and competition does little to empower individual service users, because – to extend the metaphor – they can only choose from what is there on the shelves of the market place; they cannot determine how products are designed or constructed or what range of products is available. They participate individually, according to their own preferences, as best they are able. What happens to others as a consequence is rarely taken into account. And while resources are unequally distributed among consumers, they are bound to have unequal power to choose.

The marketisation of services is intended to challenge post-war welfare systems that are based on a collective model of spending shared resources to meet – and insure against – needs and risks that cannot easily or equitably be dealt with on an individual basis. Yet these systems have earned some valid criticism for tending to settle into an inflexible mode of top-down provision by qualified professionals to passive, needy and (it is hoped) grateful recipients. This tendency is said to undervalue human assets, create a culture of dependency and do little to prevent needs arising in the first place. Responsibility is assumed by public authorities, rather than shared with the public.

Informing, advising and consulting (which can be taken as components of a participatory approach) can do little on their own to shift power towards those who are supposed to benefit from services. This brings us to co-production, which has more to offer. The term is used to describe a model of activity that has been applied to defining needs, to

designing interventions or other activities to meet those needs and to delivering them. It describes a partnership between, on the one hand, citizens and service users and, on the other, officials, experts and professionals. Rather than people in the latter group doing things to or for people in the former group, they work together to produce ideas, insights, decisions, services and/or other activities.

Co-production deepens the concept of participation by fostering the principle of equal partnership. It draws on a long history of self-help, mutual aid and community development, and it is, quintessentially, about sharing responsibility between people who are regarded – and treat each other – as having equal worth and being able to make contributions of equal value to a shared enterprise. It enables people to pool and share a range of human assets that are too often overlooked, undervalued and under-utilised. These are embedded in people's everyday lives and relationships (time, energy, knowledge, skills, wisdom, love, care, teaching, learning, empathy and much more). At the best of times, tapping into these assets through co-production will enrich the process of identifying and meeting social needs; in times of austerity, it can help to compensate for increasingly scarce public resources. There is a growing body of evidence that co-production can add value and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services.

Co-production can redefine and transform public services and other activities of the state. It strongly implies a need for professionals and other service employees to change the way they think and behave – shifting the balance of power and becoming brokers, facilitators, mediators and enablers, rather than dominant providers. It is not a definitive model, but includes a set of key features that can be further developed, amended and applied to suit different circumstances.

Key features of co-production

- Recognising people as assets rather than problems
- Building on people's existing capabilities
- Promoting mutual and reciprocal relationships
- Developing peer support networks
- Breaking down barriers between professionals and 'service users'
- Professionals becoming facilitators rather than service providers

Participation for all

The value of participation for democracy and social cohesion depends entirely on whether and how far it is inclusive. Can all members of society participate on a fair and equitable basis? This is partly about whether opportunities to participate are available to everyone, and whether everyone is aware of the opportunities and has access to participatory processes. It depends on how far people are willing to participate and are motivated by a belief that it will make a difference to their lives; it depends on whether they have sufficient capacity and resources – such as knowledge, autonomy, time, confidence, energy – and how far they are deterred by problems such as ill-health, physical or mental disability, language or communications difficulties, or overriding family responsibilities.

All these factors are unequally distributed across populations. This suggests that inclusive participation calls for a range of social, economic and constitutional policies aimed at creating conditions for inclusion: among much else, these include measures to ensure equitable access to education, a fair living income, employment, healthcare, housing and other local services, mobile digital technologies and civil liberties. The first and most important step is to understand the range of factors that enable or deter participation and to address the underlying causes of inequality.

In addition, public authorities will need to make special efforts to reach out to marginalised groups. This will include: identifying and locating those whose voices are seldom heard, using outreach and other community development techniques; enabling marginalised groups to participate on their own territory and on their own terms; involving them in designing the process; sharing their language (literally and metaphorically); making sure they have access to computers; avoiding tokenism and one-off gestures; treating them as equals, respecting their wisdom and experience; enabling participants to reflect and learn from each other; and investing in building their capacity.

In conclusion

In this short paper I have dealt with only four dimensions of creating and improving processes for participation. They are all interlinked and need to be brought together as part of a coherent and consistent approach. It is within the power of national governments to promote participation by all members of society – both in democratic decision-making and in actions to promote sustainable social justice and well-being for all. Inclusive participation, democracy and social cohesion are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. All three are essential for forging political and welfare systems that are capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

Working session 2B: Issue paper

Creating and Improving Structures for Sustainable and Cohesive Democratic Societies

Peter Taylor-Gooby

School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent

Introduction: the significance of social context

Structures that support the development of democratic societies themselves operate in a social context. The European context is currently subject to rapid change. Relevant features are:

- Relatively high and rising educational standards. People are more able to understand the workings of their own societies, and are more confident in participating in them.
- New interactive communication technologies. Developments in electronics enhance the capacity to access and distribute information. They also enable people to communicate and organise about issues that concern them. However they may facilitate the development of exclusive groups or ‘enclaves’, defined by access to a specific communication network.
- The fanning out of social inequalities in income and wealth since the mid-1970s, due to changes in work practices and the rapid growth of highly competitive international markets in capital and in professional skills. This effect is most marked in Anglo-Saxon countries and, to some extent, in the Mediterranean Rim. Concentration of wealth among small minorities at the top end enables wealthy minorities to exercise disproportionate influence. Those at the bottom may feel excluded and be less inclined to participate. The impact of the recession on this longer-term trend is unclear.
- Migration within and into Europe. Immigration tends to increase social and cultural diversity and to expand the skill pool. To the extent that immigrants are seen to compete for scarce jobs, schooling and housing with the groups among the established population who feel under pressure themselves, greater diversity may foster the growth of extreme right political parties.
- Economic crisis and recovery packages. The 2007 banking crisis and subsequent recession has affected European economies and social groups within them in different ways. Perceptions that valued public services are being cut back or that groups such as bankers or the wealthy do not pay a fair share of tax, combined with wage cuts and higher levels of unemployment, especially for lower-skilled workers and young people, may impose further strains on democracy.
- The diversity of democratic institutions in Europe, including more consensus-forming and more majoritarian systems of government, federal and unitary states, varying roles for civil society institutions such as Trade Unions, NGOs and

religious groupings, and different degrees of participation for minorities and for women. These differences furnish strong opportunities for policy learning, and show that challenges to democracy may be addressed in different ways in different countries.

Other long-run contextual factors include the impact of climate change and the shift in geo-political economic activity away from the West. These are not discussed here since their impact is subject to much debate.

The context in which European democracies seek to create and improve democratic structures includes both opportunities and difficulties. Higher education standards, new interactive technologies and greater contact with diverse groups all provide opportunities to strengthen integrative democratic institutions. Growing inequalities, racism and Islamophobia and the impact of economic crisis challenge the capacity to sustain open and cohesive democracies. This paper will consider what might be done to enhance positive effects on institutions and citizens.

How can institutions enhance awareness of the importance of accountability, openness and intercultural competence, and build closer partnerships with civil society and user groups?

The move towards market competition within frameworks that include non-state (for-profit and not-for-profit) alongside state providers, as part of the 'New Public Management' raises particular issues for democracy. Private providers sometimes face a conflict between commercial and public interest in responding to pressures for greater transparency. Current financial pressures point the dilemma between cost-efficiency (which may lead to open market competition) and democracy (which may require investment in civic competence and in institutions to enable citizens to challenge providers) in a particularly acute form.

Practicable responses to these issues fall into two groups: one seeks to empower and support citizens so as to ensure that positive pressures to improve democratic practice are enhanced across society. Such measures include civic education that ensures that people are aware of their rights, and the establishment of a framework of counter-institutions alongside agencies that provide benefits and services, directed at supporting and enabling citizens in claiming their democratic rights. The success of such institutions depends on open and high-quality media and on a sense of efficacy. This derives from the experience of enforcing rights and achieving change through democratic processes.

The second group of responses seeks to change practices within institutions: greater transparency in institutional structures and practices, measures to ensure the representation of minorities at various levels within institutions and to audit progress in achieving this, staff training, as a continuing process through working life and so on.

*What constitutes an 'educated user' in relation to democratic structures and processes?
How can all users be fully informed about choices?*

Education as a 'user' requires not only an awareness of rights and duties, a matter of schooling and reinforcement in further training during working life, but also measures to build confidence that the individual citizen can realise those rights and duties and to provide support in doing so. Such confidence can be reinforced through participation in democratic institutions that are experienced as effective during the process of schooling and also in relation to neighbourhood and civic life. Such institutions could operate to manage local social provision (social care of older people, children's day care services, parks and public open spaces, local housing estates or transport networks and so on), so that individuals have an incentive to participate and to build a democratic social capital. In addition the availability of a counter-structure of civic and welfare rights institutions with staff who can advise and help individuals in confronting state organisations and the providers of public services is necessary in order to realise democratic rights in practice.

How can participative processes help extend democratic practices into everyday life, for example the workplace?

The Maastricht Treaty provided for Works Councils. These vary substantially in role and impact, in most cases functioning as consultative bodies. It is often argued that most people will only take the trouble to pursue democratic engagement if they believe that it will lead to positive outcomes. Institutions designed to extend democratic practices must have the capacity to change some aspect of people's lives. Those who participate in them require practical support in understanding their own rights and in promoting them. The various participants can only engage democratically if they are equal in status, resources and information.

Similar institutions can be developed or extended in other areas of social life as in the examples given earlier. These might include the management of schools, hospitals and clinics, day-care centres and similar institutions. One dilemma lies between participative democratic governance, which is often envisaged as embracing local institutions, and the degree of inequality across regions or nations. This raises issues of resource distribution between different social groups or areas of a country, and of the competence of different levels of local and national democracy.

How can civil society find the resources it needs to modernise and become more participative?

The kinds of participative institutions at the local or works council level discussed above do not require large resources. Some support is necessary for education and training and in order to provide information about rights and about the issues and to support those who wish to participate. This should be provided through channels separate from the institutions in order to ensure independence.

Much larger resource issues derive from the inequalities in the social context mentioned earlier that enable wealthy groups to lobby effectively for their interests and to exert control over information and attitudes. These can be addressed through measures to ensure free, active and varied media, transparency in political donations and lobbying and support in democratic engagement. Further issues of inclusion and exclusion may result from the growth of extreme right and xenophobic political parties in a context of economic stagnation, harsh competition for jobs and housing and incompatible cultural assumptions. Formal non-discrimination and equality legislation goes some way to addressing these issues. One question is whether an inclusive society can be attained by such means, without a positive commitment to and valuing of multiculturalism as a source of social vibrancy and as contributing to the fund of ideas and cultural resources available within a society.

Concluding comments: the significance of a changing context

This paper began by stressing the importance of context and of the way it is changing in assessing conditions for the successful development of cohesive democratic institutions. It is suggested that greater social inequality and increasing pressures on inclusiveness and cohesion must be taken into account in any consideration of democratic institutions. Formal political measures such as redistributive social rights, the strengthening of the resources available to the less advantaged groups, media freedom, freedom of information, non-discrimination and equal citizen rights can help to address these problems. However the creation of a society in which democracy and cohesion are mutually reinforcing may also require shifts at the level of social practices and values: cultural shifts which value those who fail in the labour market and eliminate the possibility of a disabling stigma, and a commitment to positive multiculturalism.

A number of measures might help to address the immediate question of creating and strengthening cohesive democratic institutions: education and training in civic and social rights; the experience of participating in institutions in which such rights are exercised and achieve positive outcomes at local or work's council level; the provision of resources and particularly of counter-institutions parallel to the official structures of public service provision which will enable and support citizens in challenging those structures.

These measures will not have a major impact without steps being taken to address the factors in the broader social context which damage progress towards more cohesive democracy: the fanning out of inequalities and particularly the impact on extra-democratic power at the top end and on effective exclusion at the bottom, and the growing importance of extremist far right politics in undermining the values necessary to support inclusion.

SUMMARY

Working sessions 2A & 2B

Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion

Carlo Ruzza

Professor of Political Sociology, University of Leicester

Introduction

This summary presents the main findings of the two working sessions held within the theme 'Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion'. They addressed two specific aspects: 'Creating and improving processes for participation by all members of society' and 'Creating and improving structures for sustainable and cohesive democratic societies'. The programme reproduced in Appendix lists the participants of the working sessions.

Defining participation

Working session 1A began by considering the wide range of activities participation can refer to and which need to be disarticulated and examined in terms of the means and institutional structures created to make participation possible. The session focused on forms of participation where the final decision-making power remains with an official public body where goals include building consensus, generating political support, managing conflict, and improving the quality of decisions and actions in the public realm. However, in some situations participants might take direct control and therefore outcomes might emerge that differ from the expectation of public authorities. This can happen where there is a need to fill a vacuum, where there is no official presence or activity, or where the motivation is to challenge an official body that is resisting change. In such cases conflict is seen as a driver of empowerment and change, rather than an outcome to be managed or stifled.

In all cases people on all sides need to know what the purpose is, why they are participating and what is the range of possible outcomes. This is important because not all participation is good participation and not all participation is effective. In fact participation can be counterproductive. There is 'participation fatigue' and the fact that often too much time and energy is required from participants resulting in a biased field of participants. When only highly motivated and resourceful participants are allowed to self-select themselves for inclusion poorly representative decisions and biased opinions will emerge.

Good participation should be inspired by clearly stated principles, which should include the principle of accountability, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and identification and allocation of the necessary resources. If these conditions are met then participation could be seen as a useful tool to overcome the shortcomings of the marketisation of services which has become dominant in recent years as a sometimes ineffectual response to the shortcoming of previous excessive reliance on welfare state provisions (seen as

undervaluing human assets, creating a culture of dependency and unable to prevent the emergence of needs).

Participation cannot replace representation. Some of the advantages of representative institutions over participative arrangements include the capability of representative structures to aggregate consensus and balance interests across different competing social groups. Representative institutions also ensure a more effective use of citizens' time over the often time-intensive mechanisms of participation. Good participation is only possible and effective if issues of economic and social equality are also tackled with appropriate policies.

New participatory phenomena

The working session explored the social movement activities of the Spanish *indignados* movement as an expression of alternative participation which thematises radical alternative policy visions responding to the widespread perception that there are fundamentally dysfunctional processes in the way politics is conducted in advanced societies. Decisions are seen as marked by elitist allocations of power and seen as fostering social inequalities.

The *indignados* movement can be seen as connected to similar movements such as 'Occupy Wall Street' which are emerging in reaction to the financial crisis. They reflect an important phenomenon, namely the call for a true and effective inclusion of marginalised groups such as the young and the social strata victim of the current financial crisis.

Discussing the initiatives of 'Generation Précaire', which utilises theatrical action repertoires to publicize the plague of youth unemployment and marginalisation, it was noted that a precondition for participation is social presence and that a radical critique of the exclusionary processes affecting the young is now necessary.

Reviewing participatory processes used in relation to constitutional changes and the financial crisis in Iceland, the difficulty of reaching the more marginalised groups of the population because of the technological obstacles was stressed. Also discussed was the importance of providing good feedback to citizens included in participation as well as to citizens that were not included because of the necessary processes of selection of participants by event organisers.

Examining themes of inclusion and the need for more openness between local authorities and civil society organisations, the working session discussed the example of Copenhagen City Council. It was noted that social media (in conjunction with local community initiatives) are increasingly playing a role in connecting citizens of different ethnicities and religions. The benefits of inviting participation from neighbourhood residents regardless of their citizenship status were noted. Nonetheless, social media are still often only accessible by citizens with the necessary technical skills and financial resources.

The barriers to participation that affect particularly vulnerable groups of citizens were considered, including the distinctive barriers that disabled citizens face. It was argued that focussing on vulnerable subjects as targets for inclusion in participatory forums constitutes an important strategy to address a wide ranging of social inequalities.

The issue of exclusion was extended to participation in Eastern European societies in the light of the cultural legacy of Communism and its collapse, and the distinctive difficulties East European societies now face in emphasising and promoting social cohesion. The relevance of the European Social Charter and its empowering features should be given more prominence, even among educational elites who are sometimes unaware of its contents and relevance. Indeed, there is a need to educate and train local elites to engage in a broad range of participatory activities.

Interventions from the audience emphasised that mere participation in efforts to enhance and streamline policy delivery does not necessary impact the distribution of social and political power and argued that participation should also include a role in decision-making activities which can radically rebalance the distribution of power. Doubts on the role, relevance and effectiveness of the social media were also expressed.

The connection was made between the lessons about participatory activities mentioned above and the recent events in Greece in reaction to the financial crisis and the related budget cuts. Participation becomes increasingly problematic when one deals with a disenchanted citizenry, as it often the case at present.

Overall, a consensus emerged in working session 1A that civil society and its organised and unorganised activities are increasingly important in facing the current radical crisis of the political and economic legitimacy of European elites. It was also noted that all too often civil society is not sufficiently resourced to perform its role effectively. Finally, it was argued that not all civil society activities are inclusive and empowering of vulnerable citizens and that in fact growing xenophobic and homophobic expressions of civil society are increasingly emerging.

The structures required for effective participation

Presentations in working session 2B emphasised that rights need to be protected and advanced through education and training of the population and through appropriate institutions. Without appropriate training of citizens for participation, and in the absence of democratic structures, participation would not be fruitful. At the same time, the importance of context and institution building processes were examined.

A participatory society is one in which social groups of different kind are first willing and able to engage with each other. For this, appropriate regulatory structures are necessary and should be provided at appropriate levels of governance. Only thorough a structured interaction of different types of local-level organizations from different sectors (public, private and parts of the social economy) it is possible for active citizenship initiatives to tackle the challenges of globalisation through better collaboration.

In this context supranational and international institutions such as the Council of Europe can play an enabling role through proactive involvement in implementing measures for the protection of the rights that in turn enable participation. Policy instruments to foster rights and social protection should be considered a right and not an act of charity, they are fundamental to making participation and active citizenship effective. Even those NGOs who are currently framing their activities as charitable would be empowered by redefining their work as a contribution to the attestation of a right.

The working session addressed the importance of social cohesion and the need to enhance social solidarity in order to combat the threats of all political and religious extremisms and particularly the right wing extremism. The recent terrorist attack in Norway highlighted how the high level of trust in Norway was so important in reacting to the terrorist attack.

The watch-dog functions of civil society organizations and their monitoring role was discussed, particularly in regarding the consolidation of Polish democracy. The importance of processes of institutionalisation of civil society groups was stressed, arguing that whilst innovation might come from protest movements and that they may help redefine the meaning and contents of citizenship in more participatory ways, without proper institutionalisation protest leaves little permanent traces in terms of policy change. Thus, a relevant sector of civil society needs to become professionalised and institutionalised.

The working session suggested that there is a substantial lack of transparency in most states throughout the world, including in Europe. For example, the *indignados* movement in Spain is connected to grievances related to lack of transparency in society and the need to promote better access to information legislation – a legislation area that is often completely neglected and under-regulated. Without information it is difficult and even impossible to participate. Without adequate training, for example in good accounting practices, transparency and accountability cannot be achieved.

Conclusions

It is clear that the focus on participation and on social cohesion are closely related – in modern democracies a cohesive society is often a participatory society. Participation of organised civil society is generally seen as key to engender broader participation by the citizenry in consultative forums at local, national and supranational levels of governance.

Civil society plays a key role in revitalising representative democracy and in the growing need for informational and representational input by civil society advocates. Debates in the public sphere can be conducted by single individuals and in the context of NGOs and other associations, but in both cases, public deliberation activities are beneficial for democracy, for social cohesion and for a better social and political representation of vulnerable groups.

The contribution of participants in consultative fora should not be limited to improving current public policies. Participation is also important as a means to foster substantial policy innovation and to voice conflict. Conflict should not necessarily be seen as a

negative aspect of participatory dynamics. It should instead lead to the identification of alternative policy approaches and the formation of public spaces in which different political conceptions are aired and institutional dysfunctional behaviours are identified and addressed.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Majeda Al Masri

Minister of Social Affairs, Palestinian National Council

It is a great honour to be here with you today representing our country, Palestine, in the 7th Forum for the Future of Democracy entitled: "The Interdependence of Democracy and Social Cohesion". This forum takes place directly after the signing of the partnership agreement 10 days ago in Strasbourg, by which the Palestinian National Council (Parliament of the Palestinian People in homeland and in diasporas) was granted partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation and pride for the resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly, calling on the six members of the Council of Europe, which are permanent members of the UN Security Council, to support the Palestinian request for full membership in the UN, which was submitted three weeks ago by the President of the State of Palestine, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas.

Today, 131 members of the United Nations have already recognized the State of Palestine on the basis of the 4th June 1967 borders. We are proud to mention that 17 of them are member states of the Council of Europe, whereas Palestine has established diplomatic relations with 24 other COE member states. Several of these countries have expressed their willingness to recognize the State of Palestine at the appropriate time and as our President Mahmoud Abbas stated in his speech to the UN and in Strasbourg: "We say to you all, sincerely, now is the appropriate time".

Nowadays, we are living in the era of the Arab Spring, the uprising of the Arab people expressing their desire for the establishment of freedom, democracy and social justice. The Council of Europe has supported the Arab Spring, and we, Palestinians, always being at the heart of the Arab people's aspirations for freedom, we declare that the time of the Palestinian Spring has arrived. We wish, and have the right, like all other people in the world, to live in freedom and dignity. The Palestinian People are asking for freedom and the ending of the Israeli occupation, the last and longest occupation in the world.

The Palestinian Spring aims at achieving the prevalence of freedom from occupation, and have our independence state on the borders of 4th June 1967 with east Jerusalem Capital and a just solution to the Palestinian refugees issue according to the United Nation resolutions in this connection, as well as to ensure the security and stability in the region. Europe has, by now, responsibly and generously supported the construction of Palestinian infrastructure (building of strong state institutions), providing important financial assistance.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude for this considerable aid which will always be remembered with high appreciation from our people, but it is well known to you that sustainable development and even democracy cannot be achieved

under military and settlement occupation. Recognition of the State of Palestine and support of the Palestine UN bid, is a means of protecting and ensuring the survival of all that has been achieved in the past years, and also a means of strengthening the position of Europe and its leading role in promoting the peace process and democracy in the region of the Middle East.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Joao Bosco Moto Amaral
Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly

It has been a great pleasure for me to participate in this year's Forum on the beautiful island of Cyprus. And it is a great honour for me to have the opportunity to say a few words at the closing session in my capacity as Vice-President of the Assembly.

Not only have the organisation of this session and the hospitality of our Cypriot friends been remarkable, but also the quality of the debates has been exceptional in both the plenary and the workshops: we have had the opportunity to exchange views in an open and direct way and the interaction between politicians, government and local government representatives, academics and representatives of the civil society has been most fruitful.

This is indeed the major strength of our Forum for the Future of Democracy, an initiative launched by the Parliamentary Assembly which was taken up at the Warsaw Summit of Heads of State and Government, namely that it brings together, on an equal footing, its four stakeholders: representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society. The subject of this year's forum – the links between democracy and social cohesion – has proved to be both relevant and timely as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe said yesterday morning.

Discussions have shown that, on the one hand, our Assembly has already been at the origin of a number of ideas and proposals that are of particular relevance today, and on the other, that our Assembly can and should take on its share of responsibility, together with the other pillars of the Council of Europe, in ensuring concrete follow-up to the conclusions. For instance, a great deal of our discussions have been focused on the need to empower all members of society and enhance civic participation.

Let me recall that, in its biennial debates on the state of democracy in Europe, our Assembly has repeatedly stressed the need to enhance participation not only of citizens but more generally of people living in a country.

Thus, in last year's debate, we clearly stated that the crisis in representation, accentuated by the current economic crisis, requires that the political relationship between society and the authorities must also be approached in a different manner from the traditional forms of mandate and delegation. Without calling into question representative democracy, the Assembly believes that, as a complement to the latter, participatory democracy should be enhanced as a process in which all people are involved in the conduct of public affairs at local, regional, national and European levels. We have recognised such a right to participation as a human right and a fundamental political freedom, which of course entails certain responsibilities.

However, what has changed since last year is that the political apathy, or citizens' disinterest in institutionalised procedures of democracy, which we had decried has now given place to numerous movements of civil society, which have brought people to the

streets and woken up public or civic conscience. New or alternative forms of democracy have seen the light of the day largely thanks to social networks, which have amplified them, and various forms of e-democracy have been developed - a concept that has also been largely promoted by our Assembly. In parallel, several countries are now seeking to improve communication channels (including internet) between governments/parliament on the one side and people on the other, for instance, through e-petitions in UK and in my home country Portugal.

I would like to stress that this is a positive development; although we do not yet really know where all this will lead us, we can at least be pleased that people now seem to be interested again in public affairs and seek to claim a fair share in decision-making, albeit through alternative channels.

Indeed, several participants stressed that people believe in and want more democracy, while at the same time expressing a certain mistrust in the ability of us, politicians, to represent their real concerns. And this is something that should give us, politicians, food for thought about our representative role. Our discussions have also shown that introducing elements of direct or participatory democracy entails not only opportunities but also risks, including the risk of referring to the “people’s will” for legitimising steps or statements which are contrary to fundamental democratic principles, for instance xenophobic ones or hate speech. Our national parliaments should assess the pros and cons of introducing such elements in order to improve the quality of representative democracy and restore public trust in it. We can surely not go on ignoring the people’s wish to be heard.

We, parliamentarians, members of an Assembly which has often been called as “the conscience of Europe”, also have another responsibility: to protect our societies against the rise of populist movements, which is a kind of collateral damage of the economic crisis and people’s increasing lack of confidence in mainstream political party representatives.

This issue was raised during our discussions and I recall Ms Brasseur’s words when she stressed the need to protect our core values which are threatened by populists or extremists. I might add that these challenges will be covered by reports currently under preparation with a view to the Assembly’s debate on the state of democracy in Europe next year. So from that perspective too, this Forum is rather timely. Furthermore, these challenges will also be addressed in next year’s European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments under the theme “Is representative democracy in crisis?”

We have reasons to be optimistic, even if we are undergoing one of the worst crises in Europe since the end of the World War II. This optimism does not only stem from people’s desire to be more actively engaged in public affairs than in the past; it also comes from the Southern shore of “Mare Nostrum”, not far from where we are sitting right now. While we are questioning the quality and effectiveness of representative democracy in today’s Europe, people in Tunisia and Egypt gave their lives to get rid of dictators and are now struggling to build up democratic institutions, including a freely and fairly elected Parliament which will represent the people and not just some elites. And elsewhere in the Arab world people continue to fight for freedom and democracy.

The challenges our Tunisian and Egyptian friends are facing are huge and it would be naïve to believe that they have already succeeded in their endeavour. But we should not only bet on their success, we should also do everything within our power to ensure that we win our bet. We, in the Assembly, are thus offering a tool to the emerging democracies in the Arab world, our recently created Partnership for Democracy status. We have just heard the Palestinian Minister for Social Affairs talking about the granting of this status only a few days ago to the Palestinian National Council. A couple of months ago, we granted this status to the Parliament of Morocco. Tunisia could be the next on our list, Egypt will hopefully follow.

I trust that the conclusions of this Forum will prompt the intergovernmental sector of our Organisation to move more boldly towards associating, in one form or another, our Organisation's neighbours, in particular in the Southern Mediterranean.

Let me conclude by recalling that much of what we discussed could be echoed in the future work of all four stakeholders - but also in the work of a new structure which the Assembly has been calling for over the last couple of years. This is the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy which should embrace all the various Council of Europe democracy-related structures and activities.

As Vice-President of the Assembly I look forward to seeing this initiative materialise with the support of both our parliaments and governments. I would like to thank and congratulate all participants in this year's Forum and especially our Cypriot hosts who have been both efficient and effective and extremely generous in their hospitality.

Vuk Jeremić

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia

It is my pleasure to once again have the opportunity to address the participants of the Forum for the Future of Democracy. I would like to thank our Cypriot hosts and in particular my good friend and old colleague Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis for her very warm hospitality. I am very glad to be participating for the third time in this special event of the Council of Europe.

The values which a truly progressive society endeavours to accomplish and implement, whether they are related to politics, social, economic, cultural, sports or other spheres, cannot be established unless the principle of democracy is woven in the very fabric of the society.

The challenges facing democracy today are not easy to address and I believe that we are continuously in need of seeking new directions and methods of action in an effort to reinvigorate the principle of democracy for present day conditions, especially in this part of the world.

In the past decade, the Republic of Serbia has made significant progress in developing a democratic society and it is determined to continue along that path, as a respectable member of the pan-European family of nations. The point that we departed from was dealing with the legacy of the past. Today, the global economic crisis has not bypassed us.

However, through perseverance and continued efforts we have been trying hard to carry out some fundamental reforms in our country. In this process the roles played by all actors, citizens in the first place but also non governmental organisations and other structures are extremely important. The extent to which citizens participate in democratic processes defines the extent to which they belong to the community. For this reason, social cohesion is essential in every society and needs particular attention.

The Republic of Serbia is somewhat lacking in the experience of an economically developed country where the migration process is intense. Nevertheless, over the past twenty years we have been faced with a particular social, political and humanitarian phenomenon reflected in the huge influx of refugees and internally displaced persons from the territories of neighbouring states, as well as from the southern province of Kosovo. Efforts to resolve the facing these population pose a serious challenge not only to their livelihoods but also in broader societal terms.

Serbia is a country with close to thirty ethnic communities; we do not consider this a stumbling block. On the contrary, we see it as something that particularly enriches our society. There is no better way to illustrate the interrelatedness of democracy and social cohesion than through the participation of ethnic minorities in the life of a land.

The measure in which the legal conditions have been established to ensure participation of minority communities in the democratic process at all levels is a key measure of what

has been provided to make them feel as full citizens of a country. The Republic of Serbia has adopted a whole range of legal instruments that enable ethnic minorities to enjoy their rights. From setting up and financing of national ethnic minorities councils, to adopting decisions on a number of issues relevant to their status and identity, in particular in areas of education culture, public information and the official use of languages.

Promoting the inclusion and empowerment of Roma, one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe, remains central to our efforts in accordance with the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma. We have chosen to place human rights education at the heart of our activities, targeting classroom students and older generations alike. In this context, I believe that the theme of the present Forum is vital to the understanding of the democratic process and commitment to its further promotion. I am convinced that this is a field in which we can learn a lot for each other by respecting differences between us and creating better living conditions for our citizens; this is the practical application of the democratic principle.

I particularly wish to underline the important role played by the Council of Europe, under whose leadership this meeting has been organised. We are committed to developing full cooperation in accomplishing our common goal of having all citizens of Europe, whichever part of the continent they live in, benefit equally from democracy and the rule of law. In this context I would like to emphasise that my country will follow closely the activities taken in this field and we are committed to make considerable efforts in order to offer a decisive contribution to reaching our goals.

Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cyprus

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to make this closing address at the 2011 Forum for the Future of Democracy of the Council of Europe, and which I am honoured to have co-hosted, along with my colleague the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance and the Council of Europe, this important event in Cyprus. During the last two days representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, as well as civil society, took part in a lively debate on strengthening democracy, political freedoms and citizen participation in member states of the Council of Europe.

I am also pleased that senior representatives and experts from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region participated in the Forum. Cyprus, a member of the Council of Europe and future President of the Council of the European Union during the second half of 2012, is fully committed in engaging the countries of our southern neighbourhood, which are currently undergoing monumental changes on their way toward democratic transformation.

Enjoying very close historical and cultural ties with its Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern neighbours allows Cyprus to serve as a conduit between them, the Council of Europe and European Union institutions.

The development of the Southern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood policy will be one of the priorities of our EU Presidency during the second half of 2012. We are ready to contribute toward the closer cooperation and coordination between the EU and the Council of Europe with a view to common action and concrete programs *vis-à-vis* our neighbouring states. The Progress Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe policy toward its immediate neighbourhood, issued by the Secretariat last September, provides a good basis for advancing this discussion.

In view of the tremendous challenges faced by our governments and institutions, the correlation between social cohesion and democracy is more pertinent than ever before. The current financial and economic crisis aggravates already existing problems, such as territorial conflicts, terrorism, environmental degradation, illegal immigration, xenophobia and intolerance. These pressures threaten the social fabric of societies and erode the trust of the citizens towards their elected representatives.

The correlation between democracy and social cohesion should be fully explored, since one presupposes another. The attainment of social justice, the fight against poverty and marginalization are necessary conditions for the development of the democratic process. This is a process that cannot remain static to the demands of our times and the genuine needs of the people with particular emphasis on young people. A stable democratic environment requires the active participation of the citizens in the democratic process. In addition to personal security, citizens must be given a sense of ownership in the democratic process and it must be matched by the growing accountability of elected leaders. In this respect, the core values of the Council of Europe, human rights,

democracy and the rule of law are the steady compass towards social cohesion and ultimately the well-being of the citizen body.

President Christofias stressed yesterday that the democratic process can only take place in a secure environment, both within and between states. Strict observance by States, of the norms and principles of international law, and the avoidance of any form of provocative behavior, along with the exercise of good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, will positively impact the development of the democratic process. Moreover, it will also prove beneficial economically, as the necessary conditions for economic development will be created. We are hopeful that Cyprus and its neighbours could become a model for such transformation.

Finally, I would like to thank our co-organizers, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance of Cyprus and the Council of Europe for the excellent cooperation in the organisation of the Forum. I hope that this has not just been a successful event but that participants, apart from having two days of intensive discussions, had also the chance to enjoy some of the beauties of our island.

We look forward to the discussion and further elaboration of the Forum conclusions and recommendations in future meetings of the Council of Europe on this important topic of Democracy and Social Cohesion.

APPENDIX

Forum for the Future of Democracy 13-14 October 2011 Limassol, Cyprus

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Strengthening representation and democratic participation through public dialogue and civic engagement

PROGRAMME

Introduction

The Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy is a multi-partner process which aims to strengthen transversal understanding of the issues under review and foster cross-sectoral approaches. Its specificity lies in bringing together high-level representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society with a view to strengthening democracy, political freedoms and citizens' participation in member states. The format of the Forum, a mixture of plenary events and thematic working sessions, intends to encourage dynamic and open discussion between the various stakeholders.

The 2011 Session in Cyprus marks the seventh Forum since its creation in 2005 by the Warsaw Summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government. In the light of the push towards democracy taking place in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, Forum stakeholders, in their respective spheres of competence, will invite experts from countries on the southern and eastern rims of the Mediterranean basin.

The Cyprus Forum will focus on the interdependence of democracy and social cohesion, addressing the issues from a political point of view. It will examine the main trends in, and challenges to, stronger linkages between democracy and social cohesion, taking into account the growing threat to social cohesion as European governments and institutions struggle to respond to the financial crisis.

The Council of Europe defines social cohesion as “a society’s capacity to ensure the well-being of all its members by minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation” Moreover, “social cohesion is a dynamic process and is essential for achieving social justice, democratic security and sustainable development. Divided and unequal societies are not only unjust, they also cannot guarantee stability in the long term”¹⁴.

The Council of Europe considers social cohesion to be essential for the fulfilment of the Organisation’s three core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Globalisation and other developments are putting under pressure and weakening the human bonds of solidarity and shared responsibility. The emerging pattern of a fragmented society, with rising inequalities and an increasing number of people reduced to living on the margins of society, poses one of the greatest challenges to social cohesion in Europe.

¹⁴ New Strategy and Council of Europe Action Plan for Social Cohesion approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 7 July 2010

Solutions to these trends lie in strengthening stakeholder responsibility and empowering people to actively engage in democratic participatory processes. Such approaches provide an opportunity to broaden the reach of democracy as well as help (re)-legitimise the mandate of elected representatives.

The Forum's reflections will also draw on the findings of the recent Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe on 'Living together: Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe'¹⁵ which assesses the seriousness of the risks to society, identifies their sources and makes a series of proposals for "living together" in open European societies.

The transversal approach to the topics undertaken in the Forum means that many issues central to social cohesion are mainstreamed across the plenary and working sessions. These include: intercultural dialogue and the integration of migrants, the specific challenges facing Europe's young people, intergenerational issues and life cycle approaches, and new concepts of governance through partnership and dialogue. Examples of good practice will be included. The Forum outputs are expected to contribute to the 2012 Forum session and recommendations for further action by the Council of Europe and other stakeholders in the fields of democracy and social cohesion.

DAY ONE: THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER

9 a.m. – 10 a.m. **Registration**

10.– 10.45 a.m. **Opening of the Forum for the Future of Democracy 2011**

H.E. Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus

Opening addresses by

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,
Chairman of the Committee of Ministers

Lenia Samuel, Deputy Director General, DG Employment, Social
Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Andreas Christou, Mayor of Limassol and Head of the Cypriot
delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the
Council of Europe

¹⁵ The Group is headed by the former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer: <http://book.coe.int/ftp/3667.pdf>.

Introductory panel debates:

10.45 – 11.45 a.m. **Fighting the crisis without undermining social cohesion: can Europe meet the challenge?**

Chair **Sotiroula Charalambous**, Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Cyprus

Moderator **Michalis Attalides**, Rector of the University of Nicosia

Anne Brasseur (LUX), Chairperson of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mary Daly, Professor, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast

Elizabeth Spehar, Director Americas and Europe Division, focal point on issues relating to democracy, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

11.45 – 12.45 p.m. **South-Eastern Mediterranean: building democracies that nurture social cohesion**

Moderator **Keith Whitmore**, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Kamel Besbes, Professor and former Dean, Monastir University, former Deputy Mayor of Monastir, Tunisia

Andreas Gross (CH), Chairperson of the Socialist Group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

2.30 – 5.30 p.m. **First set of parallel working sessions 1A, 2A**

Theme 1: Empowerment and participation: key elements for democracy and social cohesion

Working Session 1A

Promoting and enabling broad democratic engagement by empowering all members of society

People's ability and motivation to engage in public affairs requires a range of skills, resources and opportunities. Modern democracies should facilitate the capacity of citizens and non-citizens to acquire the social, cultural and political capital required to enable them to navigate the institutional framework, concretise their rights and participate in democratic processes rooted in a process of reforms and power-sharing. Associations and NGOs representing minority and vulnerable groups play an important role in aggregating consensus and reducing social conflict. However, they must avoid exacerbating fragmentation. There is also growing concern with self-exclusion which concerns both vulnerable groups, who cannot imagine themselves as part of the decision-making processes, and the middle classes who choose to opt out of using certain public services.

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How can policy makers and civil society organisations facilitate the acquisition of the necessary skills, resources and opportunities by all members of society, including the most vulnerable, thereby ensuring that their voice is heard and their needs are taken into greater account? How can access to social rights be made more robust in order to reduce systemic disempowerment and exclusion? Is self-exclusion from the use of public services a threat to democratic wellbeing and progress? Is there a need to adapt accepted structures, standards and practices to better address the notion of "rights and responsibilities" on the part of all? What about the participation of minorities and migrants, including "new minorities", especially those originating from "circular migration" (i.e. migrants coming to a country to work and returning home later)?

Moderator **Alexander Vladychenko**, Council of Europe

*Author of the
Issue paper* **Hugh Frazer**, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Applied
Social Studies National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Discussant theme 1 **Joseph Joseph**, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Greece

Speakers **Thomas Boje**, Professor in Social Science, Roskilde University,
Denmark
Marcus Brixskiöld, Swedish Government National Special Advisor
on Democracy Policy
Kenneth Davey, Expert, European Committee on Local and
Regional Democracy (CDLR)
Nurnaz Deniz, Founder of Urban Cosmopolitans, Amsterdam

Theme 2: Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion

Working Session 2A

Creating and improving processes for participation by all members of society

A modern democracy aims to enhance the mandate of the political actors by ensuring that the entire population is involved in decision shaping in ways that complement democratic electoral processes. Innovatory participatory and direct democracy structures, for example consultative assemblies and citizens' juries, have been successfully introduced, particularly at the local level. If such forums are to be truly democratic, people's participation needs to be closely interlinked with a sense of co-responsibility. At a time when access to social rights, i.e. education, health, social protection, employment and housing, are deteriorating because of the economic crisis, it is particularly challenging and important that all members of society, including the most vulnerable, are involved in participation processes. Furthermore, services are increasingly organised in such a way that users are required to make consumertype choices, for example in selecting schools or hospitals. If public service offer is to retain its democratic ideal, all users, including vulnerable consumers, should know how to access and shape services.

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How can participatory structures and processes be developed to offer new forms and spaces for participation, thereby fostering social cohesion and sustainable democracy? What are the linkages between participation across different levels of governance and how can participatory approaches to be scaled up beyond the community and local level? How can marginalised populations, who may not be citizens of the country they live in, be included in political processes? The internet and electronic democracy offer unprecedented opportunities for people to participate in decisionmaking processes. How can we make certain that these and other emerging tools are used to truly strengthen democracy, rather than to reinforce the voice of already prevailing groups?

Moderator **Kyriacos Pierides**, Journalist, Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation

*Author of the
Issue paper* **Anna Coote**, Head of Social Policy, new economics foundation
(NEF), London

Discussant theme 2 **Carlo Ruzza**, Professor of Political Sociology, University of
Leicester

Speakers **Alejo Cuervo**, Publisher, Spain
Dina Haffar, Senior Advisor/Programme Team Leader, Intercultural
Cities, Copenhagen
Csilla Kollonay-Lehoczky, Professor at Eötvös Loránd University
and Central European University, Budapest and member of the
European Committee of Social Rights
Ophélie Latil, Génération précaire, France
Salvör Nordal, Director of the Ethics Institute, University of Iceland

DAY TWO: FRIDAY 14 OCTOBER

9.30 – 12.30 p.m. **Second set of parallel working sessions 1B, 2B**

**Theme 1: Empowerment and participation: key elements
for democracy and social cohesion**

Working Session 1B

Enhancing civic dialogue and social solidarity for the well-being of all

Despite unprecedented overall levels of wealth, the economic and social disparities between rich and vulnerable populations in Europe are growing. These trends are weakening the human bonds of solidarity and shared responsibility, thereby threatening concepts of welfare and social, environmental and intergenerational justice. The current recession and financial crises are deteriorating the daily reality of many Europeans and making people fearful of the future. Civil society plays a crucial role in building social sustainability by facilitating social integration and cohesion as well as raising awareness of the long-term consequences of policy decisions. Innovative ways of thinking about inclusion and participation, for example active citizenship and shared social responsibility, highlight the interdependencies and co-responsibilities of all elements of society.

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How should participatory processes be structured in order to facilitate consensus that seeks the common good above the advancement of special interests? How can processes and practices which foster reciprocity, solidarity and co-operation be further developed and implemented in order to consolidate social capital, intergenerational solidarity and connected communities? How can active citizenship be given greater substance and meaning?

Moderator **Jean-Marie Heydt**, President of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe

Author of the Issue paper **Guy Standing**, Professor of Economic Security at the University of Bath

Discussant theme 1 **Joseph Joseph**, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Greece

Speakers **Antonina Dashkina**, President of Russian Union of Social Pedagogues and Social Workers and Director of Russian European Trust for Welfare Reform
Niccolò Milanese, Director, European Alternatives
Samuel Thirion, Social Cohesion, Research and Early Warning Division, Council of Europe
Hans-Jörg Trenz, Professor, Centre for Modern European Studies, University of Copenhagen and Adjunct Professor, Arena, Norway
Jordi Xuclà I Costa, member of the Spanish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Theme 2: Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion

Working Session 2B

Creating and improving structures for sustainable and cohesive democratic societies

A sustainable society fosters democratic practices and processes within the institutions and organisations which frame people's daily lives. The regulation and management of institutions and services should assist the development of organisations which are responsive, adaptable and accountable. Democratic governance of institutions also requires that the people managing and working in them understand the importance of transparency and openness, the need for dialogue and partnerships, and the relevance of intercultural issues. The watchdog and monitoring role of civil society is also key in fostering the democratic functioning of institutions.

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How can institutions enhance awareness of the importance of accountability, openness and intercultural competence, and build closer partnerships with civil society and with their user groups? What constitutes an 'educated user' in relation to democratic structures and processes (including public services) and how can a situation be reached in which all users are fully informed about their choices and are given options that are appropriate to their situation? How can participative processes help extend democratic practices into everyday life, for example the workplace? How can civil society find the resources it needs to modernise and become more participative?

Moderator **Bouli Hadjiioannou**, journalist (CY)

*Author of the
Issue paper* **Peter Taylor-Gooby**, Professor of Social Policy, University of Kent

Discussant theme 2 **Carlo Ruzza**, Professor of Political Sociology, University of Leicester

Speakers **Bjorn Bredeesen**, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, Norway, and Chair of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS)
Helen Darbshire, Executive Director, Access Info Europe, Madrid
Jane Jenson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Montreal
Jacek Kucharczyk, President of the Board, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw

DAY TWO PLENARY SESSION

2 – 3.30 p.m. **Round table discussion of the working session findings and Conclusions by the General Rapporteur**

General Rapporteur

Constantinos Phellas, Professor of Sociology and Dean of the School of Humanities, Social Science & Law, University of Nicosia and General Rapporteur of the Forum

Discussant theme 1 **Joseph Joseph**, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Greece

Discussant theme 2 **Carlo Ruzza**, Professor of Political Sociology, University of Leicester

3.30 – 4 p.m. **Closing session**

Ministerial statement

Majeda Al Masri, Minister of Social Affairs, Palestinian National Council

Addresses by

Joao Bosco Moto Amaral (PT), Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly

Vuk Jeremić, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia

Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cyprus