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**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

Working languages: English and French

Document prepared by the Forum Secretariat

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"¹.

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.

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'² 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.

¹ 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

² The Group is headed by the former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer: <http://book.coe.int/ftp/3667.pdf>.

Day 1: 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

Addresses by:

- **Thorbjørn JAGLAND**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- **Kostyantyn GRYSHCENKO**, 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

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 a.m. – 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

12.45 – 2.30 p.m. *lunch break*

2.30 – 5.30 p.m. **First set of parallel working sessions (1A and 2A, details on the following pages)**

8.30 p.m. *Forum dinner offered by the Cypriot hosts*

Day 2: Friday 14 October

9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. **Second set of parallel working sessions (1B and 2B, details on the following pages)**

12.30 – 2 p.m. *lunch break*

2 – 3.30 p.m. **Round table discussion of the working session findings and Conclusions by the 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
- **Joseph JOSEPH**, Discussant theme 1
- **Carlo RUZZA**, Discussant theme 2

3.30 – 4 p.m. **Closing session**

Ministerial statement, **Majeda AL MASRI**, Minister of Social Affairs, Palestinian National Council

Addresses by:

- **Joao Bosco MOTA AMARA** (PT), Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly
- **Vuk JEREMIĆ**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia
- **Erato KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cyprus

4 p.m. *End of the Forum*

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

Parallel working session 1A

Thursday 13 October

2.30 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.

Coffee break mid-afternoon

**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 for Working session 1A:

Hugh FRAZER, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Applied Social Studies National University of Ireland, Maynooth

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

Parallel working session 1B

Friday 14 October

9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Coffee break mid-morning

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 for Working session 1B:

Guy STANDING, Professor of Economic Security at the University of Bath

Discussant for 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

Parallel working session 2A

Thursday 13 October

2.30 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.

Coffee break mid-afternoon

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 consumer-type 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 decision-making 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 for Working session 2A:

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

Discussant for 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

Theme 2: Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion

Parallel working session 2B

Friday 14 October

9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Coffee break mid-morning

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 HADJIOANNOU, journalist (CY)

Author of the Issue paper for Working session 2B:

Peter TAYLOR-GOOPY, Professor of Social Policy, University of Kent

Discussant for theme 2:

Carlo RUZZA, Professor of Political Sociology, University of Leicester

Speakers:

Bjorn BREDESEN, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, Norway, and Chair of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS)

Helen DARBISHIRE, 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