



Forum Civique Européen  
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## European Civic Forum Brussels, September 5th, 2007

The board of directors meeting took place in Brussels on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September at the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee, Trèves building.

The following organisations were **represented**:

*European House* (Hungary), *Association Européenne des Droits de l'Homme, la Ligue de l'enseignement* (France), *Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants d'Europe*, *Contact 2103*, *Anima'fac* (France), *Cap Magellan* (Portugal), *Cidem* (France), *Forum Permanent de la Société Civile*.

The following organisations were **excused**:

Youth Work Ireland Kesalukioseura, Citizens Union Paremvassi, LDH, Maison d'Anne Frank, ANO pro Evropu, CSV, IRI Europe, ARCI, GSI Italia.

The session was opened at 10h30 by Nadia BELLAOUI, President of the ECF, who presents the apologies of several Board of directors members that could not make at that time of the year.

Today's agenda is adopted.

### 1) Adoption of the Protocol of the Board of Directors on the 11th of May

The protocol of the European Civic Forum Board of directors meeting that took place in Rome on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2007 is adopted unanimously.

### 2) Latest Developments

The Forum's statutes were established officially and published by decree on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007. In accordance with French law and still waiting for the "statute of European association", the Forum has come henceforward into legal existence. A new logo of the Forum has been created. A new website has been launched. The French version is operational; an English version is coming soon.

Demands for financial aides will be directed at the European institutions. While waiting for their own resources the Forum will rely on the support and logistics of the CIDEM and la Ligue de l'enseignement.

Since June 2006, the European Civic Forum has relaunched a debate on the statute of European association in the course of a specific campaign. The successive presidential programme of the European Union elaborated by France in close co-operation with the Czech Republic and Sweden for the period from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 to December 31 2009 is in its final phase of realisation. We contacted the future French presidency in order to be sure that the statute of European association project and, more generally, the question of the place for associations and NGOs within the "civil dialogue" are not forgotten. In this regard, the resolution presented to the Board of directors for adoption was reformulated. The Forum's meetings of November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> in Lisbon under the Portuguese presidency is dedicated to the civil dialogue and it will allow us to refine our particular propositions to the project.

Many invitations got to the European Civic Forum head office. After some debates and presentations of the different meetings, the Board of directors decided to respond positively to the following solicitations:

- The conferences of ECAS (European Citizen Action Service), a think tank located in Brussels and financially well supported by the Commission:
  - September 18<sup>th</sup>: European citizenship, “looking for Cinderella”
  - October 3<sup>rd</sup>: methods of participative democracy
  - November 27<sup>th</sup>: upcoming elections to the European Parliament
- The Portuguese presidency and the Commission organise a conference on the SSGI (Social Services of General Interest) in Lisbon on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September,
- The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organises a conference on the institutional process of the Reform Treaty for Europe. As a member of the liaison group of the EESC, the Forum is invited to participate.
- The Citizens’ Agora of the European Parliament on the upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of November:
 

The project of Gérard ONESTA, vice-president of the European Parliament, of creating a European Citizens’ Agora, original instrument of debate and proposition within European civil society, will have its first sessions on November 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. During two days and within the framework of plenary meetings and workshops different representatives of European civil society will be gathered together to discuss respective agenda items. The ECF should not only be present at the general Agora but especially in the workshops (in particular Workshop B on fundamental rights and Workshop E on the future stages of European integration).

Philippe HELSON (contact 2103) will represent us in the preparatory meetings.

**Certain member organisations of the Forum have directly been invited and are going to participate in these meetings either entirely or at least partially. They are supposed to signal the coordination of the Forum ([contact@civic-forum.eu](mailto:contact@civic-forum.eu)) and to indicate their affiliation with ECF on the inscription as well as during their potential interventions. On the next gathering of the Forum, precise mandates will be given to representatives for every single conference or public meeting.**

Finally, this update on latest developments closes with the information on the preparation of our next meeting in Lisbon on November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. (November 16<sup>th</sup>: Board of directors 10h-17h / 20h Ceremonial evening / November 17<sup>th</sup> public meeting on the “civil dialogue in Europe” / ECF members and Portuguese associations). The organisation team (David LOPEZ, Jean-Marc ROIRANT, Philippe DA COSTA, Hermano SANCHEZ) informed about the stage of contacting the Portuguese hosting associations.

### **3) Resolution Project**

The text proposed by the president deals with the necessity of updating the resolution of December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005 during the foundation of the ECF in Strasbourg at the premises of the European Council and within the framework of elaborating the future presidential programme of the European Union; The Portuguese Presidency is in charge, via the intergovernmental conference, of proposing the basis of a new treaty. Associations committed to the general interest have to make their points of view heard and have to remind, on that very occasion, their attachment to participative democracy and to the institutionalisation of the civil dialogue in Europe of which the status of European association is fundamental. The text, enclosed to this document, is adopted after debates and propositions of amendments.

### **4) Civil Dialogue**

This agenda item was being dealt with during the afternoon with the participation of members of the European Civic Forum (non-administrators) and different invitees.

Three introducing interventions to the debate were programmed:

- Current state of the civil dialogue by Jean-Marc ROIRANT, Co-president of the liaison group of the European Economic and Social Committee,

- The representativity of associations and NGOs in the civil dialogue by Patrick FEVE (Head of Unit “Relations with organisations of the Civil Society” of the EESC),
- Structuring the voice of organised associative life and different European platforms by Conny REUTER, Secretary General of Solidar, member of the Managing Committee of social platform and Civil society contact group.

The exchanges and the debate that followed illustrated very opportunely the different elements of the resolution that had been adopted the morning; moreover it allowed to refine the potential framework for our meeting day in Lisbon on November 17<sup>th</sup> dedicated to that topic.

## **5) Acknowledgements**

The members of the Board of directors thank the EESC for the high standard of working conditions offered by the European Civic Forum and in very particular Patrick FEVE for his comments and his disposability.

## **6) Next meetings**

- November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2007 : Lisbon (Portugal), Board of directors + Public meeting,

Next dates (still to confirm):

- January 2008 : Board of directors in Brussels (no precise date yet),
- May or June 2008 : Board of directors + Public meeting in Slovenia,
- September 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> 2008: European Forum in Charente Maritime (France).

Nothing else was on the agenda; Nadia BELLAOUI closes the meeting of the Board of directors at 17h.



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## EUROPEAN CIVIC FORUM

### Resolution adopted in Brussels, September 5th 2007

The summit of heads of state and government of the European Union in June 2007 provided a detailed mandate for the elaboration of a new European treaty. In this regard it reinitiates the institutional process.

The experience of the 2005 debates shows that **the citizen's interest in the values, objectives and operating of the European Union** is far beyond of simply being “for” or “against” Europe.

Many refuse the thought that Europe is reduced to constant economic and social competition of people and companies on a market inspired by liberal theories. They rather think about its future in terms **of a renewed democratic dialogue in an expanded Europe that is solidary and open to the world**. The debate on the new treaty should respond to that very interest, positive for those that believe in active citizenship.

The future treaty has arranged some elements that could turn out positively in the construction of Europe. In return, the recognition of the rights articulated in the “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union” is essential. The possibility of the member states to reject its appliance raises the question of an effective implementation of common values and social and territorial cohesion of the European Union.

The immense complexity of the decision-making process could lead to paralysing and permanent horse-trading. But these changes might as well lead to a more democratic functionality. More than ever does this **democratic issue represent a sufficiently common European project so that it could also be shared by the citizens**.

The European project will also be appreciated by **the creation of a true civil dialogue where associations and NGOs will have their own place**. In the 27 countries of the EU, millions of citizens dedicate themselves amongst hundred thousands of associations and NGOs that are committed to international development, culture, sexual equality, education, social justice, fight against racism, environment, solidarity, sports, etc. in order to make a better world. They represent an authentic place of civic education, social advancement and revaluation of commitment. Distinctive from political organisations and syndicates, they complete the gathering of individuals around common values. The NGOs and associations, in their capacity of mediation, are essential links between citizens and institutional authorities. Providing privileged freedom of expression for European citizens, they can all become places likely to restore civic aspirations.

The more citizens feel like being able to **feed and to enrich the authorities' reflections**, the more decisions and propositions of the states and the European Union are heard, understood and even supported.

The European Union financed streets, bridges and other types of infrastructures. It financed the possibility of fruitful mobility for students. It is time that the same **attention is drawn to construct a European participative democracy**. Europe was born out of an economic spirit. In the future it must commit itself more within a social, cultural and civic framework assisted by associations and NGOs. It must take a serious interest in lasting developments, in being a prototype of international solidarity, in carrying the ambition of “living together in harmony” which is of high importance to our societies.

Moreover, the European Civic Forum (ECF), network of 80 national associations in 21 countries of the EU, asks:

- **The Portuguese Presidency of the European Union:**
  - to **propose**, during upcoming summits of the heads of state and government, **the conditions of a civic and popular appropriation of the debate on the future treaty**;
  - in this context, to **reinforce the democratic infrastructure for open and institutionalised debates, all-embracing acclamations and consultations**, in which the **associations and NGOs**, speakers of the European citizens, play an important role.
  
- **The members states holding the successive presidencies of the European Union (Slovenia, France, Czech Republic, Sweden):**
  - to favour the introduction of **new forms of “governance” that integrate more participative and decision-making establishments that gather all actors of civic society** and particularly associations of general interest, non-profit non-governmental organisations;
  - to put in execution, following the establishment of the status for European enterprises and cooperatives, **the status of European associations**. This European status should document the recognition of the role of the associations and NGOs, in their civic and social capacity, in the European civil dialogue. Furthermore, this status should be embedded in the **“charter of reciprocal commitments” between the European institutions and the organised association life**.
  - to provide **European associations the possibility to act locally and to develop transnational activities** which allows eventually millions of citizens to feel implied in the European evolution where diversity is a trump, not an obstacle.