

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY

Third European Civic Academy

Draft agenda

(Un) Civil Society and Populism

What trends and perspectives for civic space in Europe?

28 – 29 March 2019, Collegium Polonicum, Słubice, POLAND

Organised by: The European Coordination for Civil Society Organisations



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Background and context

[Civil Society Europe](#), the coordination of civil society organisations in Europe, gathering around 30 civil society networks and platforms active in diverse areas such as civic participation, human rights, social policy, education, culture, the environment, transparency, international cooperation, youth, organises a European Civic Academy since 2016. The first edition was held in La Rochelle, France and a second one in 2017 in Brussels, Belgium. The aim of the ECA is to bring together activists and leaders of civil society organisations with academics and researchers from all over Europe (including the Black Sea Region) to discuss societal challenges relating to civil society and democracy.

Europe has gone through important changes during these last years and civic freedoms are now threatened in several countries of the European Union. The emerging of « illiberal » democracies, the rising of populist movements has created a difficult climate for independent civil society organisations. In particular, the rule of law is challenged in a number of countries and European Values are attacked while anti NGO laws are adopted and smear campaigns are directed against civil society.

In this context, Civil society Europe would like through the organisation of a dedicated European Civic Academy to give activists key insights into these developments and concrete tools on how to address them. Building partnerships between the academic world, and civil society is ever more needed.

The 2019 edition will take place in a particular context with both the European elections and uncertainties around the impact of Brexit.

The organising committee proposes to focus this year's academy on the impact of populism on civil society, exploring current literature and practice and perspectives ahead.

After a first session on the situation of civil society in Poland as a case study for Europe, participants will participate in a key note session on populism, Euroscepticism and civic space which will entangle this phenomenon from multiple perspectives, including the voice of Europeans that are adhering to populist narratives.

The different facets of populism, the impact on civil society and on Europe will be then discussed in different thematic workshops led by both academics and civil society experts in a world café style.

Also participants will adopt a declaration to decision makers ahead of European elections which will include a section on research recommendations.

The results of the discussions will feed into a conference report, and article for scientific publication.

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DRAFT PROGRAMME

Wednesday 27 March

18:00 – 20:00 Registration

20:00 Cocktail dinner with welcome by event partners

Thursday 28 March

9:00 – 9:30 Official Opening

with the participation of authorities from: *City of Słubice, Collegium Polonicum, the National Federation of Polish NGOs/OFOP, Civil Society Europe*

9:30 – 10:30 Plenary session I

The situation of civil society in Poland - A case study for Europe?

Debate with the audience

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:00 – 12:00 Plenary session II: Populism, Euroscepticism & Civic Space

Keynote speeches

12:00 – 13:00 Debate with the audience

13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch*

14:30 – 16:00 World Café Discussion Part I

Discussion tables

One theme of discussion per table with 2-3 academic and CSO experts. 1 rapporteur and moderator per table to summarise key points of discussion and recommendations for conference declaration. Participants participate in 3 discussion tables (change every 30 minutes):

- 1) *Elected populist's movements and civil society organisations: experiences from Italy, Austria and Romania*
- 2) *The mobilisation of Un-civil society at EU level – what strategies for civil society?*
- 3) *What place for European cooperation for CSOs and Academics within an increasing nationalistic narrative?*
- 4) *Uncivil society & Corporate State Capture*
- 5) *A view from the Black Sea and Balkan Region*
- 6) *Civil society & populist voters, is dialogue possible?*

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY

- 16:30 – 17:00** Coffee break
- 17:00 – 18:30** **World Café Discussion Part II**
- 18:45 – 20:00** Meeting of rapporteurs – Preparation of draft conference Declaration
- 20:30** *Dinner*

Friday 29 March

Plenary Session III – CSO resilience & legitimacy, Summing up day 1, presentation and adoption of conference declaration

- 9:00 – 10:30** **Session on CSOs resilience & legitimacy in the context of shrinking civic space**
- 10:30 – 11:00** **Reports from World Café session & Presentation of draft declaration**
- 11:00 – 11:30** *Coffee break*
- 11:30 – 12:30** **Discussion & vote draft conference declaration**
- 12:30** *Cocktail Lunch & Departure*