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TOWARDS A VALUE-DRIVEN EUROPEAN POLICY
European CSOs Call for The Instrument to Support European Values in Europe

“Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than the euro. It was always about values” – President Jean-Claude Juncker's 2017 State of the Union Address

Where are we now?

1. **The current value crisis in the European Union is largely associated with the growing nationalist and populist sentiment.** Both new and old EU Member States face this problem. One of the root causes is the lingering negative attitude towards the very concept of the EU among a large number of Europeans.

42% of Poles and French and 45% of Italians aged 16-26 do not believe that democracy is the best form of government;
45% of EU citizens believe that democracy is not working well in the EU;
Only 36% of EU citizens declare they trust the EU and have positive associations with the EU;
59% of EU citizens perceive a growing popularity of 'anti-establishment' parties as a threat;
80% of EU citizens believe that more engagement is needed from policy makers at the EU level in order to promote democracy more effectively.

Sources:

<https://www.tui-stiftung.de/en/media/young-europe-2017-the-youth-study-of-tui-foundation/>

Special Eurobarometer 451 (2016) – Future of Europe

Standard Eurobarometer 86 (2016) – Public opinion in the European Union

2. **Political manifestos that contradict the core EU values are attracting more and more followers. They are being amplified by xenophobic attitudes towards the new wave of refugees and migrants and a tendency to blame them for the terrorist attacks in Europe.** While Eurosceptic parties and candidates have not won the majority vote they have gained a long unseen support in elections in Austria, the Netherlands, Germany and in France. In Hungary and in Poland, governments openly contest European values and violate community legislation and policy. The outcome of the UK referendum is an extreme example of how harmful the activity of anti-European movements and social campaigns may be. The UK leave vote has caused a major crisis in the whole EU.
3. **An erosion of European values has been observed in places where new governments question values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union. This results in the actual weakening or even destruction of the core democratic institutions** in these countries: independent judiciary, public media and curtailment of civil rights such the freedom of assembly or the right to privacy.
4. **The contestation of core EU values and the attack against institutions that are stewards of these values are followed by campaigns against civil society organisations that promote European values.**

This manifested in legislative and administrative decisions to the detriment of such organisations in Hungary and in Poland.

Manifestations of the dismantling of democratic institutions in Poland and Hungary

Politicisation of the judiciary

<http://citizensobservatory.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Brief-on-Supreme-court-legal-opinion.pdf>

<http://citizensobservatory.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/RESOLUTION.pdf>

<http://njb.nl/Uploads/2017/6/encj-report-ia-2017-adopted-ga.pdf>

<http://verfassungsblog.de/the-hungarian-constitutional-court-and-constitutional-identity/>

Deteriorating status of civil society organisations

<http://www.hfhr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/HRD-report-30112016-FIN.pdf>

<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/ngos-under-attack-hungary-poland-continue-adapt>

<http://dafne-online.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Rule-of-law-in-Poland-March-2017-update.pdf>

<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265672.pdf>

https://www.ceu.edu/sites/default/files/attachment/basic_page/17842/ceubrief1.pdf

Where should we be going?

5. **More and more EU Member States have seen the need for an increased focus on fostering such values as freedom, equality and the rule of law.** This was explicitly raised by the President of the European Commission in his annual state of the union address in August 2017. The European Union needs a common policy of strengthening of its fundamental values¹. This policy must not solely rely on statutory sanctions under EU treaties or threats to reduce payments from the cohesion funds. And it must be not remain solely declarative.
6. **A co-ordinated value-driven policy must predict a realistic financial support for active citizens and civil society organisations that share and promote European ideals.**
7. **We urge the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council to consider the launch of specific support instruments to promote European values and Europe as a value in the EU Member States.** Below we propose the establishment of **the European Values Instrument (EVI)** which could be modeled on existing initiatives that are designed to strengthen democracy outside the EU (such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights with a budget of EUR 1.4 billion for 2014-2020 or the European Endowment of Democracy). **The main goal of EVI would be to strengthen pro-democratic and pro-European attitudes in Member States' societies and to improve the awareness and knowledge of democratic institutions and mechanisms.**
8. The financial instrument supporting European values policy should focus on the following objectives:
 - **promoting and raising awareness** of human rights and the principles of the rule of law;
 - **promoting dialogue and cooperation** to counter divisive and polarising discourses in relation to political, cultural, and religious differences;
 - **promoting respect for minority rights and countering discrimination;**
 - **countering extremism and radicalism;**

¹ See also: Common appeal to European leaders by European Civil Society Organisations and Trade Unions. The Europe we want: Just, Sustainable, Democratic and Inclusive (March 2017), <http://www.caneurope.org/docman/climate-energy-targets/3050-the-europe-we-want-just-sustainable-democratic-and-inclusive/file> or Scenario 6. Sustainable Europe for its Citizens (June 2017), http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/ngo_policy_6th_scenario_position_20170620.pdf

- **countering disinformation**, fake news and increasing the access of EU citizens to reliable information on EU policies and societal challenges
- **countering abuse of power**, in particular by supporting watchdog organisations.

EVI or other funds aimed at promoting European values should be managed by entities independent of governments. Beneficiaries should include primarily civic organisations in individual countries.

The creation of a new European financial instrument either in the form of the dedicated budget line in the UE budget or a European Fund for Democracy and Solidarity modeled on EED would enable citizens to act effectively in their own countries to promote and defend the values laid out in Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union. It would be a clear and positive signal that the Union and its institutions are determined to support citizens who share the basic common European values. It would help to work "on the ground" to tame the spill-over effect of the anti-democratic developments and be complementary to the rule of law mechanism and Article 7 of the Treaty of the European Union.

The organisations that signed up to this statement support the idea of a common European policy to strengthen fundamental democratic values and support it with specific financial instruments. We urge European decision-makers to start work on these solutions and to be able to implement them fully with in the new EU financial perspective for 2021-2027.

Signatories:

AUSTRIA

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights
GEMMA
Europahaus Klagenfurt
Litigation Association of NGOs Against Discrimination

BELGIUM

Anticor
International Partnership for Human Rights

BULGARIA

Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law
Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation

CROATIA

Center for Peace Studies
Documenta – Center for Dealing with the Past
GONG

CZECHIA

Association for International Affairs (AMO)
Civic Education Center, Charles University in Prague
Environmental Partnership
Antikomplex – movement against xenophobia

DENMARK

European Movement Denmark

ESTONIA

Corruption Free Estonia
Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations – NENO
Open Estonia Foundation
NGO MONDO

FRANCE

Fédération de Paris de la Ligue de l'enseignement
Maison De L'europe Des Yvelines

GERMANY

DRA - Deutsch-Russischer Austausch e.V.
European Exchange
Society of German-Russian Relationship
SOLIDARUS - Solidarität mit der Bürgerbewegung in Russland e.V.
Dialog macht Schule gGmbH
Jugend- & Kulturprojekt e.V.

GREECE

Vouliwatch, Greece

HUNGARY

Carpathian Foundation Hungary
Civil College Foundation
K-Monitor
Ökotárs Alapítvány/ Hungarian Environmental Partnership

IRELAND

The Wheel

ITALY

L'Associazione ARCI
European Movement Italy
Memorial Italia
UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights

LATVIA

Civic Alliance-Latvia
European Movement – Latvia
Foundations DOTS
Society Ascendum

POLAND

Centre for Ecologic Education “Sources”
Citizen Network Watchdog Poland
ePanstwo Foundation
Federation of Polish NGOs
Grupa Zagranica [Polish NGO Abroad]
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
Environmental Partnership
Polish Robert Schuman Foundation
Stefan Batory Foundation

ROMANIA

Civil Society Development Foundation
Europlus
Federation of Community Foundations
Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services
FOND Federation of Development NGOs
Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation

SLOVAKIA

Center for Philanthropy
Ekopolis Foundation
Forgotten Slovakia
Forum of the World's Religions
MESA 10
Pontis Foundation
Slovak Governance Institute

SLOVENIA

Danes Je Nov Dan

SPAIN

Access Info Europe
Altius Foundation
Fundación Ciudadana Civio
Nexes Interculturals de Joves per Europa

THE NETHERLANDS

Open State Foundation

EUROPEAN NETWORKS

Centre European de la Culture
CONCORD Europe
European Civic Forum
European Citizens Action Service