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Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy

« European Democracy in the 21st Century – Principles and Challenges »

Yerevan, Armenia, from 19 to 20 October 2010

Background information

1. The Forum for the Future of Democracy

The Forum for the Future of Democracy was established in May 2005 at the Warsaw Summit of the Council of Europe, with a view to strengthening democracy, political freedoms and citizens' participation and enhancing the Council of Europe's work in these fields.

The launch meeting of the Forum for the Future of Democracy was held in Warsaw in 2005 and dealt with Civic Participation. The 2006 Session of the Forum was held in Moscow, focusing on the Role of Political Parties in the Building of Democracy. The 2007 Session of the Forum was held in Stockholm and Sigtuna with the theme "Power and empowerment – the interdependence of democracy and human rights". The 2008 Session of the Forum took place in Madrid in 2008 and dealt with "e-democracy", while the 2009 Session was held in Kyiv with the theme "electoral systems". Further information about these five Forum Sessions can be found on www.coe.int/democracy.

2. Background information on the 2010 Session of the Forum

Governments with democratic legitimacy are required to deliver on both the rights and needs of people or they risk losing legitimacy and public support. This means guaranteeing fundamental freedoms whilst fostering sustainable economic development and sustainable communities, social cohesion, education. In order to achieve this, governments need to respect, promote and practice democratic governance. Basing democratic governance on a series of clear and solid principles is a key building block to creating and sustaining the "soft security" that facilitates enduring domestic and international peace and social and economic progress.

3. Themes

The Yerevan Forum will address the principles of democratic governance by analysing their application to, and their repercussions on, contemporary political and societal challenges in Council of Europe member states. In other words, the objective will be to examine the achievements and shortcomings in various policy fields and the respective institutional frameworks through the prism of the principles of democratic governance.

This analysis will be done with full respect for common principles of pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

For the purpose of analysis in the framework of the Forum, the principles of democratic governance may be broken down into three clusters: legal framework, institutional requirements and the ethical dimension.

Consequently, the following sub-themes could be addressed in the Yerevan Forum:

Sub-theme 1 : The legal framework of democratic governance

For example, rule of law, human rights, accountability, transparency

Sub-theme 2: The institutional requirements of democratic governance

For example, representation and participation, efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, competence and capacity, openness to innovation and change

Sub-theme 3: The ethical dimension of democratic governance

For example, equality, diversity, social cohesion, non-discrimination, sustainability

4. Structure of the Forum

Apart from the formal opening session, the first day will include a high-level panel of experts which would identify main trends in, and threats to, democratic governance.

On the afternoon of day 1 and the morning of day 2, there will be three parallel workshops, some of which might have several sub-sessions.

The afternoon of day 2 will be devoted to reporting back, presentation and discussion of results, closing keynote(s) and formal closing.

5. Expected results

The Yerevan Forum is expected to provide orientation on how the Council of Europe could support the improvement of good democratic governance in its member states. This would include:

- an indicative list of strategic tools based on the existing *acquis* on the principles of democracy as a basis and structuring element for further work by the Forum over the next few years;
- a roadmap for the next phase of the Forum process, including proposals for issues, in particular transversal ones, that may be addressed in thematic intermediary events, to be used as input to the next Forum plenary session.

The Forum might, in a perspective beyond 2010, focus on shaping democracy within an evolving context of democratic governance, based on a set of pointers deriving from the common principles on democracy. Such pointers would make it possible to better compare and analyse key challenges facing political actors and societies by sectoral and, increasingly,

cross-sectoral approaches, thus facilitating the formulation of innovative solutions at both the national and European levels.

6. Selection of NGO representatives

The Council of Europe and the host country attach great importance to having civil society appropriately represented at the 2010 Session of the Forum for the Future of Democracy.

The Conference of International Non Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe has been asked to bring the Forum Session to the attention of civil society representatives across Europe and to carry out the selection of approximately 50 NGO participants for whom the Council of Europe will cover the travel and subsistence expenses.

Additional NGO representatives may be invited provided that they cover their own travel and subsistence expenses.

Only NGO representatives who have been selected by the Conference of INGOs will have access to the 2010 Session of the Forum for the Future of Democracy.

The Conference of INGOs will apply the following criteria for the selection of the NGO representatives:

- civil society shall be represented by national NGOs from as many member states as possible and by a number of selected international NGOs, think tanks or foundations ;
- selected NGOs should be competent - and need to have concrete experience - in the areas covered by the Forum Session (please refer to the above sections on themes and expected results) ;
- a broad array of NGOs is expected to be selected such as service providers, advocacy groups, think tanks, youth NGOs etc. The selection process will aim to achieve a balanced representation of women and men at the Forum Session ;
- English, French and Armenian (*tbc*) are the working languages of the Forum Session and proficiency in at least one of the languages is required.

The Council of Europe will cover the following costs for selected NGO participants¹ :

- travel expenses ;
- hotel accommodation ;
- NGO participants may also be entitled to a small contribution towards other expenses connected to their travel and stay in Yerevan. Some luncheons and dinners will be offered by the Forum hosts. **Reimbursement of expenses will be made by bank transfer after the meeting.**

Interested NGOs are requested to return their application form by e-mail **no later than Friday 18 June 2010** to catherine.emezie@coe.int ([application form](#)). The selected NGOs will be informed by the first week of September 2010.

¹ The Council of Europe will cover the costs for a limited number of NGOs

Contact at the Council of Europe :

Should you require further information, you may contact Mr Mehdi Remili (email: mehdi.remili@coe.int) or Mrs Catherine Emezie (email: catherine.emezie@coe.int), Division of NGOs and Civil Society, Directorate of Democratic Institutions, Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs of the Council of Europe.