The **Civil Society Days 2019** focusing on **Democracy and Sustainability** took place right after the European elections and were a very timely occasion for civil society organisations to address these key issues in six workshops and two plenary sessions.

Around **250 citizens** from across Europe, and from South Korea, with backgrounds in civil society, policy making, business and education sectors participated in this edition that has been prepared by 16 European civil society networks in cooperation with the EESC.

The following key recommendations are outcomes of the discussions and exchanges in the workshops. They will form the basis of a proper political document to be forwarded to the EU institutions and notably to the freshly elected MEPs.

**Workshop 1 on resilient democracies and the positive impact of civic action:**

* Take clear stance against stigmatisation and criminalisation of civil society and give support, including financially, to its different actors that stand and act for democratic values and fundamental rights both at grassroots and transnational level.
* Implement an EU democracy semester, with a democracy score board and a monitoring system to assess the annual state of democracy, fundamental rights and civic space across EU member states.
* Parties which turn against the Fundamental Values as enshrined in Art.2 TEU should be excluded from their political parties at the European level and political groups in the European Parliament.

**Workshop 2 on inclusive youth organisations:**

* Digital solutions for young people in decision-making.
* Invest in research and practice in usage of new digital solutions towards including diverse groups of young people in decision-making. These tools should be created in partnership with the institutions, expert organisations and the young people directly.
* Provide increased funding schemes and provide capacity building opportunities for organisations to become more inclusive.
* Create more and accessible funding programs particularly for projects that mainstream diversity, inclusion and supporting training programs in order to strengthen the capacity of organisations (inclusive project management, monitoring, evaluation of inclusion).

**Workshop 3 on transitioning to an economy for people and planet:**

* Put social and environmental justice at the center of the future European economic model
  + Qualified majority voting on taxation matters to ensure fiscal justice (e.g. corporate/environmental taxes)
  + Hard legislation to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights (e.g. Framework Directive on adequate minimum income)
  + Fiscal capacity at EU level to ensure macro-economic stabilisation (e.g. a European unemployment re-insurance scheme)
  + Investment in civil society organisations working on wellbeing and post-growth economics.
* System change. 3 TO DO’s for 3 EU institutions
  + To the Council: change the Treaty. The Stability & Growth Pact (SGP) should be a Sustainability & Wellbeing Pact (SWP). Give the EESC & COR back the power they had in the Maastricht Treaty. Tell EIB & ECB to work on money as a public social good, tackling the debt trap & currency innovation. Also: go for a GLOBAL GREEN NEW DEAL
  + To MEPs: start / join decentralised citizen assemblies to pick up policy proposals on economic system change, postgrowth, just transition etc. and turn them into policy proposals at the EP.
  + To the incoming EC: make a DG for Wellbeing & Future Generations under the 1st VP. This DG also incorporates DG GROW and ECFIN. It deals with NEW economic models, targets & indicators and makes a wellbeing budget.

**Workshop 4 on e-democracy, citizens' advocacy power and active participation:**

* MEPs should work to empower citizens through education and physical mechanisms, including for instance citizens panels, outreach consultations (to reach underrepresented groups) and e-tools, to develop and communicate their ideas and suggestions for better local policies and actions that will lead to improved equality of opportunity and quality of life for all citizens at the local level.
* MEPs should use ICT more to reach out to citizens – especially by opening their institutional reports to crowdsourcing citizens’ ideas and by having more online policy discussions with citizens (e.g. webinars)
* Formal group/committee on citizenship participation: create a continuous structured space for MEPs and CSO representatives to discuss and ensure improvement of current processes to be open for citizens and CSOs in all the levels of participation (e.g. decision-making, follow-up etc.), and not only consultations. Additionally ensure a European perspective of the participation of citizens and encourage European cooperation.

**Workshop 5 on protecting freedom of expression in culture and education:**

* There should be a long-term commitment towards protecting and promoting academic and artistic freedom, in accordance with EU values and the EU law (in particular art. 2 of TEU and art 13 of ECHR).
* We recommend the creation of a handbook, based on the Members States’ legal obligations vis-à-vis the EU law and ECHR, to enable a systematic monitoring of the violation of artistic and academic freedom of expression.
* We call for adequate funding to support civil society though existing EU programmes (rights & values, Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Justice programme) and to protect and support artists and academics at risk.

**Workshop 6 on economy and democracy in the labour market:**

* The EESC to draft its own opinion on democracy at work, based on the evidence that democracy at work, implemented through workers' participation and freedom of association, and civic democracy are mutually reinforcing.
* The existing tools for democracy at work already entailed in the *aquis communitaire* to be enhanced and implemented in order to empower workers and enforce their rights.