

“EMPOWER CITIZENS FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE”

EUROPEAN NETWORKING MEETING

Milan, Visconti Auditorium, 13-14 December 2019

EU CIVIL SOCIETY ENDORSE PAN-EUROPEAN FRINGE FESTIVAL IN PARALLEL WITH FUTURE OF EUROPE CONFERENCE AND A BOTTOM-UP COMMON DECLARATION CELEBRATING EUROPE DAY

Civil society leaders of twenty EU networks have renewed calls for a bottom-up building-site and free-standing and spontaneously organised events modelled on the world famous **Edinburgh Fringe Festival** to mobilise EU citizens ahead of the Future of Europe Conference.

The Conference on Future of Europe is one of the top priorities of the new Commission chaired by Ursula von der Leyen and is due to start in 2020 and run for two years. Formal arrangements are currently under discussion by the EU institutions.

Civil society representatives have discussed in Milan how a “**European Fringe Festival**” would allow citizens to occupy the “spaces in between” whatever consultative processes and citizens dialogues emerge from the inter-institutional negotiations.

Taking up an idea of **Raymond Van Ermen (European Partners for the Environment)** and **Tilmann Loeser (Peace Revolution Foundation)**, the Conference should be preceded by a **Common Declaration of Europeans written by European Nobel Laureates and Youth Movements**, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration and offering a vision of an EU of the 21st century that implements the SDGs by 2030.

On May 9th, 2020, the Presidents of all the EU Institutions should open the Conference to address the transformation of EU, drawing inspiration from the Common Declaration.

The Milan meeting was organised by the Italian Platform of the **European Movement** and chaired by its President **Pier Virgilio Dastoli**. Closing the meeting, Mr Dastoli said: *“The proposal for a European Fringe Festival to run in parallel with the Conference is a powerful one. As the EP starts to consider how best to approach the organisation of the Future of Europe Conference, our message is clear: by working on the fringes of politics, civil society will energise proceedings and transform the prospects for a successful outcome”*.

Prominent civil rights campaigner **Roger Casale (Secretary General New Europeans)**, who proposed the idea of a “European Fringe Festival”, said: *“Like Edinburgh’s Fringe Festival which has become the dominant and influential voice of the arts world, we should occupy the fringe of EU politics ahead of the Future of Europe Conference. We have a unique opportunity to understand and crowd-source ideas about what needs to be done within Europe and how we can change the course of the EU building a stronger, united and more resilient Europe”*

Dominik Kirchdorfer (President of European Future Forum) said: *“A European Fringe Festival would galvanise the power of civil society and transform the Future of Europe Conference into an event focused on citizens. We promote active citizenship so it’s natural we now take action and push forward our own ideas for the future of Europe before the Institutions invite us to do so.”*

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The second European networking meeting “Empower citizens for the Future of Europe” (the first was held in Milan-Sesto San Giovanni on the 11th and 12th of May 2018), promoted by the European Movement Italy with the support of the Italian Representation office of the European Commission in Milan, has registered the participation of representatives of the following bodies, networks or organizations: ACMOS; ALDA, ARCI, ASVIS, Cittadinanzattiva, CIVICO Europa, Diem25, EESC, EWLA, Europe’s People Forum, European Future Forum, European Partners for the Environment, Fondazione Benvenuti in Italia, Foundation Peaceful Revolution, MEDEL, New Europeans.