



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy

The Interdependence of Democracy and Social Cohesion

**13 - 14 October 2011
Cyprus**

Background note

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 participation of representatives of all stakeholders in the democratic process – governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, organised civil society – is a major feature of the Forum. Further information on the Forum can be found at www.coe.int/democracy.

2. Content and structure of the 2011 Forum session

The 2011 Forum session will focus on the close connection between democracy and social cohesion, ie strengthening social cohesion using a political rather than a technical approach. It will aim to address the main trends of and challenges to stronger linkages between democracy and social cohesion, as well as discuss how representation and democratic participation can be strengthened through social dialogue and civic engagement.

In the light of the push towards democracy taking place in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, it is foreseen to involve these countries in this year's Forum session, both as participants and in widening the debate to encompass their aspirations and experiences in building democracy and fostering social cohesion.

Results of the Forum session are expected to provide an input to the 2012 Forum session and recommendations for further action by the Council of Europe and other stakeholders in the fields of democracy and social cohesion.

The Forum session includes plenary meetings and interactive workshops. The workshops will address the following sub-themes

Track A**Empowerment and participation: key elements for democracy and social cohesion****□ A1**

Promoting and enabling broad democratic engagement by **empowering** all members of society.

□ A2

Creating and improving **processes for participation** by all members of society.

Track B**Democratic institutions, active citizenship and social cohesion****□ B1**

Enhancing **civic dialogue and social solidarity** for the well-being of all.

□ B2

Creating and improving **structures** for sustainable and cohesive democratic societies.

3. Selection of NGO representatives

The Council of Europe and the host country attach great importance to having civil society appropriately represented at the 2011 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 30 NGO participants from all over Europe as well as Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, 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 2011 Session of the Forum for the Future of Democracy. The following criteria for the selection of the NGO representatives will apply:

- civil society shall be represented by national NGOs from as many European states as possible and by a number of selected NGOs from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, 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
- 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 and French 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 up to 30 selected NGO participants :

- travel expenses ;
- hotel accommodation ;

- NGO participants may also be entitled to a small contribution towards other expenses connected to their travel and stay in Cyprus. 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 8 July 2011** to catherine.emezie@coe.int. The selected NGOs will be informed by the first week of September 2011.

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