



## **CITIZENS FOR FREEDOM, ECOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY**

### **1st Congress of EUMANS**

#### **Paneuropean Movement of Popular Initiative**

**11 - 12 March 2021 - Warsaw**

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### **Premises**

Democracy and the rule of law are violated all around Europe. Their defense cannot be entrusted only to national governments. European citizens are needed for a paneuropean action to affirm civil and political rights across and beyond national frontiers.

Poland, together with Hungary, is recognised as the most blatant case of systematic violation of the rule of law because of the steady governmental action against separation of powers and autonomy of the judiciary (besides authoritarian policies on civil rights like abortion and lgbtq+).

The 7th of October decision by the Constitutional tribunal to reject the supremacy of EU law and jurisdiction represents a frontal attack on the EU as a supranational institution. Some EU Governments replied with outrage, others are more cautious. The approach of governments such as the Polish and the Hungarian once, shows the need for a European Union based on

rights. Being too harsh against “peers” could sooner or later backfire when their own violations will be under scrutiny.

Citizens do not have this worry. People can appreciate the importance of defending democracy everywhere, without the fear of this being counterproductive at home. On the contrary, strengthening democratic rule of law abroad can only have positive influence on democracy within the EU institutions (which are far from democratic) and in your own country. National Governments tend to compete for power but cooperate in defending it from citizens. Citizens are free to cooperate for the common good regardless of nationality, if only tools are given to them.

In order to activate, reinforce and build those tools, the pan european movement “Eumans - citizens for democracy and sustainability” will convene in Warsaw its founding congress.

Rule of law, civil freedoms, climate change, participatory democracy are the main subjects for discussion and transnational crossparty action. Instead of just pointing the finger against a specific Government, the ambition is to create a civic network for common goals toward a more open and democratic Europe.

In today's global scenario, the US has abandoned its role as guarantor of the liberal order, and Asia's economic leadership is in the hands of the Chinese authoritarian model. Europe retains its contradictions and is still paying the price for an unfinished process of community building, but it remains the place where democracy has the best chance of overcoming the crisis phase it has been going through for the last years, and re-proposing itself in a renewed form, strengthened by the participation of citizens. Indeed, while European national governments may have an electoral interest in competing and clashing with each other, European citizens have everything to gain from cooperation and the harmonisation of rights.

This can only be achieved if the European instruments of direct democracy are adapted to this common need, bypassing national interests with popular participation.

In this context, Poland is a symbol of the cracks in the European Union and of a new nationalist drift that is undermining the rule of law and civil rights in the heart of the old continent. Eumans, as a pan-european movement of popular initiative, will hold its founding congress in Warsaw because we believe that it is precisely where European democracy is going through its hardest crisis that it should be relaunched and revitalised.

### **The value of a Congress in Warsaw**

Poland is a plastic representation of the practices of the integration process of the European Union as well as of the functioning of the European Union, starting from its “role” in the European Council dynamics.

At the same time, it is also a powerful symbol in the collective imaginary of activists - as the real playing field of the future of Europe.

### **Key Topics in the European Polish Public Sphere**

- The independence of the judiciary system and the protection of the rule of law
- Civil Rights, in particular those that are needed by women and LGBTQ+ people are continuously put in danger by the Conservative government
- An economy and a job market that are strongly rooted on coal and not renewable energies dependency

## **The pan-european approach of the local civil society in Poland and the activation of instruments of participatory democracy**

- In January 2020 Polish Judges call for a large demonstration (one of the latest before the Pandemic) to draw the attention of the European Union on the fragility of the Polish Judiciary system due to some "reforms" related to the retiring age of judges and different forms of control. Polish Judges explicitly called for the support of other Judges and activists from the European Union. Marco Cappato, President of EUMANS was the only Italian political activist to join the demonstrations.

- In 2021 Polish women accelerated their initiatives for abortion rights. After years of demonstrations in the streets, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of citizens, activists decided to transform their proposals for the legalization of abortion into a bill of popular initiative, on which 100.000 signatures are needed to become a bill that can be discussed by the Parliament

- In October 2021, the decision of the Constitutional Court to overturn the role of National Laws against Treaties caused an incredible popular reaction. On the weekend of the 9th and 10th of October over 100.000 people took over the streets in over 120 places.

## **The pillars of the Congress in Warsaw**

- Information and European Public Sphere
- Rule of Law
- Portability of civil rights and right to science in the European Union: End of Life Decisions, Cannabis Legalization, Abortion and Sexual and Reproductive Health
- LGBTQIA+ Rights
- Climate Change: Sustainability and Economy
- Open Science and Open Access to Science
- Institutionalization of sortition based citizens assemblies

## **Purposes and outputs of the Citizens Congress**

The goal is to create a network of European activists who share common goals on freedoms, civil rights, ecology and democracy and are ready to activate instruments of direct and participatory democracy addressing the European Union.

Individuals, grassroots organisations, campaigners and activists interested in the topics that are going to be discussed at the Congress are welcome to join in Warsaw but most importantly in taking part in the co-creative process to design EU proposals that can be discussed during the 2-days event in Warsaw. The output of the Congress will be a set of proposals for EU-legislative reforms based on evidence-based analysis of each issue and an exchange of experience among the participants. For each proposal the appropriate instrument of participatory democracy will be identified in order to hook the proposal into the democratic framework of the European Union. A strategy framework of direct actions and other forms of popular initiative will be developed.