

Session of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe: "[Let's build a better future together. Strengthening Participative Democracy and Civil Society when building the Post-Corona World](#)" on 22 June 2020

Title: Importance of research and science in building a better post-coronavirus world with civil society

Eurodoc is a grassroots federation of 28 national associations of early-career researchers (ECRs) from 26 countries across Europe. We advocate for young researchers' working conditions and the quality of higher education and research.

Research and education are vital for democracy and crucial for informed public debates, thus strengthening the participation of civil society in political decision-making. For scientists and researchers, freedom of expression is paramount to asking important questions for society and science, to be able to look for answers in libraries, perform interviews, fieldwork or working in labs. Having access to information, financial resources, and mobility are some of the tools needed to carry out research and raise the voice of ECRs.

However, due to restrictive measures during widespread state of emergency, young researchers are one of the more vulnerable groups whilst at the beginning of their careers. Our national associations informed us about the impact of national and European restrictions on research. For example, problems with freedom of movement have a serious impact on ongoing research, limit fieldwork and limit research. Sometimes, when methodologies require observations made in person, or live interviews, the research simply cannot be conducted. Lockdown has caused fellowships to be extended without payment, and already-precarious conditions have worsened further due to cuts in many national research budgets. The gender inequality gap has increased between female and male researchers, already apparent in the decrease of publications made by women in connection to heightened childcare responsibilities.

The scope of problems in the post-coronavirus world will not only be connected to virology and economics, but also to society and our fragile democracies. Therefore, neither humanities or social sciences research should be put on hold, and ECRs must continue to develop research skills and achieve mobility or exchange abroad. ECRs cannot be made to work for free to complete their projects as the majority is not able to continue under such conditions.

What can be done? First of all, quality education and science in all fields should be one of the priorities during and after the coronavirus reality. Secondly, there should be more collaboration between scientists and citizens who are curious or concerned and motivated to make a difference. This can be achieved by promoting, citizen and open science, participatory methods side by side of communities, NGOs, individuals. Expert scientists should devote themselves to participate in public affairs, debates and political decision-making. They should do it in close engagement with civil society which is the one on the ground and having the practical knowledge. The mutual collaboration can range from instrumental to partnership collaboration; from simple collecting data and documenting changes in nature or discrimination to building greener, smarter or safer cities; informing about and defying societal problems, monitoring and evaluating dangers. On the other hand, the researchers gain access to precious data and CSOs and NGOs practice and fieldwork. Amidst the disinformation and information noise, CSOs and NGOs joining forces with researchers and science, will help build a better post-coronavirus world and democracies through reliable knowledge, analytical and critical skills and solid data. Endowing citizens to contribute to research and to inform

policymakers using science-based evidence brings better quality debate and makes the voice of civil society stronger and clearer in the new reality.

Beata Zwierzynska
General Board Member
beata.zwierzynska@eurodoc.net

Additional reading on ECRs situation:

<http://eurodoc.net/news/2020/pandemic-heavily-impacts-on-european-ecrs-with-caring-responsibilities>

<https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-europe-horizon-2020-2020-6-marie-curie-fellows-fear-covid-19-crisis-will-lead-to-career-devastation/>