During the crises provoked by Covi-19, the governments have taken extreme emergency measures, limiting civil rights and demanding a total compliance by their citizens. The end of the lockdown opens the period of the restoration of citizen freedoms and rights. The social relations and economic life start to be reinstated as well. The new rhetoric emphasises a “new normality”. However, this new normality never will be “normal”, while it imposes still limitations of civil rights and freedoms. In this process vast amounts of money shall be spent to mitigate the negative consequences of the lockdown and to rebuild our collective health, economies and social life.

There is a strong commitment to greening these measures, build a healthier environment and climate neutral economy. Although voices warning against too many green policies are being heard. Moreover, we don’t see so strong commitment to more social public policy. Celebrated heroes of the time of the hardest lockdown (employees in supermarkets, nurses and other staff with mainly low-income) are pushed into the background again. This context rather heralds a further decline of democratic society, with an imbalance of powers and with a weakening check and balance system. Will the civil society and volunteer’s mobilization during the health crises continue in post-pandemic time?

What can we do to ensure that this transition period will not permanently damage CSOs and NGOs but will serve to use the drive of change to strengthen the civil society sector and to make democracy more participative? Will the bottom-up citizen initiatives have strong and substantial proposals to convince democratic institutions to review their mode of operation and decision-making? Will the reconstruction be based on a citizen-centred approach? Is and will democratic deliberation be endowed with an institutional form and sufficient power to influence the public policies at European, national and local level? What role CSOs should play in the democratic consolidation during the pandemic and in the post pandemic-period? Impacted themselves by the restrictive measures, are CSO coalitions able to propose a global vision of the changes needed (“global new deal”), leading to more equitable and equal society, based on inclusive growth and democratic rules?

We want to explore these questions with:
- a key-note speaker and discussant providing the expertise related to civil society and institutional democratic landscape,
- with specific views on gender equality and youth perspectives.

We will try to find answers to what needs to be done to safeguard the multitude of NGOs and to give civil society a strong role in the process of rebuilding our public policies, institutions and societies. We want to debate on how to make this “new normality” a “new reality” which will include diverse voices and opinions and will not replace, under a blanket of well-meaning good measures, the promise of freedom by a promise of security.

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**Draft program**

Moderation: Gerhard Ermischer, VP of the DSCGC Committee

Introduction Anna Rurka – President of the Conference of INGOs

Key-speaker: Alberto Alemanno EU Law Professor HEC Paris (tbc)

Or

eLabEurope – nonpartisan organisations committed to promote civic engagement by experimenting new forms of participatory democracy and non-profit, evidence-based advocacy in the public interest in Europe and beyond. (tbc)

**How to improve youth democratic participation and Youth NGOs in the pandemic and post pandemic time: Speaker to be suggested**

**How to improve gender equality in the post pandemic time and support CSOs acting in this field: Speaker to be suggested.**

Discutant (conclusive remarks): ECNL (tbc)

Questions open for INGOs contributions:

1) Based on your experience, could you present some concrete impacts of the restrictive measures under state of emergency on CSO and NGO’ activities

2) Regarding the various expertise present in the public debates during pandemic and post pandemic time, how CSOs and NGOs can reinforce their advocacy in order to make the public debate more diverse and in order to bring their perspective and evidence-based advocacy?