



# Presidency of Latvia Council of Europe

MAY – NOVEMBER 2023

## **PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE**

**September 15, 2023, Riga, Latvia**

### **Background information**

Regional geopolitics and aggressive invasion of Russia in Ukraine have reshaped the European agenda of democracy putting in the center of the development the urge for the peace. In the recent years the societies themselves have become visible and active actors for transformational change at all levels, have proved the ability to respond with responsibility and solidarity.

This conference puts forward the substantial questions of the changing nature of the partnerships among governments, multilateral institutions and NGOs, and also the within the sector itself - examining the role of the local level civic activism and its regional and global level impact.

Participants of the event will shape the agenda by their own stories of the best and challenging examples, discuss the different perspectives and proposals for improvement. Politicians, civil servants, academia, NGOs and civic activists are invited to participate, learn and share.

### **Preliminary agenda**

#### ***September 14***

Warm-up discussion and welcome cocktail

#### ***September 15***

#### ***Conference Day***

#### ***Panel discussion I “From local to global: raising role of the local and national level NGOs in the multilateral institutions”***

Changing nature of the civic activism where individuals play more important role, birth of new forms of citizen engagement and association bring forward the question how multilateral institutions can reshape their ways of working and become more open to the local and national level NGOs. Decisions on the sustainability of the democracies are made at the national level and strengthening the capacities of the citizens to safeguard democracies are of high importance.

The panel discussion will look at the good examples of the representation of the national and local level organizations at the regional and global level, produce proposals to improve the transformational change of the partnerships in the Council of Europe.



***Panel discussion II “Impact of the regional security challenges on the sustainability of democracy”***

Unprecedented levels of civic activism bring together stakeholders from all sectors - politicians, civil servants, entrepreneurs, academia and CSOs. At the same time security challenges are used as a veil for the untransparent decision making, discussions on regulations on “foreign agents” threatening the sustainability of the CSO sector, limiting freedom of association and freedom of voice by smear campaigns on journalists and activists.

The panel discussion will look at the challenging examples reshaping the sustainability of the democracy in the region and produce the proposals for the minimum standards of the enabling environment for the rule of law and civic space.

***Panel discussion III “Social resilience: tool for inclusive, safe and sustainable local communities”***

Recent years have proven that grassroots initiatives can grow in the nation wide movements of solidarity and civic activism. Bottom up and decentralized development is a key for the social resilience in democracies but also in the times of high security uncertainties. Inclusion and protection of vulnerable groups, reducing of the inequalities pave the road to the cohesive societies.

The panel discussion will look at the outstanding examples of local initiatives that have reshaped the concept of the development recently and produce the proposals for the more resilient region.

***Departure to inspirational local site visits - social enterprises, NGOs and civic initiatives***