

War in Ukraine :

Statement of the European Economic and Social Councils

10 March 2022

Confronted with the brutal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army we, the Economic and Social Councils of the European Union (EU), representing the diversity of civil society actors, wish to state our major concern, deep indignation and unconditional support for the Ukrainian people.

After the failure of diplomatic attempts that were made until the last hours preceding the attack, we express our dismay watching the footage seeming to arise from an era that we thought was over; columns of tanks crossing cities, civilians fleeing the combat zones or taking refuge in the corridors of Kyiv subway. History repeated and, beyond the sounds of boots and bombs, it is also the fear of the populations - on the ground, but also within the communities settled outside the borders - that we hear. Neither the invasion of Ukraine nor the prospect of overthrowing its legitimate institutions are acceptable to us as democracies.

We stand firmly against this unjustified act of invasion of a sovereign state and would also like to pay tribute to the courage and determination of the many actors of Russian civil society who are opposing this destructive enterprise - endangering their own freedom.

Because such crises are also moments of truth, we salute the strength and clarity of the European response. Member States and institutions of the EU managed to react in an effective, rapid and coordinated manner. European civil society organizations are also currently carrying out a colossal task of mobilizing all resources on the ground. Beyond the necessary political statements, Ukrainian people need an effective and massive material support today.

We are deeply convinced that this solidarity will have to be maintained over a long period of time and that each Member State and each European civil society organization will have to take part in it. Our institutions are determined to do so. Effectively acting in a democracy, though, requires transparency and coherence. And this also goes for our international umbrella institution, the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) that is currently chaired by the Civic Chamber of Russia. The Chamber indicated its official position on March the 5th, 2022, in a letter with which we cannot agree.

Indeed, considering all the elements of the official Russian discourse in its letter, the Civic Chamber of Russia imputes the responsibility of the war to Ukraine, which we can in no way support.

It is essential that the Councils and Similar Institutions members of the AICESIS, and to begin with the Russian Civic Chamber, take a clear stand on respecting international law, support the values of the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human dignity, all essential values for our civil societies to flourish.

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Therefore, the signatories of this declaration that are members both of the EU and the AICESIS temporarily freeze, from today, all activities within the framework of the AICESIS, until the convening of an extraordinary general assembly that these same members commit to hold on the 28th of June 2022 in Athens, Greece. This initiative is intended to be discussed, and implemented in a transparent way, together with all the Councils and Similar Institutions members of the AICESIS on all continents, in the framework of the rules governing the Association.

We do not underestimate the magnitude of the daily difficulties and political pressures that weigh on the defenders of the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and the inalienable character of human dignity and the right of people to self-determination. We sincerely hope that a representation of Russian civil society will be able to speak out in favor of peace and dialogue between people.

Finally, our Councils call on the European Heads of State and Government, who will meet in Versailles on March 10 and 11, 2022, to commit themselves more and more to deepening the construction of the European Union and to strengthening the policies necessary to increase its resilience.

Until then we support together all European and international sanctions adopted against the Russian Federation. And we believe, today, that dignity commands that we mobilize all resources and deliver every possible message to reassure the Ukrainian people that they do not stand alone in their struggle against oppression, and that our institutions and their civil society organizations stand behind them in this dark hour for world peace.

