

Global Heads of Division of ICSOs

The 2019 Policy, Programme, HR and Communications Directors meetings

24 May 2019

Date:	10-12 September 2019
Venue:	Adlershof Technology Park , Rudower Chaussee 17, Berlin, Germany
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Concept

Background

As in previous years, the International Civil Society Centre in 2019 is planning to convene Global Heads of Division of international civil society organisations (ICSOs) for high-level strategic discussions on global trends, best practice and joint challenges. This meeting presents a unique chance for Senior Leaders to meet, network with and learn from peers from other organisations. It is also a great space for these leaders to explore opportunities for collaboration and how they can jointly push for change in the sector.

Four parallel groups

This year, the Centre aims to convene four groups who will meet in parallel at the same venue:

- **Policy & Advocacy Directors:** The Centre has convened this group annually since 2016.
- **Programme Directors:** This group was convened by the Centre for the first time in 2018.
- **Human Resources Directors:** This is the first time the Centre is bringing this group together.
- **Communication Directors:** As per suggestions coming out of the Innovators Forum, the Centre is also bringing together this group for the first time.

The four groups will focus on different topics depending on their specific interest. Parts of the meetings will explore the potential for collaboration around specific issues or projects, such as the development of a sector-wide secondment programme in the case of the Human Resources Directors, or coordination of efforts around the *Effectiveness of Advocacy*, and *Advocacy through Digital Means* for the Policy & Advocacy Directors. Other parts will focus on a structural peer exchange related to topical issues of joint concern, for example related to discussions around power and norms in the larger framing of safe-guarding. The Centre will work with Steering Committees to prepare content and direction of the respective groups.

Joint sessions – A new narrative for civil society

In addition to the parallel peer sessions, the meeting will provide space for discussions on issues related to the future of the civil society sector and how the Centre is working to serve and support the work of ICSOs.



Specifically this year, the shared session on day one will provide input, an interactive discussion and inspiring examples on the link between organisational values and the world we want to see as well as on how ICSOs can live their values beyond the level of statements and policies. Most organisations have a number of values and principles that provide the foundation for the work of the organisations. There is huge overlap in the values that ICSOs promote, which tend to include *inclusion, transparency, accountability, justice and collaboration*.¹ The values are central to the way we present our organisations but they should also play a central role in shaping the rest of our work, beyond communication campaigns and branding. Our values should shape everything we do, from the way we interact with communities, decide on the actors we work with, share power across the organisation, make programmatic priorities, and attract and retain talent. Essentially, they should play a fundamental role in organisational cultures and leadership approaches. Furthermore, there are arguments saying that values should provide a clear link to the world we are working to shape, but do they really? Implementing and living such shared values throughout huge, diverse, and often decentralised or federated organisations is an immense challenge for many ICSOs. In this session, we will hear input on why it is important that ICSOs live their values and how this links with the much-needed aim of reshaping the narrative around civil society. We will also listen to inspiring champions who have taken innovative steps towards living their values throughout their organisations.

In the joint session on day three, we will take a first look at the Centre's [Innovation Report on Responses to Populism](#), to be launched at the Global Perspectives conference in October 2019. This includes how ICSOs and other civil society actors are reflecting their 'license to operate', reshaping legitimacy, advancing accountability towards communities, and strengthening resilience towards challenges of perceived elitism, privilege, or disconnection from grassroots interests. It will provide examples of powerful narratives and positive visions aiming at reopening spaces for constructive dialogue on social change and democratic actions. The case study contributors will be invited to provide a challenging and inspiring voice in an interactive session exploring this area.

Participant feedback from Global Heads meeting 2018

"Very relevant topics that many of us are wrestling with. Great way to connect with colleagues from international HQs."

"I think this meeting was very good at defining and prioritising issues to be taken back for further internal discussion."

"Mainly I will take back learnings and reflections that I can suggest to others internally, demonstrating that similar organisations are facing the same problems and challenges as we are."

The aim is that participants will leave the Global Heads of Division meeting 2019 with:

- A better understanding of the current challenges and opportunities of other ICSOs,
- An extended network of peers from other ICSOs,
- A number of ideas for potential areas of collaboration, support and/or exchange,
- Insights into the prevailing discussion on a value based vision for civil society.

For more information, please contact Åsa Månsson (amansson@icscentre.org).

¹ The Centre has compiled an overview of the values promoted by ICSOs and these are the most used words.