

With the endorsement of the Municipalità di Venezia-Murano-Burano

PUBLIC MEETING

Organisational resilience of civil society under external pressure

Bank accounts, archives, management platforms, communication channels, insurance and payments: intermediaries that are often irreplaceable and themselves exposed to unpredictable political pressure. How can operational continuity be ensured in a system built around a few chokepoints, and what policy response could secure European financial and digital sovereignty?

Friday 16 October 2026

5 pm to 8 pm

EMERGENCY Venezia

Giudecca 212, Fondamenta San Giacomo

PROGRAMME · Contributions in Italian and English, with live subtitles

17.00	Welcome	Rossella Miccio President, EMERGENCY
	Opening remarks	Giovanni Pelizzato President of the Municipalità di Venezia-Murano-Burano
	Introduction	Tara O'Grady President, No Peace Without Justice
17.20	Panel discussion	Stefano Quintarelli Computer scientist (online)
		Zoe Paris Advocacy Director, Coalition for the International Criminal Court
		Fausto Gianelli Lawyer for Autistici/Inventati
		Roberta Borroni Vice-President, EMERGENCY
		Ahmed Abofoul Legal Advisor, Al-Haq
		Luca Casarini Head of Mission, Mediterranea Saving Humans
		Matt Cannock Centre for International Justice, Amnesty International
		Alvise Nicoletti Founder and CEO, ELAN42
18.30	Open discussion	Moderated by Niccolò Figà-Talamanca , Secretary-General, No Peace Without Justice
19.50	Conclusions	Alison Smith , Convenor, Coalition for the International Criminal Court
20.00	Close	

Free entry, registration required

[Register at tinyurl.com/NGOResilience](https://tinyurl.com/NGOResilience)

or scan the QR code



An almost invisible infrastructure

Every organisation, small or large, rests on an ordinary and almost invisible infrastructure: the bank account that receives its grants and pays its salaries, the archives and management platforms that hold its documents, contracts and institutional memory, its email and messaging, its insurance, its payments. These services are in the hands of a few intermediaries, often irreplaceable in the short term and themselves exposed to unpredictable political pressure. The resulting architecture has grown around a few nodes without anyone designing it that way: each dependency is a critical point with no alternative, and the dependencies add up. When a node gives way, the organisation stops, even if it was never itself targeted.

From the International Criminal Court to an ordinary bank transfer

At the most visible extreme are the sanctions imposed, under the same executive order, on judges and prosecutors of the International Criminal Court and on three Palestinian human rights organisations that cooperate with it, Al-Haq, Al Mezan and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights: measures contrary to Italian and European law, which nonetheless take effect in Europe, because banks, payment networks and digital services depend on nodes located elsewhere.

At the end of August the same tool was turned on a small Italian volunteer collective, which had offered free email and websites to associations and activists since 2001: the United States government placed it on a counter-terrorism list. A few days later its bank, an Italian ethical bank, suspended its account rather than put at risk the cards and international payments of all its customers. In early September the collective shut down all its services.

At the other extreme there is no list, only over-compliance: a compliance system that goes well beyond anything the law requires. An organisation pays a staff member in a country automatically classified as “high risk”: almost every time, even for recurring payments, the machine flags the transfer, the payment (and sometimes the account itself) is suspended, and the bank’s compliance office has to phone to ask for the donor contract, the invoice or the payslip, and then release it manually. If this happens three times a week, the bank closes the account on a simple cost-benefit calculation, knowing full well that everything is in order. An organisation afraid of losing its account starts choosing projects, partners and words with the bank in mind: that is how self-censorship and blackmail take hold.

In the end, the question is simple: which law applies on our soil? The law made by national and European legislators, or an executive order signed in Washington, Moscow or Beijing, against which those who suffer its effects have no effective remedy?

Organisational policies and policy responses

On 16 October we will discuss this on two levels. The first concerns organisations: which governance choices, redundancies and contingency plans ensure operational continuity, without solutions so rigid that they push staff towards informal workarounds that create new risks. The second concerns policy: what responses could secure European financial and digital sovereignty, starting with an update of the Blocking Statute, the instrument through which the European Union shields those operating on its territory from the extraterritorial effects of third-country measures.

Format

The meeting is public and open to everyone. It takes the form of a working session: short framing remarks and plenty of room for the practical experience of those who run organisations and those who carry out their day-to-day work. Civil society organisations of every size, local and national, and experts in the field are invited to join the discussion. Contributions are welcome in Italian or English, with live subtitles in both languages.