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EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum



SEMINAR
CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:
UKRAINIAN PATH TO EUROPEAN STANDARDS

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**EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES, STANDARDS AND PRACTICE OF CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**

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**OPEN DEBATE IN EUROPEAN UNION ON THE ROLE OF CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN THE
DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

> EU : Means and aims

In these last years, at every level of the decision making process, the participation of citizens and their civil society organization, have been given a particular relevance and role.

At the EU level (Commission/parliament/CoR and EESC) , starting from the Minimum Standards

of Consultations (2002) indicated by the European Commission, many possibilities have developed

- Consultations and structured dialogue
- Hearings
- Working groups and strategic partnership
- Agora's / single citizens

The aim being to approach relevant stakeholders for expertise and grass root inputs, adding them to the "regular" established way to build opinions and make decisions (via the representatives democracy and its instruments – political parties and parliamentary democracy).

The recent Art 11 of the Lisbon Treaty also reconfirmed the need for institutions to engage in a dialogue with citizens and civil society. It meant ALL level of institutions (local/national and EU). The Art 11 proposes an new agenda setting instrument for civil society groups with the European Citizens Initiatives (1 million signature for starting a legislative process and proposing the EC).

The main problems at the EU level as for citizens' participation are concerned

- A non fully *operational* EU "democracy" with a half way mechanism working with States competences /Commission role/Council role and less relevance of the Parliament (which is not using all its potentiality)
- A consultation process often *ad hoc* or limited (also for budgetary means)
- Unclear process of inclusion of consultation
- Costs of consultations and bottom up approach

EU Decision making process included some of you as well, as for the Neighbourhood is concerned and the EaP.

A particular mention here goes to the Recommendations that are issued soon from the European Alliance for the

> NATIONAL DIMENSIONS

The challenges remains at the national level and solutions have been adopted as frameworks. Most of the methodological issues are mentioned above. It goes from a mere consultation to a more extended platform of partnership.

- General Platforms including civil society representatives:
 - Forum del Terzo Settore / in Italy
 - Compact in the UK (defining model for charities organisations, etc)
 - General framework of cooperation with civil society in Lithuania and Slovenia
 - General framework of consultation in Sweden

Art 118 Italian constitution says

" State, Regions, Provinces Metropolitan cities and municipalities favour the autonomous initiative of citizens, single ones or associates, to perform activities of general interest on the

basis of principle of subsidiarity”

- Legislation and practices

> LOCAL DIMENSION

Of particular interest in the possibility to develop citizens' participation at the local level, where often civil society are particularly involved for policymaking and implementation. Experiences varies with more or less continuity

- Citizens juries
- Citizens panels (elaboration of agenda setting by the citizens themselves)
- Neighbourhood councils with management of resources and responsibilities
- Participative approach to budgets in municipalities
- Shared vision and spatial plans for the communities

Documents are available for this both from the EU and from the **Council of Europe side** – tell more tomorrow

- European Charter on Local Self Government (CoE)
- Additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self Government on the right to participate in the affairs of local authority
- The strategy for innovation and good governance oot the local level

> *Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Political Decision making process of the Council of Europe*

!! An instrument promoted by the Conference of INGOs and endorsed by the Council of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly of the COE and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. !!!

!! Added value of being consulted with all the different regions.

It identifies the **Parameters** of Civil society (what is civil society)

It sets the principle for **Civil Participation**

- Open and accessible participation
- Trust
- Accountability and transparency
- Independence

Present cases about how to engage (depending on the possibilities and capacities)

- Information
- Consultation
- Dialogue

- Partnership

Crossing them with the decision making process

- Agenda setting
- Drafting
- Decision
- Implementation
- Monitoring/assessment

It has the advantage of bringing concrete examples and a place for everyone – showing the step forward. Currently the Code is discussed for being more *local authorities* accessible. It was used as criteria of evaluation for the Study on Citizens Participation in Local Self Government in the Eastern Partnership countries: a comparative Analysis of the CSF EaP Subgroup on Local Government and Public Administration Reform.

It served as a basis for national compact (UK/Lithuania/Sweden/Slovenia) and for some regional legislation (in Italy).

Global challenges:

- Civil society representatives *versus* citizens “one by one”
- Participative democracy *versus* representative democracy
- Time to confirm the added value of participation
- Feeling of cacophony
- Participative democracy should develop together with representative democracy in some countries