

Italy
Euromed Carrefour Sicilia – Europe Direct
www.carrefoursicilia.it

Italy
Casa d'Europa di Palermo
www.caseuropa.org

Romania
Fundatia Chance for Life
www.chanceforlife.ro

Italy
LeOnde ONLUSS
www.leonde.org

Poland
Ochtnicze Hufce Pracy - OHP
www.dolnoslaska.ohp.pl

Czech Republic
Koalice nevládek Pardubicka, o.s.
www.konep.cz

Belgium
Comité Européen des Associations
d'Interêt Général - CEDAG
www.cedag-eu.org

Northern Ireland
Omagh Community Support Forum
www.omagh.gov.uk

Romania
Civil Society Development Foundation - CSDF
www.fdsc.ro

Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Council for
Voluntary Action – NICVA
www.nicva.org

Czech Republic
Základní škola a Praktická škola SVÍTÁNÍ, o.p.s.
www.svitani.cz

Czech Republic
Liberecká občanská společnost - LOS
www.oleweb.net/los

Portugal
Planeta Sul
www.planetasul.org

Italy
ECO. Culture e viaggi
www.viaggisicilia.org

Austria
Europazentrum Graz
www.europahaus-graz.at

Greece
La Maison de l'Europe Byron



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The organised civil society: role and tasks in an enlarged European Union

Palermo: 29 Nov-1 December 2007

Bucharest: 9-11 April 2008



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Presentation of the project

The idea of involving our organisation with a project in the frame of "Europe of citizens" was born as a consequence of the experience of our participation in the Empowerment Forum in Bergamo in November 2006 that Euromed Carrefour Sicily attended as part of Europe Direct Network.

As part of the Europe Direct network we work a lot to promote everything that may be related to the idea of European integration and we thought it was a good idea grabbing this opportunity to start to create the ground for organisations of civil society to debate about Europe, the role of civil society in the European integration process and also to confront the reality of NGOs in different European countries.

We started to use our contacts with Comité Européen des Associations d'Interêt Général - CEDAG in Brussels and National Council for Voluntary Organisations - NCVO to build up a team of organisations that could bring a substantial contribution to our project and we managed to have partners from Poland, Czech Republic, Northern Ireland, England, Austria, Portugal and Romania.

The main idea was to have mainly partners from regions with strong social or political problems in Europe as Romania, Northern Ireland, Sicily and some areas in Poland and Czech republic could be, in order to have the opportunity to compare how civil society develops and works in areas that, although geographically very distant, nevertheless can be very close for social, economic and political problems to be tackled and where the OCS plays a basic role for developing a sense of active citizenship sometimes in absence of an efficient and mindful local public sector.

Being Romania a natural and historical partner for Italy (Latin relatives), a new member State of the Union and also taking in consideration certain prejudices existing in Italy against the Romanian citizens in the last few years, due to a recent massive immigration and often to a misleading information of medias, we thought that Romania had to play a relevant role in the project and therefore we asked the very well established platform Civil Society Development Foundation - CSDF in Bucharest, to work actively for the project to involve other Romanian organisations and organise a final meeting in Bucharest.

The network of Maisons d'Europe was also actively involved in the project.

The meetings that we held in Palermo and in Bucharest saw a large participation of local organisations and were extremely interesting both for the contents and the results achieved. It was quite clearly stated that European OCS has a fundamental role and wants to play a role in the





European integration process, being able sometimes to arrive where national, regional or European institutions cannot because of their more formal and official action. All the organisations agreed on the fact that besides their specific fields of interest a common action has to be taken in order to promote a more active citizenship in Europe and fill up the gap that sometimes can exist between institutions and citizens. The house of Europe of Palermo has written a final document, taking in account what said during the meetings, that has been signed by the other partner organisations and will be included in the brochure as a message for institutions at local and European level to communicate what was discussed in the project (attached at the end of this report). Significant problems as well were put in evidence as the lack of real establish permanent dialogue between the OCS and the local or national institutions in certain member States , therefore we decided to add to the final brochure a section where each partner presents the level of formalised dialogue between the OCS and the public sector. Another problem that was put in evidence and was also experienced during our project was the lack of interest of the media for the European integration process and the role played in it by the OCS. Both in Palermo and Bucharest, and specially in Bucharest, it was quite clear that for local medias these are not very relevant issues and the participation of the press was always very low.

We also had the good opportunity of involving in our project the European Commission inviting, both in Palermo and Bucharest, Elena Montani responsible for the dialogue with the civil society of the Representation of the European Commission in Italy and in Bucharest Doina Serban, of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania. The presence of the representatives of the Commission added a very important contribution to our work and gave us the opportunity to confront different point of views and share common concerns with the European institution.

The interest raised about the difficulties of acting as OCS in areas in Europe affected by war, poverty and criminality (N.Ireland, Romania, Sicily etc.) led to a very intense debate and also pushed many organisations to look for contacts to develop transnational project in more specific fields, ex: a DAPHNE among a Sicilian, an Irish and a Romanian women organisations about games to detect at school domestic violence and a Youth in Action Programme Ac 4.5 among a Czech a Romanian and a Sicilian organisation about social theatre and role games for youngsters to promote intercultural dialogue and fight against prejudices .

All the activities were organised and developed following a strict rule of direct involvement of all partners. Euromed Carrefour Sicilia, lead part-



ner of the project, has played this part only for what concerns the administrative aspects of the project, while a large role in the contents of the project has been played by the Civil Society Development Foundation - CSDF in Bucharest and the other platforms participating to the project.

A part of our meeting in Bucharest was hosted in the Czech cultural centre.

A project written in Sicily, organised in Bucharest and hosted by a Czech cultural centre was a very good opportunity to send the message that different cultures and the civil society must work together in Europe to create more aware, responsible and active citizens and accelerate the process of European integration.

Both meetings had also a very practical moment with a field visit. In Palermo all the partners were taken by one partner of the project, ECO for responsible tourism, to visit a cooperative that since several years has started organic farming and agro-tourism activities on fields and properties that were confiscated to the mafia.

In Bucharest the Romanian partner organisation Chance for Life, organised a show of youngsters with the technique of social theatre to explain how do they use this instrument to work with youngsters to tackle issues as social inclusion, xenophobia, discrimination, environment respect etc. as already mentioned this last experience inspired our organisation together with Chance for Life and the Czech Koalice nevládek Pardubicka to present a project under the Youth in Action Programme Ac 4.5 to exchange best practices about social theatre and role games for youngsters to promote intercultural dialogue and fight against prejudices .

To promote our activities, apart from the already mentioned brochure (draft documents attached to this report) we decided to create a specific website: www.civilsocietyforeu.eu . The website, that during the active phases of the project has been used mainly to inform and promote the actions of the project, is meant to be an instrument for future communication among partners, for partner search on specific projects and for further debate on the main topics of our project and the evolution of the European integration process.

The project has been co-financed by the Presidency of the Regional Government in Sicily and by the Sicilian Parliament.

Giovanni Luca D'Alia
Euromed Carrefour Sicilia





What is the Europe for Citizens Programme?

The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, have agreed to establish the Europe for Citizens Programme, which materialises the legal framework to support a wide range of activities and organisations promoting 'active European citizenship', i.e. the involvement of citizens and civil society organisations in the process of European integration.

The Europe for Citizens Programme builds on the experience of the previous Programme to promote active European citizenship, which ran from 2004 to 2006. This Programme was presented by the Commission after a large consultation with the different stakeholders and an 'ex ante' evaluation, which analysed the need for an intervention at Community level and the expected impact of the Programme on the sector. Thanks to these experiences and reflections, this Programme of 2nd generation demonstrates a certain level of maturity, combining continuity and innovation.

The Programme will run from 2007 to 2013.

The general objectives of the Europe for Citizens Programme are to contribute to:

- o giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union;
- o developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture;
- o fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens;
- o enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens
- o respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while
- o contributing to intercultural dialogue





A presentation of the organised civil society in Europe and the organisations taking part to the project.

Romania

Organisations in the project:

CSDF

Civil Society Development Foundation is a nongovernmental, independent, non-profit organization founded in 1994, with at the initiative of the European Commission. CSDF is actively involved at both national and European level in the public dialogue between civil society and authorities, and between national and international organizations. Through information, financing, research, training and advocacy, CSDF aims to develop the capacity of civil society organizations and communities to improve people's life. CSDF's research helped the public sector and the major international donors, active in Romania, to design their policies, based on relevant information regarding the impact of the NGO projects in society. Also, CSDF have been actively involved in adopting and amending those regulating acts regarding the way in which NGOs run their activity.

The project "The organized civil society: role and tasks in an enlarged European Union" offered us the great opportunity of sharing experience and exchange best practices with other European Nongovernmental Organizations. Both events organized within the project, organized in Palermo and Bucharest, brought together partners from many European countries with the aim of sharing information, communicate with each other, achieve a better and effective European cooperation and building in this way an European framework for dialogue.

Chance for life

The CHANCE FOR LIFE Foundation is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to develop Romanian communities by providing educational, emotional and social support to children and young people. CHANCE FOR LIFE aims to shape the civic spirit of children and their desire and ability to get involved in the lives of their communities.

What we do

Our projects provide the children with:

permanent educational support for preparing their homework as well as additional training and courses to encourage their intellectual achievements;



daily nutritive care;
individual emotional assistance to support the needs of each child;
alternative activities aiming at the individual development and progress of our beneficiary children and youths;
a recreational weekend program;
birthday parties for each child;
summer and winter camps;
international youth exchange programs;
individual assistance for the institutionalized teenagers focusing on developing independent life abilities and increasing self responsibility.
Our projects provide the parents with:
counseling and assistance in increasing their ability to improve their relationship with the children;
the ability to actively support the children's improvements.

Where we work

The CHANCE FOR LIFE Foundation started in 2000 in Bucharest. We have now expanded our activity nationally in Vidra, Ilfov county, in Sulina, Tulcea county, and in Pitesti, Prahova county.

Last year we coordinated a national project - "Forum Theatre, Spect-actors for Non-discrimination" - which was carried out in the following cities: Bucharest, Ploiesti, Brasov, Sighisoara, Timisoara, Cluj, Slatina, Craiova, Buzau, Iasi, Bacau, Constanta.

Feed back for the project "The organized civil society: role and tasks in an enlarged European Union"

This project has represented a major opportunity for Chance for Life. Thanks to this project, the people working in our organization were offered the chance to get to know good practice in involving the entire society in the European development in many European countries. Moreover, it has offered us the opportunity to find out more things about the projects currently developed by the European Union and how we can access these projects in the future.

During the two sessions of the project - the first one in Palermo, Italy, and the second one in Bucharest, Romania - we've had the chance to present our activity, our projects, as well as the results we've managed to obtain by now. The participants were offered important information regarding the working methods used by us with our beneficiaries, as well as the results we have obtained as a result of our activity.

This project has offered us the opportunity to establish and develop relations





with organizations and institutions of other European countries in the view of new international projects.

Through our projects, we sustain the individual values and personal needs of each child, and support their personal development.

The positive outcomes of our effort extend much beyond the individual development of each child. It is our strong belief that, in order to achieve true solid results for the areas we wish to improve, the entire community must be actively implicated. We fully support the involvement of the entire community in our work, because the success of our projects depends on the people who decide to join our cause.

Civil Society formal dialog with public institutions in Romania

The structured dialog between the third sector and Government, Parliament and other public institutions in Romania has a brief history in Romania as it has entered the public agenda starting since 2000.

Two main channels of formal dialog between the parties have been identified and discussed among NGO leaders in the 2000s: legal provision and social contracts.

Legal provision includes special laws or legal references about the obligation of public authorities to consult civil society organizations in the decision making process. Another possible mechanism deals with the contractual agreements signed by these parties (Compacts, Charta, Forum, etc). Recently a new mechanism of dialogue was identified: formal institutions aiming to discuss subjects and issues of common interest.

The mechanism of formal dialogue with civil society organizations has its origins in the provision of new law regarding the associations and foundation issued by the Romanian Government in 2000 (G.O no26) that has a special chapter dedicated to the dialogue and communication with CSOs. In this respect each public authority must delegate one person or setup one office to offer public information and initiate common projects or activities. In fact, only few institutions have created special offices or have designated distinct civil servants for these responsibilities. In most of the cases these attributions were included in the job description of public relation offices.

In the period 2001 -2003 two new laws were adopted regulating the free access to public information (Law 544/2001) and transparency in public administration (Law 51/2003). If the first document guarantee the access of citizens or CSOs to various public information (e.g. budget, strategies, the mechanism of spending public money), according to the second document each public



decision issued by Government or Local Institutions must be taken after a process of public consultation. This new law opens the gates for CSOs to accede at the table of decision making. Some organizations focused their activities on the implementation of this mechanism and requested a substantial number of public debates. In the last years the focus was more on setting up consultative bodies by different decision makers. It is the case with the creation of the College of Associations and Foundations by the Prime Minister Office. The College gathers 40 CSOs representatives. The initiative came directly from the Prime Minister in his first year of mandate (2005) and the College was created without consultations with Romanian civil society organizations. After a difficult startup process the College met for the first time in 2007. It held only 3 meetings in all this period. A similar consultative body is the Economic and Social Council. After Romania's accession to the EU, the Economic and Social Council has reformed to include third sector representatives alongside trade unions and employers' associations. The recent law on the functioning of the ECS reserves 15 seats for CSOs representatives in this structure. However, after more than 1 year, NGO representatives have not been designated yet for these seats. Although the CSOs have designated after an online election process 15 organizations, the disagreements between trade unions and employers unions prevented the initiative of Government to nominate these organizations as ECS members. Nonetheless, 5 NGOs represent Romania in the European Economic and Social Committee.

After 4 years of implementation of the Law 52/2003 some CSOs have started to promote the initiative to organize public debate also within the Parliament legislative process. In this way a recent Regulation of the Chamber of Deputies (2007) give the possibility for CSOs to present their arguments to the Parliamentary Commissions and to be involved in the process of adopting draft laws. Moreover, MPs and Parliamentary Commissions can organize public consultations with different stakeholders in order to receive more opinions. This mechanism can have a disadvantage given the less involvement of MPs in the local consultations with their constituencies compared to the more technical arguments coming from stakeholders in the process of public debates.





Northern Ireland

Organisations in the project:

NICVA

is an umbrella organisation, seeking to represent the interests of voluntary and community organisations throughout Northern Ireland. In its role as a voluntary sector development agency, NICVA acts as a catalyst to promote innovation and new approaches to the challenge of social need.

We work for justice, equality and dignity throughout society by promoting opportunities for community participation in the essential decisions that affect the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

Mission

To achieve progressive social change by tackling disadvantage through voluntary action and community development.

Vision

Of a healthy, vibrant, progressive voluntary and community sector which contributes to social cohesion, equality and justice.

What we do

- o Governance and Charity advice - set up/operation of a group
- o Funding Advice - advice on project planning, funding and grant-makers
- o Policy - training, facilitation, lobbying and representation, raising profile of sector
- o Europe - NICVA houses Europe Direct and a European library
- o Research - knowledge about the sector for researchers, policy makers, etc
- o Partnerships - representing the sector on committees, fora and working groups

Formal methods of dialogue with Government

The Joint Forum

NICVA provides part of the joint secretariat for the Joint Government and Voluntary Sector Forum.

The Joint Government Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, known as the Joint Forum, was established in October 1998 to give the voluntary and community sector the opportunity to meet regularly with government departments.

The Forum is responsible for continuously reviewing and improving the communication channels between government and the sector. It aims to facilitate open

discussion on key issues which impact the relationship between the sector and Northern Ireland departments and their agencies. It does not take on specific issues between a voluntary organisation and a government department - these are best dealt with at the departmental level.

The Forum consists of government representatives and a cross section of representatives from the voluntary and community sector, known as the Joint Forum Panel. The Panel is made up of 15 representatives from the voluntary and community sector. They in turn each nominate an alternate, who will attend meetings on their behalf if they are unavailable.

Compact

The Compact between Government and the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland sets out the key values and principles that underpin and define the partnership between Government, its Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies and the voluntary and community sector. The Compact is based upon the mutual recognition of the roles and responsibilities of each partner and its aims are to encourage closer working relationships.

It is not a legally binding document as it has no statutory basis and is not a contract. The Compact doesn't represent a commitment on behalf of the NI Assembly or Executive, but it is hoped that when they consider their relationship with the voluntary and community sector, they will endorse the Compact or draw on the work done to develop their own partnership agreement.

Czech Republic

Organisations in the project:

Koalice nevládek Pardubicka, o. s. (KONEP)
(Pardubice Region NGO Coalition)

KONEP is an open association of NGOs working in Pardubice region. It was established in 1998 and it is supported by Pardubice region and EU.

A mission of KONEP is to associate all kind of nonpolitical-character NGOs in Pardubice region. And the main long-term goal is to support mutual cooperation, interchange of experiences and to help with NGO's development. All members of the coalition prefer cooperation and partnership to competitive relationship.

The general goals of KONEP are:





1. strengthening of a social function of a public sector,
2. support of mutual cooperation, interchange of experiences and development of NGOs and region,
3. affecting of regional and communal development documents, priorities and a way of solving problems

Activities:

- o Information service for NGOs
- o Counselling centre (EU bids, accounting, law)
- o Communication (conferences, workshops, negotiation)
- o Education (Trainings, seminars for NGOs, public, public administration)
- o Public relations of nongovernmental sector (presentations, promotion, campaigns)

LOS-Liberecká občanská společnost

Who we are:

LOS - Liberecká občanská společnost is a non-governmental organisation focusing on non-formal education of youth on the regional as well as international level. Our aim is to support of European mobility of youth and strengthen awareness of European integration and European citizenship among youth. As well we focus on supporting cooperation within/with Euroregion Nisa. Secondly we as well focus on the support of usage of interactive and non-formal methods of education on primary and secondary schools.

Our activities:

- carrying out projects focused on non-formal intercultural education and on the theme of European integration and citizenship
- organising youth meetings of ngo leaders
- organising and running summer schools and courses for students and teachers of civics and social subjects
- being a sending organisation within the youth program of the European commission

Feed back for the project

KONEP was participant of conference held in Bucharest. We find very useful to meet organizations from other EU countries. We changed experiences, learned new approaches in formal and informal dialogue with institutions. Most useful were presentations of formal dialogue on the national level from representatives



of England and Northern Ireland. Very interesting was a presentation of the "Europe for citizens" Programme and presentations of relations between NGOs by Romanian colleagues.

Important benefits of the project for KONEP are connections with potential partners for future projects. We would like to cooperate with partners in education of NGOs and bringing best practices into the Czech Republic.

Mechanism of formal dialogue OSC/institutions in the Czech Republic

Formal dialogue provide on the national level The Government Council for NGOs ("The Council"). There is no dialogue formally regulated on the regional and local level in the Czech Republic. The Council was established by the government decree in the year 1992 as a Foundations Board, in the year 1998 it was transformed to the Government Council for NGOs. The Council collects, negotiates and via its chairman/chairwoman introduces materials concerning the NGOs and the development of suitable NGO environment for their existence and activity to the government.

The Council fulfils especially the following tasks:

- * initiates and reviews conception and realization materials for the government decisions relating to the NGOs support and legislative and political measures that concern conditions of their activities,
- * monitors, initiates and gives its opinion on the legal enactments governing the position and activity of NGOs; via its chairman/chairwoman member of government - the Council comments on the suggested legal regulations that concern the NGOs,
- * initiates and coordinates the cooperation among individual ministries, other administrative authorities and local government bodies in the field of NGOs support including the endowment policy from the public budgets,
- * it monitors, analyses and publishes information about the NGOs position within the European Union, about the engagement of the Czech Republic within the EU regarding the NGO sector and about the financial resources connected to that; it cooperates with the ministries and other administrative authorities responsible for administration of the EU financial resources in the Czech Republic, in the case that NGOs may apply to these resources,
- * in cooperation with ministries, other administrative bodies, NGOs and





other bodies and institutions it ensures the availability and publicity of information about NGOs and about state policy regulations regarding the NGOs; it makes accessible and analyses especially information about public budgets endowments for the NGOs; and it participates in creating and operating the information system about NGOs,

The Board has 37 members, including the chairman/woman, two vice-chairman/vice-chairwomen and other members.

The chairman/woman is instituted and deprived by the government; as s/he is a member of government. Vice-chairman/woman and other members of the Board are established and deprived by the government according to the chairman's proposal.

Other members are

- a) representatives of NGOs, who always constitute at least half of all members of the Board; NGO representatives are nominated either as experts in a particular field or as representatives of associations and other groups within the NGO sector,
- b) representatives of the ministries and other administrative bodies that influence the position and activities of NGOs,
- c) representatives of the local governments.

The administration of the Board members is four years. The Board members for NGOs the number of administrations is limited to two contiguous administrations.

The Board has following committees:

Committee for the regions:

- a) initiates and monitors the cooperation among the ministries, other administrative bodies, local authorities and NGOs including the endowment policy from the public budgets,

Committee for the European Union:

- a) monitors information about the position of NGOs within the EU, development of the current topics and discussions connected to the European integration, which the European NGOs engage in, and which are financially related,
- b) cooperates with the ministries and other administrative bodies responsible for the implementation of the EU financial resources in the Czech Republic and prepares the suggestions for measures for incorporation of the NGOs in using those financial resources,



Committee for legislation and financing:

- a) monitors legal restrictions influencing the position and activity of NGOs, initiates them and cooperates on their formation,
- b) cooperates with the ministries, other administrative bodies, local authorities and NGOs and other institutions,
- c) monitors the processes of NGOs' financing and works for their better efficiency

England

Organisations in the project:

NCVO EU & International Office

NCVO - the National Council for Voluntary Organisations is the umbrella group for the community and voluntary organisations of England; it brings together over 5 500 organisations from large national charities to small community organisations in all parts of the country. It works to support the capacity of organisations, develop advocacy capability and provide a strong voice for civil society to ensure that all groups are being heard; and that the role of civil society is guaranteed across the political spectrum

The project allowed participants from a broad range of countries to engage with the major issues of involvement between civil society and the EU institutions. There was considerable opportunity to understand the underlying cultural links across countries and the greater challenges for participation in an enlarged EU. The meetings and workshops allowed all the participants to share key ideas on how to consolidate a greater level of dialogue and how to allow civil society to set out its own priorities for the EU. There is a sense that the space for dialogue is built on the existing networks of national civil society groups, supported by EU level platforms.

The discussion also covered changes on the part of the EU's institutions, such as the European Commission's Plan D and the European Parliament's Agora; there was a sense that in order for the changes to take root they require a sense of ownership on the part of civil society and also a concerted effort to offer feedback and next steps on the part of the institutions. This is a process that requires real reciprocal relationships with a clear awareness of shared spaces.

Furthermore, the exchange showed the importance of different elements of the cultural life of each country. In Sicily the importance of traditional cuisine demon-





strated the strength of the culinary expertise in the cultural life of the country, there is a recognition that social capital is not only built through official meetings but also through informal mechanisms of cultural exchange at the dining table! In Romania the recognition of the life of the city and the great changes that are occurring due to membership of the EU show that a culture is not static and that external influences are constantly re-shaping our sense of identity.

The opportunity to visit parts of the country beyond the urban centres also highlighted the breadth of experiences in each country and the tremendous contrasts in wealth that reinforce the need for an engaged civil society to offset the social inequality gaps.

Mechanism of formal dialogue OSC/institutions in Italy

Compact

The Compact in the UK was agreed in 1998, it sets out the relationship between government and the voluntary sector; defining role and responsibility of each side. It was built on broad consultation across the sector - there was widespread ownership of the project by civil society. It was agreed across Government, not just one department; and across all the parties, so the policy is embedded. There is a clear mechanism for measuring effectiveness and the right for organisations to campaign even if in receipt of government funding is re-affirmed.

The Compact structure is made up as follows:

Compact Voice

The body that represents the voluntary sector to government on the Compact; including Local Compact Voice and new National Compact Voice Network

Compact Advocacy

NCVO run this service to campaign for civil society groups that suffer from a Compact breach, generally most cases relate to the funding or consultation

Codes of Good Practice

Compact Commissioner

Neutral organisation that oversees the Compact as an independent body to ensure that the Compact is being upheld

Key recommendations allow for improved exchange of information, best practice, and effective engagement of civil society, it is made up of five Codes of Conduct, these are:

Funding and Procurement; Consultation and Policy Appraisal; Volunteering; Community Groups; and Black and Ethnic Minority Groups



EU Charter agreement

There was considerable discussion over an EU Civil Society Charter to extend the same principles of a balanced relationship to the level of EU institutions, to cut across the European Commission's areas of work and ensure a more effective dialogue. The major areas include:

- o A framework for dialogue between civil society and the EU institutions: a "Civil Society Charter/Compact"
- o Participation as a right enshrined in an agreement between civil society and the European Commission
- o A move beyond consultation on an agenda set by the European institutions towards shared decision making with citizens and communities to set priorities, implement and evaluate projects; including the 'hard-to-reach' communities
- o A reciprocal agreement that sets out the responsibilities of civil society BUT also clear undertakings on the part of the European institutions

- o Developing shared values to be put into practice across the EU
- o This would lead to balanced relations; greater trust; and sustainable links for the empowerment of civil society

Italy

Organisations in the project:

Euromed Carrefour Sicilia

Euromed Carrefour Sicilia is an organisation working to inform and raise awareness among citizens about the policies of the European Union and the sense of democratic and participatory citizenship.

General activities consist in organising meetings, events, press conferences, transnational twinning, information campaigns directed to schools, local administrations, youngsters and general public.

Euromed Carrefour Sicilia has had about 8 years experience working in the same fields as part of the European Rural Carrefours network. It is strongly rooted in the territory, both in urban and rural areas

Since 2005 Euromed is part of EUROPE DIRECT information relays that act as





an interface between citizens and the Union at local level.

The mission of the network is to:

- enable local citizens to obtain information, advice, assistance and answers to questions about the European Union's institutions, legislation, policies, programmes and funding opportunities;
- actively promote local and regional debate about the European Union and its policies;
- allow the European institutions to improve the dissemination of information tailored to local and regional needs;
- give the public the opportunity to send feedback to the European Union institutions in the form of questions, opinions and suggestions.

Casa d'Europa Palermo

The House d' Europe of Palermo, Association founded in 1987, aims to spread among the citizens European and federalists ideals. Next to the idea of a European Union, the House d' Europe has the scope of spreading of the peace ideals, of collaboration and of cooperation among populations. These purposes are promoted by the Association through the following initiatives: encounter, debates, conventions, seminars and services, faces to favour the increase and the development of the European conscience and the international cooperation; course of formation for the attainment of communitarian thematic professional profiles inherent to. The House of Europe on behalf promotes also organized course of formation of private Public agencies and. Centers of European documentation, libraries, audiovisual supports to supports audiovisual aids and information in the site of the association.

Le Onde Onlus

The association Le Onde Onlus of Palermo is an ONG of women engaged in activities of reception, accompaniment and hospitality with the women and children victims of violence, of legal and psychological consultations, preventive actions in primary education, secondary and tertiary sector, and local animation. This ONG coordinates the anti-violence network of the town of Palermo and it receives in Sicily inter-istitutional building networks relating to violence. It intervenes in the field of research social and psyc-social, formation of the operators, the promotion of the local and national policies. It has its regional representative with the table of evaluation of the impact of POR Sicily and task force and violence. It manages the national project Arianna - free antiviolence number for women 1522

ECO.

Culture e viaggi is a little Sicilian Cooperative that works in the field of sustainable and responsible tourism, in connection with Viaggi Solidali a Social



Cooperative located in the North of Italy.

The trips we promote are addressed to young and adult groups that want to experience full immersion trips in order to get to know different cultures. Our idea is to show to visitors not only the classical tourist routes but also the daily life of local communities in the countryside.

The aim is to promote the exchange between people of different cultures in an intercultural perspective, in order to reduce the strength of stereotypes and prejudices.

With this purpose, the tours we organise are accompanied by a Responsible Tourism Operator that is not a guide, but a sort of intercultural mediator between local's and visitor's cultures; he knows very well the local peculiarities and work to put in contact peoples of different backgrounds.

In our routes, we involve many local associations and informal groups of young people and adults to promote understanding, interaction and open-mindedness. Furthermore, meeting people that work against mafia, direct witnesses and experts of this phenomenon allows to truly understand the concept of 'legality', meaning with this a deep respect of the constitutional values.

Mechanism of formal dialogue OSC/institutions in Italy

In Italy, associations, social cooperatives, foundations, social assistance institutions, health and educational institutions, universities, cultural institutions, political parties, trade unions, church institutions, hospitals and NGOs are considered non-profit institutions.

So we count 16.630 non-profit institutions only in Sicily, one of the 20 regions of Italy (source: ISTAT 2001).

But focusing the laws referred to organized civil society institutions, we can speak about volunteering associations (L. 266/91), social promotion associations (L.383/00), no governmental organizations (L. 49/87), other organized committees, associations, non-formalized-groups which promote social participation of citizens (generically ruled by the civil code).

"They exist feeble consultation mechanisms involving civil society organizations:

- at a national level, third sector forum (composed by the most important third sector's organisms, including unions) expresses one delegate into the CNEL (National Economic and Work I Committee), that on its turn is an obligatory consultation organism, established by the Constitution
- at a regional and local level, every administration has got its autonomy in its actions but often are foreseen consultation mechanisms, often on a thematic basis (environment, equal opportunities, migrants, etc.) but generally expressed





opinions are not binding and dialogue with institutions is often demanded to the good will of each administrator.

It should be necessary to introduce regulated, and therefore certain, mechanisms of consultation and conduction, that can work at a local, regional and national level.

In order to support the ONG in the 2006 financial law (Law 23 December 2005 n. 266, article 1, codicil 337) it has been established the possibility to assign, based on the choice of the contributor, an equal quota 5°/°° of the personal incomes to the organizations enrolled to the a list of national taxes agency. The norm of 5 x 1000 gives the possibility to the contributors to assign a quota to not profit organisations that included the following categories:

- a) support of the voluntary service, the ONs, the recognized associations of social promotion and other foundations and associations;
- b) financing of the scientific search and the university
- c) financing of the sanitary search.

The European Union And Civil Society: Work In Progress

Every day we are obliged to face - because unfortunately experienced directly by ourselves - the limits of representative democracy, which involves us in the management of the res publica only once every four or five years. The distance between citizens and institutions is growing every day, confidence in those who govern us drops, daily needs seem not to receive appropriate responses by the leaders in power.

Citizens of modern democracies, especially organized citizens, recognize the symptoms of this degeneration and its dangerous drifts, and strongly ask for their greater involvement - regular and structured - in the daily management of policies and reforms, which necessarily affect them. Representative democracy, in a nutshell, is more and more in need of participatory democracy in order to complete itself and to become capable of making choices that genuinely meet the needs of citizens who should be represented by it.

The European Union has a big advantage compared to nation states, now consolidated and structured and therefore more hostile to change. Its public space is in fact still in the making. The EU has not yet completed the path advocated by the founding fathers of the European integration, who outlined supranational democracy at continental level as its necessary point of arrival. A Europe that truly represents an added value for its citizens, a Europe that is inclusive and open, defender of the values of peace, freedom and equality inside and outside its territory, will not be dropped from the high spheres of some European



bureaucracies and administrations. As citizens increasingly need Europe, Europe strongly needs its citizens, for deciding together what kind of entity we want to build.

European participatory democracy, although still far from complete, is increasingly proving to be a feasible as well as a desirable reality. The European institutions have opened several channels of dialogue with civil society, such as the consultations of the European Parliament called with the emblematic name of agora - recalling in this way the exercise of direct management of public affairs in the Greek poleis - and the system of consultation of the European Commission put in place for almost all different policies. Also the new text signed by the 27 Heads of State and Government in December and still pending ratification - the Treaty of Lisbon - devotes an entire paragraph to participatory democracy, stating explicitly that "the institutions maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with associations and civil society", and adopts new tools for participation and involvement of citizens, such as the citizens' initiative for the one million signatures.

The Representation in Italy of the European Commission has launched since 2006 an innovative path, which aims at building a structured dialogue with civil society at the national, regional and local levels, involving organisations and associations in the policies and reforms of Europe through a EU-civil society contact group (for info, <http://ec.europa.eu/italia>).

Europe is a common good, and those involved full-time or in their spare time to fight for the defense of civil, social and political rights in their own district or in the world have the right and duty to raise their voice. With a famous phrase of Altiero Spinelli, "Europe does not falls from the sky"; today more than ever we can build the model we want.

Elena Montani - Responsabile Rapporti con la Società Civile - Rappresentanze in Italia della Commissione Europea



Final Document

The Foundations and Organizations participating in the project promoted within the Community's Programme "Europe for citizens", aimed at the formation of responsible European Citizenship

state

the positive experience realised by implementing the programme in two States of the Union; Italy and Romania. This fact has allowed a discussion in various contexts on the same topic of active and organized citizenship, between European citizens coming from Italy, Romania, England, Northern Ireland, Czech Republic and Poland, countries that have become members of the European Union at different moments.

take note

with satisfaction that the European Union is aiming to effectively develop the principle of participatory democracy, together with representative democracy, assuring legally respected spaces for Civil Society expression and continued expansion of the arena for participation.

assert

that what so far said is conditioned by the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, noting that if ratification happens within this year, the elections of the European Parliament of June 2009 can be carried out in a defined institutional context; and does not exclude further steps ahead in the process of democratisation of the European Union.

think

that the objective of responsible and active European citizenship so far involves an unsatisfactory percentage of people and therefore the European Union, the Member States and the regional and local Institutions should implement suitable programmes aimed to consolidate the relationships between citizens and institutions, to allow citizens to perceive the opportunity of decentralisation at several levels of political power, in order to concur with the Union and the Member States, to answer positively to the challenges of globalisation.

wish

ever greater connections between the Foundations and Organizations of European Civil Society with the aim of creating one extensive and efficient network, suitable to confirm the substantial affirmation of participatory democracy.



This document has been signed by the following organisations:

Civil Society Development Foundation - CSDF -Romania

Fundatia Chance for Life -Romania

Liberecká občanská společnost - LOS - Czech Republic

Koalice nevládek Pardubicka - Czech Republic

National Council for Voluntary Organisations- NCVO - England, UK

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action - NICVA - Northern Ireland, UK

Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy - OHP - Poland

Europazentrum Graz - Austria

Casa d'Europa di Palermo - Italy

Casa d'Europa di Siracusa - Italy

Casa d'Europa di Enna -Italy

Casa d'Europa Catania - Italy

LeOnde ONLUSS - Italy

Euromed Carrefour Sicilia - Europe Direct - Italy

ECO. Culture e viaggi- Italy

Základní škola a Praktická škola SVÍTÁNÍ - Czech Republic





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