

Tuesday 13 January 2009

Developing civil dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon

P6_TA(2009)0007

European Parliament resolution of 13 January 2009 on the perspectives for developing civil dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon (2008/2067(INI))

(2010/C 46 E/03)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon on 13 December 2007,
 - having regard to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community,
 - having regard to its resolution of 20 February 2008 on the Treaty of Lisbon ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the various resolutions dealing with civil society that it has adopted during the current parliamentary term,
 - having regard to the workshop held by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs with representatives of civil society organisations on 3 June 2008,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A6-0475/2008),
- A. whereas a democratic European Union that is close to citizens requires close cooperation between the EU institutions and Member States and civil society at European, national, regional and local level,
- B. whereas an openness on the part of EU institutions and national, regional and local authorities to dialogue and cooperation with citizens and civil society organisations is a basic prerequisite for the latter's involvement in lawmaking and governance at all levels,
- C. whereas the Treaty of Lisbon enhances the rights of EU citizens vis-à-vis the Union by making it easier for citizens and representative civil society associations to take part in discussion on a 'citizens' Europe',
- D. whereas the current provisions, which have also been included in the Treaty of Lisbon, establish a vital legal framework for the development of civil dialogue at European level; whereas, however, those provisions are not always satisfactorily implemented,
- E. whereas civil society is at different stages of development in the 27 Member States, taking advantage to differing degrees of opportunities for involvement in participatory democracy, the lawmaking process and dialogue with national, regional and local authorities,

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0055.

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- F. whereas the term 'civil society' refers to the numerous non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations established by citizens, of their own will, that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests, ideas and ideologies of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations,
- G. whereas the representativeness of civil society organisations is very much a moot point, and whereas the vigour and effectiveness with which some organisations promote their ideas does not always reflect their representativeness,
- H. whereas the various EU institutions have different approaches to civil dialogue,
1. Welcomes the contribution made by the European Union to the development of civil dialogue, both at European level and at national, regional and local level in the Member States;
 2. Stresses that civil society in Europe plays an important role in the European integration process, since it communicates the positions and demands expressed by EU citizens to the European institutions; highlights the importance of the expertise that civil society makes available to the institutions, and stresses the importance of providing information on and raising awareness about civil dialogue, in particular in connection with promoting the activities and objectives of the EU, building European cooperation networks and strengthening the European identity and identification with Europe within civil society;
 3. Stresses that broader public debate, more effective civil dialogue and greater political awareness are necessary if the EU is to achieve its political goals and objectives;
 4. Emphasises its special attachment to civil dialogue and draws attention to the importance accorded to such dialogue by the Treaty of Lisbon, which has made it an overriding principle across all spheres of EU activity;
 5. Welcomes the enhancement of representative democracy and participatory democracy resulting from the provision made in the Treaty of Lisbon for 'citizens' initiatives' enabling one million citizens from a number of Member States to invite the Commission to submit a legislative proposal;
 6. Calls on the EU institutions and the national, regional and local authorities in the Member States to make the fullest possible use of existing legal provisions and best practices in order to step up dialogue with citizens and civil society organisations; considers, in particular, that the European Parliament Information Offices in each Member State should play an active role in the promotion, organisation and management of forums that take place at least annually between Parliament and representatives of civil society in that Member State, and stresses the importance of the regular participation of its Members, both from the Member State concerned and from other Member States, in those forums;
 7. Calls on the EU institutions to involve all interested civil society representatives in the civil dialogue; considers it essential, in this connection, for the voice of young Europeans, who will shape and take responsibility for the European Union of tomorrow, to be heard;

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8. Calls on the EU institutions to ensure that all EU citizens – female, male, young and old, urban and rural – are able to take an active part, with equal rights, in civil dialogue, without being subjected to discrimination, and, in particular, that members of linguistic minorities are able to use their native languages in such forums; takes the view that the EU's role in this area should be to foster the realisation of the principle of gender equality and to set an example in promoting that principle both within the Member States and outside the EU;

9. Calls on the EU institutions to adopt in an interinstitutional agreement binding guidelines concerning the appointment of civil society representatives, methods for organising consultations and their funding, in accordance with the general principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties⁽¹⁾; points out that, to this end, all EU institutions should maintain up-to-date registers of all relevant non-governmental organisations, whether they are active in the Member States and/or focused on the EU institutions;

10. Calls on the EU institutions to make civil dialogue a horizontal task for all directorates-general in the Commission, all working parties in the Council and all committees in the European Parliament, using transparent procedures and maintaining a genuine balance between the public and private sectors;

11. Calls on the EU institutions to cooperate more closely in developing civil dialogue and promoting an actively European mindset among EU citizens, with a view to ensuring better communication, information flow and coordination in connection with their public consultation activities; notes that, in this connection, regular meetings between civil society and Commissioners in forums in the Member States would be highly desirable as a way of reducing the perceived gap between the EU and the citizens of Europe;

12. Calls on the Council to afford easier and simpler access to its proceedings, which is a fundamental precondition for genuine dialogue with civil society;

13. Stresses the importance of developing a European communication policy as regards providing new ways and means of communicating with EU citizens (using the internet, e-technologies and modern audiovisual technologies);

14. Calls for the continued implementation of tried and tested EU measures to step up civil society involvement in the European integration process, such as Europe by Satellite, the Citizens' Agora, citizens' issues forums (e.g. Your Europe), internet debates, etc.;

15. Stresses the importance of the role played by professional European opinion polls in identifying and understanding the needs and expectations of EU citizens with regard to the way in which the Union operates; urges both EU institutions and civil society in the Member States to bear these expectations in mind in their interactions and debates;

16. Calls on the national, regional and local authorities in the Member States to foster civil dialogue, particularly in those countries and regions and in those sectors where it is not yet fully developed or sufficiently well implemented; further urges those bodies to promote actively the development of regional interactivity of civil society among Member States, and cross-border initiatives; considers that the building-up of Member State clusters should also be explored as a means of promoting exchanges of ideas and experiences within the EU;

⁽¹⁾ See the Commission's communication of 11 December 2002 entitled 'Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission' (COM(2002)0704).

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17. Calls on representatives of European society to take an active part in civil dialogue and in the formulation of European programmes and policies, thereby making it possible to influence decision-making processes;
18. Encourages EU citizens to become more involved in European debates and discussions and to vote in the forthcoming European Parliament elections;
19. Points out that, for dialogue with citizens at all levels – European, national, regional and local –, appropriate financial resources are required, and calls on the stakeholders in that dialogue and the entities responsible for it to ensure that it is adequately funded;
20. Stresses that, besides dialogue with civil society, there also needs to be an open, transparent and regular dialogue between the Union and churches and religious communities, as provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon;
21. Recommends to the EU institutions that they jointly make available information on the representativeness and fields of activity of civil society organisations in Europe, for example in a public, user-friendly database;
22. Calls on the Commission to submit a fresh proposal for European associations so that European civil society organisations can fall back on a shared legal basis;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the parliaments of the Member States, the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

Transposition, implementation and enforcement of Directives 2005/29/EC and 2006/114/EC

P6_TA(2009)0008

European Parliament resolution of 13 January 2009 on the transposition, implementation and enforcement of Directive 2005/29/EC concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and Directive 2006/114/EC concerning misleading and comparative advertising (2008/2114(INI))

(2010/C 46 E/04)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular the provisions thereof establishing the internal market and guaranteeing undertakings the freedom to provide services in other Member States,
- having regard to Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market ⁽¹⁾ ('the UCP Directive'),
- having regard to Directive 2006/114/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 concerning misleading and comparative advertising ⁽²⁾ ('the MCA Directive'),

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 149, 11.6.2005, p. 22.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 376, 27.12.2006, p. 21.