Perspectives for developing the civil dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon

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The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Genowefa **GRABOWSKA** (PES, PL) on the perspectives for developing civil dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon.

MEPs emphasise their special attachment to civil dialogue and they draw 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. They stress 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. The report also 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.

The committee invites 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. It considers that the EP 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.

The **EU institutions** are invited to:

- involve all interested civil society representatives in the civil dialogue;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- make civil dialogue a horizontal task for all directorates-general in the Commission, all Council working parties in the Council of Ministers and all committees in the European Parliament, using transparent procedures and maintaining a genuine balance between the public and private sectors;
- 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;
- make available information on the representativeness and fields of activity of civil society organisations in Europe, for example in a public, user-friendly database.

The report 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. Furthermore, it urges those bodies to promote actively the development of regional interactivity of civil society among Member States, and cross-border initiatives.

MEPs call 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. They encourage EU citizens to become more involved in European debates and discussions and to vote in the forthcoming European Parliament elections.

Lastly, the Commission is asked to submit a fresh proposal for European associations so that European civil society organisations can fall back on a shared legal basis.