Perspectives for developing the civil dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon

2008/2067(INI) - 13/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 519 votes to 75 with 11 abstentions, a resolution on the perspectives for developing civil dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Genowefa **GRABOWSKA** (PES, PL) on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

In its resolution, the Parliament recalls that 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. Therefore, 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.

Parliament emphasises its special attachment to civil dialogue and its 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. It 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.

The resolution 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 resolution invites 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.

Parliament 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. It urges both EU institutions and civil society in the Member States to bear these expectations in mind in their interactions and debates. It also 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.

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.