



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2011

The state of play of European political and institutional context: what challenges for civil society organizations, what role for the European Civic Forum?

« One year after the entering into force of the Lisbon treaty, we have to draw a state of play of its implementation. While strengthening the outreach of representative democracy, the new treaty also foresees very important advancements regarding citizens' participation in democratic life, setting out the possibility for one million citizens to take the initiative of inviting the European Commission to submit a new legislative proposal as well as the obligation for all the European institutions to lead "an open transparent and regular dialogue with civil society and representative associations ».

However, there is still a wide gap between the European Union and its citizens, as revealed by the turnout in the latest European elections, by recent surveys which show the citizens of Europe's lack of awareness of European citizenship and identity. The EU's incapacity to offer a political and institutional response to the different crisis it is facing - financial, economic, social and political - and the predominance of the intergovernmental method in the process of construction of the European Union can partly account for this civic disaffection.

2010, the European Year to combat poverty and social exclusion, has been particularly symptomatic of the institutions' inability to draw up real policy proposals in this area.

In this context, and with regards to the "EU 2020 Strategy" adopted in June 2010, the ECF's objectives are more relevant than ever: it has become urgent to foster a civic and popular ownership of Europe and to promote the collective engagement for a common project and the emergence of a public European space where the role and influence of organised civil society are fully recognised by the institutions.

The European Civic Forum has undertaken to promote the idea of a European Union based on integration, as Europe's construction cannot be reduced to a mere juxtaposition of national positions. This perception of Europe could be translated into "an ever closer union of our civil societies", an increased structuring at the local, national and European level but also in the creation of a public space of dialogue and cooperation which would enable the formulation of common positions towards the institutions, with increased impact and legitimacy.

We had the opportunity to make these messages heard during the "European Civic Days" in Malaga in May 2010 and also the "Civil Society Day" in Brussels relation with the European Economic and Social Committee in March 2010. The ECF has played a major role in the organization of these two events.

The European Civic Forum had been actively campaigning for its "Plan C for Europe" all through 2010, to promote the development of civil society across Europe and the emergence of a European model based on participatory and deliberative democracy, as you will see while reading this activity report.

Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go before the formalisation and the structuring of a genuine European civil dialogue, with particular focus on the issue of the Statute of the "European association". The advocacy campaign initiated in 2010 by EASEA (Alliance of associations created on this purpose) with the support of the European Parliament gives us some promising perspectives.

The European Civic Forum will pursue its awareness raising work and its mission to gather together European civil society actors to better voice and gain recognition of organised civil society and have a strong impact on European Unions' policies" as announced its President, Jean-Marc Roirant in his report to the General Assembly which met on 28 and 29 April in Brussels.

EUROPEAN CIVIC FORUM NEWS

Public hearing: « Towards a statute for the European Association », 28 April 2011, Brussels



For more than 30 years the associations with an important European and transnational dimension call for the creation of a European statute to give institutional recognition to the engagement and activism of millions of citizens who freely and voluntarily join together in associations across Europe.

The European Civic Forum was at the origin of a wide joint mobilization of associations gathered within a [European Alliance for the Statute of the European Association](#) (EASEA), to actively campaign, together with the European Foundation Centre and the International Mutuals Association, towards MEPs and bring the issue on the European political agenda.

To celebrate the success of this campaign and the important support of the European Parliament through the adoption of a [written declaration](#) and a [report on a single market for Europeans](#), the European Civic Forum has put this issue on the agenda of its General Assembly and organised a public hearing on April 28th 2011 at the EESC in Brussels with the participation of nearly 70 representatives of associations and NGOs.

To better understand the complexity of the issue and identify ways to continue working together, two panels brought together academic experts and researchers alongside MEPs deeply involved in the process, to discuss issues related to the usefulness of a European statute for the single market and civil dialogue with European institutions: Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE / NGL), Marc Tarabella (S & D), Francesco Martucci of the University of Strasbourg, Meike Rodekamp, University of Bremen, Giovanni Moro, University of Macerata, president of FONDACA, in the presence of two moderators: Patrick Bucquois, President of CEDAG, and Cristian Pirvulescu, Vice-President of the European Civic Forum and member of the EESC Group III.

The discussions allowed to distinguish between an associations' non-profit activities and economic activities, and to look into the choice of legal basis for a future draft statute, allowing the creation of a legal instrument having an optional character, which would facilitate exchanges and bridge-building between European civil society associations and their good practices, while recognizing in the same time their diversity, necessary to create a real European public space.

The report of this public hearing and the presentations of experts will soon be available and disseminated widely.

Annual General Assembly, April 29th 2011, Brussels



Beyond the statutory aspects related to the validation of reports and election of governing bodies, **this annual meeting was an opportunity to take stock of the activities of the Forum in 2010** and to prospect for years to come. ECF got strongly settled on the European scene by supporting the development and structuring of organised civil society at national and European level and by working actively for the recognition of the role of civil society organizations in decision making process.

In this regard, **ECF has been notably successful in establishing on the European scene two public events: "European Civic Days"** in the country holding the rotating Presidency of EU Council and the **"Civil Society Day"** in Brussels to discuss with European institutions cross-cutting issues of major importance for civil society organizations.

Over the next few years, the ECF will continue to bring together civil society actors to help creating a European inclusive public space, and will continue its campaigns for the adoption of a **European Statute of European Association**, for the establishment of a **genuine European civil dialogue** and **the declaration of 2013 European Year of Citizenship**, etc.

The report of this meeting will be available soon and sent to members shortly.

European Civic Forum welcomes six new members



Active on national and international levels, InSoc aims to a social change and equitable national development, by **monitoring public policies** targeting Roma and other vulnerable groups, **informing and bringing together stakeholders** on the issues of vulnerable groups, and **promoting human rights**.

for more information: <http://www.insoc.org.mk/>



The MLP is composed of 170 local associations in the areas of education, culture and social transformation. It promotes free thinking and acting in various fields: **protecting associations' rights**, **promoting cooperation and mutual assistance**, **safeguarding human dignity** and self-determination against unjust restrictions and oppressions, **social change** in favor of freedom of thought, tolerance, difference, human rights and citizenship.

for more information : <http://www.mlp.cat/>



IE's activities are implemented mostly at national, regional and local level. They may be grouped into four main areas : **research**, advancing the understanding of various fields of governance and sectoral policy making in the aim of providing timely policy advice, **technical assistance**, providing advice to governmental and non-governmental organizations on EU accession's issues, **raising public awareness**, implementing projects stimulating public debate on EU enlargement and informing public.

for more information : <http://www.europeaninstitute.bg/>



The Women's Centre

Particularly active in regional partnership, Women's Center is interested in : **addressing social and economic disadvantage** in communities (unique programme of education, information about opportunities, etc.), **developing the North West infrastructure of the Women's Center Regional Partnership**, as well as communication and thinking around these centers, **providing access to learning and development** for women with additional barriers (young mothers, women from minority ethnic groups, etc.), **influencing change** at the personal, social and cultural level.

for more information : <http://www.thewomenscentre.co.uk/>



Active at the national level, the main objectives of the European Center "SN7" are: **the promotion of European values**, respecting cultural differences and strengthening the role of democratic institutions, **the development of local, regional and international cooperation**, **the fight against the deviant phenomena of society**, including the launch of programs for youth employment and career development, and protection and preservation of the environment, **the development of programs to promote primary, secondary and higher education**, as well as organizing training courses, seminars, conferences, workshops and debates.

for more information : <http://www.sn7.org.mk/index.php?lang=en>



The CDI is addressing citizens' problems and needs, helping in overcoming challenges, and implementing projects at local, regional, national and international levels : **improving the interethnic understanding and tolerance**, **strengthening the capacities of the organizations and individuals**, by programs for capacities building or specific preparations of strategy for implementation (Youth coalition SEGA for example), **improving the living conditions and standard of life of the citizens**.

for more information : www.irz.org.mk

NEWS FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Cidem: publication of a new “Repère pour Eduquer” on Volunteerism and associative commitment



Under the 2011 European Year of Volunteering, CIDEM conducted, in partnership with the French Red Cross and the European Civic Forum, a new issue of the series “Repères pour Eduquer”.

This issue contains the basic information on how to become more involved in volunteering activities, highlighting the main areas of volunteering and giving the floor to young volunteers to express their views.

The brochure can be ordered [here](#), and will be available online on the website Cidem in pdf version soon.

EUROCLIO: Historiana training seminar « History Online »



EUROCLIO and the Netherlands Institute for Heritage (Erfgoed Nederland) are organising the Historiana training seminar “History Online” from 27th to 30th October 2011 that will take place at the Joseph Károlyi Foundation in Fehérvárcsurgó, Hungary. Historiana is an international programme on the online teaching and learning of history and heritage of Europe which enables young

generations to learn about their past. The seminar will address online demonstrations of exemplary case studies on “Rights and Responsibilities”, information market on online materials developed in the Historiana programme, or cultural programme and on-site learning related to the local history and heritage.

Click [here](#) for more information

Seminar on the confinement in Europe by AEDH on 27 May 2011



AEDH organizes a seminar and a public lecture on Friday, May 27th 2011 in Luxembourg, on the occasion of its Annual General Meeting on May 27th and 28th 2011. In collaboration with the Luxembourg League for Human Rights (ALOS-LDH), the seminar will explore different forms of confinement in Europe (prison, custody, mental hospital) and the lack of competence of the Union in this area.

The seminar will be organized in two parts, a working group addressing initially the conditions of detention in relation to human rights, the meaning of penalty and of incarceration and its alternatives. The conclusions of the debate will serve to introduce the public conference that will follow in a second time. Taking place from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., it will feature five European prominent personalities working on confinement in Europe, in presence of Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission.

More information on the details of the seminar and public lecture will be available online soon on the site AEDH: www.aedh.eu.

Launch of the project « Promote Immigrant Volunteering to Reclaim Community Life » by

Athens Network of Collaborating Experts (ANCE)



Responding to the call for “Flagship projects within the framework of the European Year of Volunteering. 2011”, ANCE launched last March 31st the project “Promote Immigrant Volunteering to Reclaim Community Life”, in partnership with the greek University of Aegean, The Greek Forum of Migrants (EFM), the italian association Lunaria and the Diputación de Granada - Sección de Juventud.

Scheduled for a period of 12 months, the project aims to promote volunteering and networking in local communities. It also aims to facilitate and encourage the organization of community events and cultural exchanges between immigrants and local residents to reinforce civic engagement.

The project will involve about twenty members or volunteers working in structures related to immigration, about 200 immigrants and local residents of Athens, the 24 immigrants’ communities and associations-members of the EFM and 8 cooperating associations.

INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

European Parliament: the Constitutional Affairs Committee supports the proposal for a pan-European list for European elections



MEP **Andrew Duff** (ALDE, UK), supported by the Constitutional Affairs Committee of Parliament, presented on April 19th its reform plan to introduce a pan-European lists in the next European elections. The report, approved in committee by 20 votes against 4, proposes the allocation of 25 parliamentary seats to candidates elected from the lists presented throughout Europe by the various European political parties.

“We are seeking to exploit for the first time the new powers we have as a result of the Lisbon Treaty, to improve the popular legitimacy of this House” said **Andrew Duff**. *“We have a great chance to establish a coherent modernisation of the electoral procedure.”*

Each voter would have two ballots: one for the national lists and one for the transnational ones. Candidates on this second list should come from at least one-third of the EU Member States. Counting the EU-wide votes would be taking in charge by national authorities, before results would be reporting to a new EU electoral authority.

The report also presents other proposals, such as bringing the timing of the European elections forward from June to May, giving to new Parliaments more time to prepare the election of the President of the European Commission in July.

These various proposals, representing a *“significant step forward for the post-national democracy”* according to **Andrew Duff**, will be voted in plenary session in June, and could become the official position of Parliament.

Click [here](#) to learn more, and [here](#) to view the report.

Informal Meeting of European Education Ministers on youth citizenship education



European Education Ministers met on 29 March 2011 at Royal Castle of Gödöllő, Hungary, in a meeting chaired by **Rózsa Hoffmann**, Hungarian Minister of State for Education of the Ministry of National Resources. The main objective of this meeting was to exchange different opinions on the concept of education for active citizenship.

Providing young people with skills to cope with challenges such as the global economic crisis also responds to the need to promote active citizenship and to the current needs of society.

According **Andoulla Vassiliu**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, *“EU needs citizens capable of solving problems.”* The 2011 European Year of Volunteering can note the importance of this activity,

encouraging teaching “in settings both formal and informal.” Entrepreneurial skills and education for financial conscience could facilitate the twin goals envisaged by ministers: to succeed in life and become socially responsible.

The strengthening of education for citizenship being among the objectives of the Hungarian presidency, better cooperation between Member States is also highlighted in the context of intercultural dialogue, each Member State takes its own decisions concerning education. European programs already in place play an important role in this respect.

Minister **Rózsa Hoffmann** confirmed these trends: “We are seeking answers to the new challenges of the 21st century. We must teach our youths how to face problems, such as the global economic crisis; as active citizenship provides a framework for all this.”

Click [here](#) to learn more

Conference on Croatia’s accession to the European Union: negotiations are progressing



Results of negotiations concerning the accession of Croatia were presented at a conference in Brussels, April 19th 2011. Of the 35 chapters covered by the negotiations, two new ones were signed, bringing the number of closed chapters to 30.

Negotiations on Chapter 11, on agriculture, have been facilitated by recent progress made by Croatia in adaptation to European legislation. Chapter 22, on regional policy and structural funds, allow to envisage the country’s participation in structural funds and equal development of all Croatian regions. These two components cover roughly 70-75 per cent of the overall EU budget, their closing representing a significant step towards the accession of Croatia in the negotiations. “These chapters are not like the others”, says **János Martonyi**, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs. “The fact that we have managed to close both of these chapters, is a huge step forward.”

According to **Gordan Jandrokovic**, Croatian Foreign Minister, the interests of Croatia were recognized and protected in these discussions, an encouraging sign for future negotiations. Indeed, five chapters politically relatively complicated are still open: Competition policy; Fisheries; Judiciary and fundamental rights; Financial and budgetary provisions and “Other issues” will be discussed in next months. Their implementation will be subject of a special attention, particularly concerning the chapters on competition policy and justice.

The closing of negotiations, however, is expected by the end of the first half of 2011: “I can say with confidence that Croatia is fully committed to tackling these issues”, said **Štefan Füle**, EU Commissioner for Enlargement. “We are looking forward to welcoming Croatia as the 28th EU Member State as soon as possible.”

Click [here](#) to learn more

The European Commission has set the guidelines for national strategies for Roma integration



Improving the economic and social integration of Roma, given the current discrimination against 10 to 12 million Roma living in Europe, is a particular need for the Commission.

In a press release dated April 5th and following a detailed study of the situation, the Commission has established a clear approach for Roma integration into four areas:

- Education: ensuring that all Roma children complete at least primary school;
- Employment: cutting the employment gap between Roma and other citizens;
- Health: reducing the health gap, for example by cutting child mortality among Roma;
- Housing: closing the gap in access to housing and public utilities such as water and electricity.

According to **Viviane Reding**, Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, “This is a serious challenge. That is why we are setting goals for Roma integration and why we now need a clear commitment from all capitals, regions and cities in Europe to put them into practice. Now is the time to move beyond good intentions and to take concrete actions.”

Member States have until the end of the year to present their national strategies for Roma integration. European

Commission also wants to set up a “*robust monitoring mechanism*” to measure progress, encouraging Member States to designate points of contact on the matter.

Click [here](#) to learn more

Publication of the EU education report: presentation of 2010's results and 2020's targets



European Commission published on 19 april its progress report on education and training. “*Education levels in Europe have risen considerably*”, said **Androulla Vassiliou**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. “*We need further efforts from Member States to reach our joint European targets.*”

Indeed, significant progress is observed, but limited by the achievement of one goal on five set for 2010. If the rate of 15% of graduates in mathematics, science and technology has been fully achieved (the current rate of 37%), progress in other areas such as reducing school dropout or increasing the number of students reaching the end of the second cycle of secondary education remains below expectations.

Education Ministers of EU have thus established five new benchmarks, whose objectives must be met for 2020:

- the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10% (at least 1.7 million fewer school drop-outs);
- the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40% (an additional 2.6 million graduates);
- at least 95% of children from the age of four should participate in early childhood education;
- the share of 15-years olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%;
- an average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.

Now, Member States must submit to the Commission their national reform programs, with their goals and their methods, which are part of “Europe 2020” strategy’s objectives for employment and growth, mainly regarding the dropout and graduation rates in higher education.

Click [here](#) to learn more

Single Market Act: European Parliament's report and communication from the Commission



On April 6, the European Parliament has adopted the three resolutions that correspond to the three pillars of the Single Market Act and are related to the Commission communication “Towards a Single Market Act: 50 proposals for improving our work, business and exchanges with one another”:

- [Governance and partnership in the single market](#), rapporteur: Sandra Kalniete (A7-0083/2011) ;

- [Single market for Europeans](#), rapporteur António Fernando Correia De Campos (A7-0072/2011) ;

- [Single market for enterprises and growth](#), rapporteur Cristian Silviu Buşoi (A7-0071/2011).

Within the resolution “**Single Market for Europeans**”, the European Parliament restates the need for European Status for foundations, mutual societies and associations:

“46. *Calls for measures to create an appropriate legal framework for foundations, mutual societies and associations so as to give them European status, to prevent legal uncertainty and to promote other social economy enterprises and other social projects; welcomes the Commission's intention to revise Regulation (EC) No 1435/2003 on the Statute for European Cooperative Societies, calls, as part of this revision, for the creation of a genuinely autonomous Statute; stresses the need to improve cross-border access for social economy enterprises and maximise their entrepreneurial, social, cultural and innovative potential in the Single Market;*”.

Within the resolution on “**Governance and partnership in the single market**”, some interesting proposals are more broadly related to the implementation of article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty:

- “14. Believes that the ‘good governance’ of the single market must respect the role of the two advisory institutions existing at European level – the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – as well as that of the social partners;
15. Emphasises that dialogue with the social partners and civil society is of the essence in restoring confidence in the single market; expects new and bold ideas from the Commission as to how this dialogue can actually be improved; demands that the social partners be involved and consulted in all relevant single market legislation affecting the labour market;
16. Welcomes the intention of the Commission to enhance an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society;
17. Calls on the Commission to publish a Green Paper on guidelines for the consultations of the EU institutions with representative associations and civil society, ensuring that these consultations are broad, interactive and add value to the proposed policies;
18. Calls on the Commission to adapt dialogue and communication to the needs of ordinary citizens to the fullest extent possible, for example by making all its public consultations available in all EU official languages or by using language in such a way that the ordinary citizen can understand;”.

The idea of a green paper on consultation is also mentioned as key priority in this resolution:

“57. Calls on the Commission to publish a Green Paper on guidelines for the consultations of the EU institutions with representative associations and civil society ensuring that these consultations are broad, interactive, transparent and add value to the proposed policies;”.

On April 13, the European Commission adopted [the Single Market Act](#) with twelve projects’ proposals aiming to increase growth, competitiveness and social progress. Commission has decided to focus on: access to finance for SMEs, worker mobility, intellectual property right, consumers, services, stronger European networks, digital single market, social entrepreneurship, taxation, social cohesion, regulatory environment for business and public procurement. By the end of 2012 the European Commission will assess the progress of the presented action plan and following the results of the economic study will identify new drivers of growth.

Presented instruments are meant to ease citizens` life however despite of the European Parliament reports and adopted [written declaration, the European Statutes for associations, foundations and mutuals](#) the actions targeting the civil society were not included. To this end, omitting the aspect of active engagement of civil society within the "good governance" of the single market and providing organized civil society with an appropriate pan-european legal framework is regrettable.