



PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 06 October 2009

Civil Society reminds MEPs to stay in touch

Only a couple of months into their five-year term, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are already being reminded of their grass roots. This week, the corridors of the EP are swarming with the representatives of European Civil Society networks, eager to help the new MEPs off to a good start.

'This is the first time that nine sectors of civil society pool their efforts to reach out to MEPs', says Sonja Van Tichelen, Director of Eurogroup for Animals, co-organiser of the event with the Civil Society Contact Group (CSCG). 'It is particularly important for us to ensure that we rapidly establish good working relationships with the new MEPs', she explains. 'We need to make sure the concerns of EU citizens stay close to the politicians and that new EU legislation takes societal values into account.'

From democracy and human rights, through development, global trade, public health, women's rights and social justice, to arts and culture, the environment and animal protection, the themes of the stands and roundtable conferences touch on almost every area of the work of the Parliamentarians.

Ms Caroline Lucas, the British Green Party MEP who is hosting the event, highlights the importance of civil dialogue and participatory democracy in the EU, principles which will gain in legal status should the Lisbon Treaty come into force as expected next January: 'These 'Civil Society Days' are an excellent opportunity for us MEPs and our colleagues to meet and exchange views with many of the major European civil society actors. The EP has a long tradition of welcoming input from non-governmental organisations and others, and this will be strengthened by the introduction of more formal, structured dialogues as well as other, wider opportunities for involvement.'

Liz Scurfield, speaking on behalf of the CSCG, considers that 'after the Irish referendum, the Lisbon Treaty is closer than ever to becoming a reality. It is now time to work concretely on the establishment of a more transparent and formalised framework ensuring the full participation of civil society and its representatives. This is essential in order to move towards a more coherent and inclusive EU, responding to the expectations of its citizens in these times of social, environmental and financial crisis that affect them adversely.'

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Further information for Press

The Civil Society Fair will take place from 9am Tuesday 06 to 4pm Thursday 08 October 2009 at the exhibition space on the ground floor of the ASP building, zone G. **Representatives of the press are invited to attend the opening cocktail at 18:00 on Tuesday 06 October.** A series of one-hour roundtable debates will be held between 12:00 and 15:00 on each day of the fair. For more information, interviews or photographs please see: <http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/back.asp?Page=264>. Alternatively, please contact:

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Note to editors

- ⇒ The EU Civil Society Contact Group brings together eight large rights and value-based NGO sectors: culture, environment, education, development, human rights, public health, social and women. Jointly we aim to represent the views and interests of rights and value-based civil society organisations across the EU on major issues, which affect us across our sectors of activity. Our objective is to encourage and promote a transparent and structured civil dialogue that is accessible, properly facilitated, inclusive, fair and respectful of the autonomy of NGOs. More information at www.act4europe.org
- ⇒ The Eurogroup for Animals represents a united voice for animal welfare organisations in Europe. For more than 25 years, we have been working to improve the way animals are treated and kept throughout the European Union. The long-standing relationship we have established with the EU institutions allows us to be recognised as a credible partner for all the policy issues that affect animals. Our objective is a Europe that cares for all animals. More information at www.eurogroupforanimals.org