

## **BULLETIN 49** *Brussels, November 2007*

### 1. EDITORIAL

### 2. CIVIL SOCIETY CONTACT GROUP

- European Transparency Initiative – Workshop proceedings
- “Making your voice heard in the EU - A guide for NGOs” now available in more languages

### 3. FUTURE OF EUROPE

- New treaty for the EU agreed
- The Reform of the EU budget: “a once in a generation opportunity”
- EP hearing on role of NGOs in the implementation of EU budget
- European Parliament report on European Transparency Initiative
- “Communicating Europe in Partnership”...

### 4. PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

- First ever European petition to collect more than 1 million signatures
- Council of Europe adopts recommendations on the legal status of NGOs in Europe
- Legitimacy and accountability of NGOs in international governance
- GuideStar Europe – online database of civil society organizations
- Tomorrow’s Europe - Plan D project
- European Parliament’s citizens’ agora

### 5. NEWS FROM MEMBERS

- News(letters)

## 1. EDITORIAL

Dear act4europe friends,

A new treaty for the European Union has been agreed by the heads of state and government of the 27 EU member states in the early hours of October 19. The same body will sign the new text on December 13 most likely in Lisbon (wherefrom "Lisbon treaty"). Each member state will then have to ratify the document during 2008 for it to come into force probably already on January 1 2009. In most countries the ratification will take place in parliament, only Ireland will definitely hold a referendum.

The new treaty in Article II-8b recognizes the role of representative associations and civil society, acknowledges the importance of consultations with parties concerned and installs the right of initiative for citizens:

"1. The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.

2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

3. The Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent.

4. Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties."

This is already a big step forward for civil society participation in the EU. Now it is time to start discussing the translation of this text into reality. We are looking forward to share ideas with you all in this interesting period for civil society and European institution relations.

Regula Heggli  
Coordinator

## 2. CIVIL SOCIETY CONTACT GROUP

### European Transparency Initiative – Workshop proceedings

As already mentioned in the last Bulletin [ALTER-EU](#) (the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation) and the Civil Society Contact Group on July 12 organized a workshop on the European Transparency Initiative (ETI). The purpose of the workshop was to provide Brussels based NGOs with an update on the ETI, more specifically on the code of conduct for interest representatives and the register for interest representatives. Over 25 representatives of a wide range of organisations participated in the meeting.

You can now find the [workshop proceedings](#) here.

Find the Civil Society Contact Group [briefing on the ETI](#) here.

Read more about the ETI below in "future of Europe".

## **[“Making your voice heard in the EU - A guide for NGOs” now available in more languages](#)**

The Civil Society Contact Group’s training handbook “Making your voice heard in the EU - A guide for NGOs” is now also available in [Romanian](#) (unfortunately not yet in the final format). It is specifically designed for those 'newcomer' NGOs and activists that are in the process of establishing a European strategy. It does so by providing tailored-made information on EU institutions, the way European NGOs work, as well as lobbying tips, illustrated by examples of EU level campaigns.

You can also download it in [Bulgarian](#), [English](#), [Estonian](#), [French](#), [German](#), [Hungarian](#), [Italian](#), [Latvian](#), [Polish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Slovene](#) and [Spanish](#) .

## **3. FUTURE OF EUROPE**

### **New treaty for the EU agreed**

The EU heads of state and government on October 19 agreed on the new treaty text for the EU. The text is to be signed by the same body on December 13 in Lisbon although fears are currently growing that Belgium will not have a government in place by the summit that has the competence to sign the new treaty. The most significant institutional and procedural changes included in the new treaty are the following:

- The right of initiative for 1 million of citizens is introduced and a commitment to “regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society” (Art. II-8b) is made (no mention of the term participatory democracy)
- Co-decision power of the European Parliament (EP) is extended consisting in an general increase of the EP’s power
- National parliaments are attributed a bigger role in the legislative procedure. This is interpreted as the strengthening of subsidiarity.
- As from 2014 the Council of Ministers will take decisions by double majority (55% majority of member states, 65% majority of the European population)
- The European Council will be presided by a president appointed for two and a half years, renewable once
- The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security’s powers are increased and resemble the powers of a Foreign Minister
- As from 2014 the number of Commissioners will be reduced from 27 to 18

Ratification of the new treaty will take place during 2008 in each member state. France, the Netherlands and the UK have announced to ratify as soon as possible before summer 2008. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown is determined to ratify in Parliament without holding a referendum. There is though strong opposition to this decision. Only Ireland will definitely hold a referendum. A poll published at the beginning of November shows that 62 percent of Irish voters remain undecided on the new treaty. Denmark still needs to take a decision if to ratify in parliament or by referendum. January 1 2009 has been mentioned as date for the entering into force of the treaty. The agreement on the new treaty is interpreted as change away from institutional debates onwards to more content discussions. The second day of the informal summit focused on the EU’s role in a globalised economy.

The CSCG will prepare a briefing on the new treaty to be ready in early 2008.

Find the [approved documents](#) here.

Read a [summary and analysis](#) of the summit outcomes by Jean-Dominique Guliani, chairman of the Robert Schumann Foundation.

Find a multitude of articles analysing the changes the new treaty brings in europolitics special edition in [English](#) or [French](#).

Find an [article about the agreement](#) on the new text.

Read an [article on the situation of the Belgium government](#) in what relates to the signature of the treaty.

Read an [article about the poll in Ireland](#).

ERA, the Academy of European Law is organizing a series of evening briefings on the expected changes the new treaty implies. Find more [information](#) here.

### **The Reform of the EU budget: "a once in a generation opportunity"**

In spring 2006 the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission agreed that the Commission should undertake a fundamental review of the EU budget. The Commission was invited "to undertake a full, wide ranging review covering all aspects of EU spending". The Commission on September 12 2007 adopted a consultation paper in view of this reform of the EU budget. Interested actors at all levels are invited to participate in an open debate on the EU's priorities. The debate will look at

- the spending priorities
- the management of the EU finances
- the resources.

The consultation paper contributes to structuring the public debate around key question such as:

- Has the EU budget proved sufficiently responsive to changing needs?
- What criteria should be used to ensure that the principle of European value added is applied effectively?
- How should policy objectives be properly reflected in spending priorities? What changes are needed?
- How could the effectiveness and efficiency of budget delivery be improved?

All submissions should be sent to: [budget-review@ec.europa.eu](mailto:budget-review@ec.europa.eu) by 15 April 2008.

Find the [consultation paper](#) and other useful information on the EU budget here.

The EU Civil Society Contact Group is currently preparing a briefing document on the consultation and will in January hold an information and training event for NGOs on the issue.

### **EP hearing on role of NGOs in the implementation of EU budget**

The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats in the European Parliament (EEP-ED) on Monday October 15 held a hearing on the role of NGOs in the implementation of the EU budget. Different Commission units were invited to explain their cooperation with NGOs in the budget implementation. The speakers from the European Commission drew a fair, pragmatic and balanced picture of the role of NGOs in the implementation of the EU budget. Comments of a few MEPs as well as the press release of the EPP-ED still raise the two known issues:

- financing one's own opposition as inopportune and
- fear that the EP would lose influence

The EPP-ED is planning to organise a debate with the Commission in the European Parliament plenary on the subject. After the publication of the European Court of Auditors's special report on NGOs they may organise a second hearing.

Find a report by the Civil Society Contact Group coordinator [here](#).

## European Parliament report on European Transparency Initiative

Alexander Stubb, Finish Christian–Democrat MEP, is preparing a report on how the European Parliament (EP) works with interest representatives. The report can be seen as part of the European Transparency Initiative. The EP committee on constitutional affairs (AFCO) will vote on the report in November or December. It will then be submitted to the plenary in January. In a European Parliament hearing in October different groups such as [ALTER-EU](#) (the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation) as well as [EPACA](#) (European Public Affairs Consultancy Association) asked for the register for interest representatives to be compulsory. The disclosure of financial information was again strongly opposed by the associations of business lobbyists. Alter-EU on the occasion of the public hearing organised an awareness raising action in front of the EP asking the EP “to ambitiously improve” its rules on lobbying.

Find [photos](#) of the ALTER-EU action here.

Find the Civil Society Contact Group [briefing on the ETI](#) on here.

### “Communicating Europe in Partnership”...

...is the title of the latest communication on a European communication that was published on Wednesday October 3 2007, by the European Commission. The paper (a follow-up of the White Paper of European Communication Policy) announces different actions to consolidate the Commission approach:

- An *inter-institutional agreement* that provides the European Commission, Parliament and Council with a shared communication agenda
- Voluntary *management partnerships* with individual governments to engage in a shared communication agenda
- Creation of *European public spaces*: a network of meeting places hosting exhibitions, films, meetings, discussions and lecturers and open to a wide range of users
- *Pilot information networks* (PINs): internet forums between members of the European Parliament, members of the national parliaments, journalists and other opinion-makers
- Strengthening the role of *European presentations in involving civil society organizations* in consultations

The paper also announces new audiovisual and internet strategies as well as a follow-up communication on Plan D. The later will include support for civil society organization in setting up projects on the European Parliament elections and the ratification of the new treaty.

Find here the [communication](#) and related documents.

## 4. PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

### First ever European petition to collect more than 1 million signatures

The European Disability Forum in January this year launched a campaign aimed to collect at least 1 000 000 citizens’ signatures to combat discrimination in all aspects of the lives of disabled citizens in Europe. The European Union must respond to a call of at least 1 million once the new treaty is in force. The European Disability Forum’s campaign is probably the first one to actually gather more than a million signatures.

Read more about the [campaign](#) here.

## **Council of Europe adopts recommendations on the legal status of NGOs in Europe**

On 10 October the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has adopted a recommendation (CM/Rec(2007)14) on the legal status of NGOs. The text defines minimum standards to be respected concerning the creation, management and the general activities of NGOs in member states of the organisation. On participation in decision-making, the recommendation says that governmental and quasi-governmental mechanisms at all levels should ensure the effective participation of NGOs without discrimination in dialogue and consultation on public policy objectives and decisions.

Find here the [recommendation](#) and an [Explanatory Memorandum](#).

## **Legitimacy and accountability of NGOs in international governance**

The CSCG coordinator participated in a workshop on the accountability of NGOs, organized by the research project "Transformations of the state - Legitimation and participation in international organizations" of the University of Bremen. The perception that civil society organizations (CSOs) have gained power in international politics leads to question CSOs' legitimacy and accountability. The underlining assumption is that any form of power should be legitimate and accountable. A couple of interesting questions when reflecting on an individual CSO's accountability were raised during the workshop:

- To whom do we as CSO want/need to be accountable externally?  
state actors/EU institutions, peer group of CSOs, general public, donors, beneficiaries
- Who want/needs to be accountable to whom within a/our CSO?  
Board, director, staff, working groups, members, supporters, beneficiaries
- What are the thresholds for accountability ("from voice to participation")?

Read a short report on the workshop [here](#).

## **GuideStar Europe – online database of civil society organizations**

GuideStar International (GSI) is a program of Civil Society Systems (CSS) a charity registered in the UK and the US. It aims at establishing searchable databases of a country's civil society organisations (CSOs). GuideStar Europe was launched this week. It will assess the feasibility of establishing databases in four European countries (Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Ireland) as well as a pilot European site.

To learn more about the project in Europe go to [www.guidestareurope.org](http://www.guidestareurope.org)

To learn more about GuideStar International: [www.guidestarinternational.org](http://www.guidestarinternational.org)

## **Tomorrow's Europe - Plan D project**

On October 13 and 14 around 400 EU citizens gathered in the European Parliament to have a pan-European discussion about the EU. The method used, deliberative polling, assesses the participants opinion towards European issues before and after the meeting. The participants of Tomorrow's Europe, coming from the 27 EU member states, deliberated about, social and foreign policy. Poll's before and after the meeting show that the participants became more informed and also changed their opinions.

Find here the [results](#) of Tomorrow's Europe.

Learn more about the project on <http://www.tomorrowseurope.eu/>.

## European Parliament's citizens' agora

On November 8 and 9 about 300 representative of civil society organisations met in the European Parliament to discuss the new EU treaty. In five workshops the participants discussed missions, rights, tools, borders and horizons based on the new treaty.

Find the [final texts](#) of the workshops here.

## 5. NEWS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS

### Members' latest news(letters)

CONCORD

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Public/Page.php?ID=1186>

[EUCIS-LLL](#)

European Forum for the Arts and Heritage

<http://www.efah.org/index.php?id=14&pagelang=en>

European Public Health Alliance

<http://www.epha.org/m/174>

Green10

<http://green10.org/>

Social Platform

<http://www.socialplatform.org/News.asp>