

EU Civil Society Contact Group

Civil Society Contact Group 2007-2009 Strategic plan

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1. Introduction

The CSCG's 2007-2009 strategic plan has been drafted following individual meetings between the coordinator and members, of the whole CSCG on 17.07.06, 04.09.06 and 24.10.06. It is also based on two previous discussion papers:

- outcomes of meetings with members ([http://act4europe.horus.be/module/FileLib/CSCG future discussion July 2006.doc](http://act4europe.horus.be/module/FileLib/CSCG%20future%20discussion%20July%202006.doc))
- draft work programme ([http://act4europe.horus.be/module/FileLib/CSCG draft work programme 2007-2009.doc](http://act4europe.horus.be/module/FileLib/CSCG%20draft%20work%20programme%202007-2009.doc))

1.1. Mission

Throughout its work in 2007-2009, the CSCG will seek to meet the following mission, adopted in 2004.

Values and Objectives (2004, extract)

Jointly we aim to represent the views and interests of rights and value based civil society organisations across the European Union on major issues, which affect us across our sectors of activity. The group seeks a role as an interlocutor with the EU institutions in specific fields of common interest to discuss the substantive concerns of the huge range of civil society organisations represented within its composition. Its 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. We promote lasting access to information, access to justice in matters of concern to civil society, consultation, and integration of all levels of civil society in the European project.

The EU CSCG bases its activities on the values shared by all its members. These include a vision of European integration, which opposes the drift to purely economic goals, but instead builds a European Union that:

- Is built upon and promotes the European social model and the international rule of law
- Is close to its citizens, respects and reflects the diversity and equality of all people living in Europe
- Builds an institutional framework which is truly effective, democratic and participatory, transparent and accessible, and develops the role of Europe in the world as a positive and stabilizing force
- Is an advocate for and a guarantor of peace, solidarity, justice, equality for all, equality between women and men, non discrimination, sustainable development, protection and improvement of the environment to ensure a

high quality of life for present and future generations, eradication of poverty and observance of human rights within the EU and globally.

The EU CSCG represents its members and not all parts of civil society. It encourages the autonomous input of other civil society organisations at a European, national, and local level, to the work of the European Institutions.

Whilst the members of the EU CSCG respect the specificity and autonomy of each other's domains and interests, they agree to pursue a common strategy and approach to the issues the CSCG works on wherever useful for the common and individual sectors' interests, informing and consulting each other of specific initiatives taken in a spirit of solidarity. The CSCG seeks to bring added value to the work of its members and their members.

While the activities of the CSCG focus on European rights and value debates, the CSCG is in full support of the same aims on a global scale and pays attention to the impact of European policies world-wide.

1. 2. Strategic objectives

Based on its common mission, the CSCG's work will be driven by three main objectives, building upon its main strengths but also reflecting its constant evolution of the over the last years:

- **Building upon achievements and expertise on participatory democracy** - This includes further disseminating and discussing the study's outcomes.
- **Developing the CSCG's "political dimension"** - the CSCG has to be a forum for exchange on policy issues and members' key concerns, a place where NGOs can also discuss "the EU they want".
- **Strengthening the network** - The CSCG's added value is not only its common "outcomes" but also the network it provides and the possibility to develop more exchanges on members' priorities and intelligence-sharing on common challenges.

1.3. Political direction

The political direction and guidance will be provided through regular meetings of Contact Group representatives to take place every sixth weeks and, between meetings, by the CSCG chair in consultation with the CSCG members (e-mail procedure). Regular CSCG meetings will be completed by meetings on major issues, fixed on an ad hoc basis.

This strategic plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis, when the annual work programme for the following is drafted. The version at hand has been update in December 2007 based on the adopted work program 2008 and the discussions lead in the group previous to its adoption.

2. Activities

2.1. Further reflecting and debating to strengthen participatory democracy

Context - The debate on NGO standards is likely to intensify over the next years, with the follow-up of the transparency initiative (in particular with the development of a Code of Conduct on transparency standards), NGO Code of Conduct by DG JLS (fight against terrorism) and developments on representativity. Besides, as a follow-up of the transparency initiative, but also the Communication White Paper, a number of opportunities exist to improve dialogue between NGOs and EU institutions. A reflection is also needed on how to better make the link with the national level.

Areas covered

- Civil Dialogue
- Standards for NGOs
- NGO funding
- Access to institutions

Specific objectives - At a time of further questioning of the role of NGOs, the CSCG will continue making the case for civil dialogue, avoid a backlash and pave the way for a better, more inclusive and enabling participation of NGOs at EU and national level. This should build upon the work achieved over the last years, in particular the study "Civil Dialogue: making it work better" and the 12 July 2006 conference.

Main activities

- Provision of background information about civil dialogue on website (early 2007+ regular update)
- Further dissemination of the study on civil dialogue (2007)
- Follow-up to transparency initiative (2007-2009)
- Follow-up communication White Paper (1st semester 2007)
- Participation in dialogue with DG JLS on fight against terrorism (2007)
- Development of a position paper on the implementation of article II-8b (second semester of 2008)

2. 2. Debating and developing a common vision of "the EU we want" to increase participation and influence major debates on the future of Europe

Context - At the June summit, heads of states and governments decided to sign a political declaration in Berlin in March 2007 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. It can be perceived as the first step of a mid-term discussion about "the EU citizens want". 2009, year of the next EP elections and of the review of the EU financial perspective, is also the deadline set by the EU to "reach a constitutional settlement". The 2007-2009 period will thus be crucial from different points of view:

- citizens' participation in the European project (after high turnout to referenda)
- sending EU leaders a clear signal of the type of EU we really want, by developing a common vision, in particular on cross-cutting issues (e.g. migration, fundamental rights, sustainable development...)

Areas covered

- 50th anniversary of the EU
- Constitutional process
- EP 2009 election
- New European Commission
- Review of the Financial Perspective

Specific objectives - The CSCG should seek to develop a "common vision" and build coalitions on key debates around the 2007-2009 agenda, with a view to raising

awareness and engaging its members' constituencies in the debates. Another key objective will be to avoid a backlash of participation in the constitutional process, as well as setbacks regarding the text itself.

Main activities

- Common declaration ahead of the EU's 50th anniversary (January-March 2007)
- Input in key phases of the constitutional process (German, French presidencies)
- Activity around EP elections: supporting national debates, common manifesto, EU debates and production of a toolkit for participation (January 2008-June 2009)
- Common campaign on the new Commission (July-September 2009)
- Common work on the review of the EU budget (2008-2009)

2. 3. Network Development

Context - The CSCG's added value is not only its common "outcomes" but also the network it provides and the possibility to develop exchanges and intelligence-sharing on strategic issues, beyond traditional alliances.

Areas covered

- Strengthening the network
- Intelligence-sharing

Specific objectives – The CSCG should seek to further develop the capacity of its members' networks to get involved in a structured civil dialogue, building upon the strong links that were made over the years. It will focus in particular on developing better networking tools so as to pool resources from the members, increase mutual knowledge among the networks (including beyond the directors' level) and support further trans-sectorial coalitions.

Main activities

- Develop new networking and communication tools (first semester 2007)
- Regular exchange on policy issues¹ (ongoing)
- Intelligence-sharing on strategic issues² (ongoing)

¹ Through "lunch debates": networks' members will present and moderate debate on key issues (e.g. sustainable development strategy, major challenges in field of Justice and Home Affairs, migration, inter-cultural learning, Millennium Development Goals, Trade, European Year of Equal Opportunities, of Intercultural Dialogue...). CSCG will provide logistics, but the meetings should be quite informal and not require much preparation work. Each network will be responsible for one meeting per year (+ possibility of joint meetings on cross-cutting issues).

² Every second CSCG meeting: such meetings could deal with common challenges, including for instance upcoming presidencies, mainstreaming, financial perspectives, "European years" (2007: equal opportunities, 2008: intercultural dialogue). They would serve as a platform for members to share know-how and practical experience.

3. Annual priorities and repartition of work

Each year, priority will be given to a specific working area. While in 2007 the CSCG will focus in particular on networking and building upon its work on participatory democracy, 2008 and 2009 will be devoted in particular to setting up the activity around the EP elections, the review of the EU budget and the development of a common vision on the implementation of Article II-2b of the new treaty. The table below identifies annual priorities.

2007 <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Participatory democracy (whole year): follow-up study and major debates➤ 50th anniversary (January-March): common manifesto➤ Networking tools (April-June): developing new tools
2008 <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Participatory Democracy: discuss the concept further and prepare a position on the implementation of Article II-8b in t he new treaty➤ Review of EU budget (whole year): contribute to open up the debate on the EU budget to a wider NGO group➤ EP election activity (whole year): development and dissemination of a common manifesto, development of a toolkit
2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ EP election campaign: manifesto and publication of toolkit and support to national campaigns (until June)➤ New European Commission (July-September): campaign based on manifesto