COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE
DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE COMMUNICATION

Citizens
Citizens Programme

Bruxelles, le 10/07/2014
COMM C2/SB/CLC-fvh(2014)

DRAFT REPORT -CIVIL DIALOGUE MEETING-10 JUNE 2014

1. Welcome – approval of the agenda and of the previous meeting report:

The meeting was chaired by Sophie BEERNAERTS, Head of Unit COMM.C2 "Citizens Programme".

Sophie BEERNAERTS welcomed the participants and expressed her satisfaction on the adoption of the Programme and its entry into force last April further to the completion of the UK national procedure.

She presented the agenda; an important point in the meeting was to discuss the political priorities for the programme in 2015 so that they could be taken into account in the Commission's proposal. The agenda was approved.

No comments were made on the minutes of the last meeting held on 6 December 2013 and the minutes were thus deemed approved.

2. Framework of the Civil Dialogue:

Cécile LE CLERCQ presented the proposed framework of the Civil Dialogue in matters covered by the Europe for Citizens Programme. The main novelty was that such dialogue is now expressly requested in the Council Decision adopting the Europe for Citizens programme 2014-2020 (article 10).

The Commission proposed to change the name from "structured dialogue" to "civil dialogue" to better reflects the spirit of the mandate of this group.

The mandate is to hold regular dialogues on all topics related to the Europe for citizens' programme and to provide to the participants a space for sharing experiences, presenting their results in view of increasing the programme impact. It also provides the opportunity to discuss and monitor other relevant policies.

The dialogues are to take place twice a year, with the possibility to create specific working groups.

Participants to the Civil Dialogue are mainly the recipients of an operating grant under the current and former EFC programme; however it can be open to other relevant organisations when appropriate. Membership of the group may be ended. Members of the group which have not yet done so were invited to register in the Transparency Register[1]

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/info/homePage.doc

for organisations and individuals engaged in EU policy-making and policy implementation, providing information on open consultations, events, conferences and hearings related to their field of activity.

The European Commission covers travel and subsistence expenses for one representative per organisation when coming from outside Brussels.

Discussion:

Euclid Network asked the European Commission to inform the participants on the future dates of the civil dialogue meetings well in advance. It was proposed to send a "save the date" 6 to 8 weeks in advance, to be followed by the confirmation when the meeting room is firmly booked - at least three weeks in advance.

The European Civic Forum raised the question of a possible mechanism for the Group to have a say in the Commission work programme. Sophie Beernaerts explained that different services were responsible for preparing the work programme in their policy areas. As a follow up to the EYC2013, DG COMM would further develop relations with other services involved in civil dialogue. As regards the EFC programme, the Group will be consulted (as is the case today) on the elaboration of the political priorities for the EFC work programme.

The proposed framework was adopted.

3. Policy developments linked to the EU citizenship:

3.1 After the 2014 EP elections – analysis of result and future prospects (Janis A. Emmanouilidis, European Policy Centre); what role for the programme and its participants.

Janis A. Emmanouilidis presented a brief analysis of results of the European elections 2014:

i. Turnout

Turnout in these European elections was 43, 09%, namely 0, 09% higher than in 2009. He insisted on taking these numbers cautiously (⇔ not celebrating any "achievement" to stop the decreasing trend) as the turnout was very low in some countries, and especially within the young people; in other countries, such as in Germany where the European elections coincided with the local elections, there was a significant increase in turnout; there were also more voters for "anti" forces.

Moreover, he underlined that a turnout below 50% didn't mean that European elections were not legitimate.

ii. Analysis of the "anti" forces:

As foreseen, there is a clear and substantial increase of the "anti" forces (characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity, covering anti-Euro, anti-immigration, anti-globalisation, anti-elites, etc) compared to 2009 even if the phenomenon was not as high as predicted. It appears more as a protest vote from people discontent with the current economic situation in Europe and with Europe as it stands, than a rejection of the integration process.

iii. Long-term consequences

It is likely that the European Parliament would be able to cope with the results as 68% of the seats consist in the traditional parties and they can form a coalition against the "anti"

forces. Furthermore, there is no coherence between the “anti” forces and therefore less risks of coalitions between them.

On the other side, the rise of the “anti” forces will influence the national policy making, which will make it more difficult to find consensus in the Council.

iv. The new President of European Commission.

It was difficult to make a prognosis as regards the Council proposal. Finally, this personalization of the EU debate has led to some politicization of Europe elections. Janis A. Emmanouilidis highlighted that the "top candidates"' experience was an experiment, not clearly designed in the Lisbon Treaty and that the parties would have to draw conclusions of their respective campaigns.

Discussion:

Institut für Europäische Politik - (IEP) suggested developing clear cases against the arguments of the "anti" forces. He insisted on the need to better inform citizens on the functioning of the EU institutions and on the benefits of being a European citizen. He suggested to hold the European elections either on the same day or to combine them with national elections. He highlighted the importance to strengthen the idea of EU parties and the visibility of those EU parties. Finally, he pointed out the issue of migration and the need to work on the fears raised by free movement and proposed to add this point to the agenda of a next civil dialogue meeting.

ALDA emphasized the liaison role of the CSOs between the European institutions and citizens, in sharing proper information on European issues, and on keeping the dialogue open with them. Moreover, she highlighted the importance of having a constant reality check directly with citizens. She also insisted on the European dimension of the European elections which is currently missing to the benefit of the national dimension.

European Alternatives also insisted on the importance of giving a European dimension to the European elections. She pointed out the quite strong phenomenon of xenophobia existing in many Member States and she insisted on the need for EU programmes, notably the EFC programme to further look at the threats to European democracy.

The European Civic Forum made a difference between the far-right (more anti-immigration) and the far-left (more anti-Europe). Euroscepticism is gaining field and the role of the EFC programme should be to fight against this trend. She underlined the role of CSOs in strengthening the image of the European Union, enhancing civil participation, listening to the citizens and getting them collectively engaged. But to be convinced that their voice is actually heard, CSOs need to get feedback from the EU institutions.

Fundacion JUSTE emphasized the fact that the European elections 2014 campaign focused more on participation to the elections and not sufficiently on concrete policies. He suggested opening the possibility to vote for European candidates (and not only for their nationals). He finally stressed the need to reinforce the role of the CSOs which need to listen more to the citizens, engage at local level and reduce the lack of information in some Member States.

ECAS asked not to take for granted what already exists. She insisted on the necessity to make instruments that already exist (ECI) more efficient before creating new ones. She encouraged the participants to work together to improve the situation and raise awareness on European issues.

ENNA (UK) insisted on the need to re-engage the EU citizens in the European affairs showing them the advantages of being a European citizen notably to go through the economic crisis, in informing better on the role of the European Parliament (importance

of the Media) and of the MEPs, and creating a real reform of the Institutions and a genuine commitment on developing the dialogue with the citizens (Agora).

Euroclio underlined the importance of educating and informing citizens (informal education) not only about European political issues but also about simply things of their daily life. She recommended working in smaller groups at the next civil dialogue meeting.

European Academy Berlin highlighted the importance of an honest dialogue with EU-citizens and to evaluate the results of this dialogue.

PROVIDUS emphasised the need to focus on projects addressing the non-organised citizens who are not represented by any organisation.

CEDAG proposed some keys to avoid the fragmentation of Europe, notably to come closer to EU-Citizens and gain a social cohesion, and to mainstream the idea of Civil Dialogue, notably in structural funds.

European Movement International stressed the protest character of the EE2014 and the need for pro-Europeans to express their views.

Confrontations Europe also mentioned the "wake-up call" aspect of these European elections. She insisted on the requirement to listen to all the voters, to give them the possibility to contribute in the European decision making process. She suggested also to further developing networking among CSOs.

For the European House Hungary there is a need to combine efforts of the different affiliates not only at European level but also at national level and to find new ways of conveying the voice of the citizens.

Euclid Network suggested bringing down the problems, identifying the target groups with which they want to work. She gave the example of young people who feel that European policies failed and underscored the importance of listening to the citizens and to what they want to do for Europe and she stressed the importance of addressing the right messages to the right target groups. She also proposed to engage with national authorities and not only Brussels based institutions.

European Volunteer Centre called to be more careful about using the right words (example, not immigration "problems" ; decisions "made in Brussels", etc) within the civil dialogue and in general. She asked to work on the fears that EU citizens are feeling because of the misinformation disseminated by the media.

Social Platform underlined the need to set up clear European priorities for the next 5 years and to discuss scenarios linked to the political agenda of the European Council and of the European Parliament. He also sustained the need to link remembrance activities with the high percentage of extreme right votes in the recent European elections. Finally, he suggested to invite other CSOs not funded by the EFC programme but by other programmes and to invite high level representatives of the EU institutions.

Janis A. Emmanouilidis concluded the discussion insisting on the necessity of a constant reality check, agreeing on the importance to better inform and educate the EU citizens, especially the young people, on European democracy and on the need to initiate a transnational dialogue. He insisted on the need to be humble and in not raising wrong expectations in areas which are not European but national competencies.

Sophie Beernaerts underlined the relevance of the Europe for citizens' Programme to debate about the European Union's aims and to bring Europe closer to its citizens at local level. She highlighted the need to continue involving the citizens on European issues, to work on their fears and fight the hatred discourses.

She also insisted in the need to find new ways to address remote and non-organised citizens, to reinforce the networking between CSOs and further structure civil society at European level. She agreed to invite more associations from other programmes and high level speakers and to work on mainstreaming the Civil Dialogue within the Commission.

3.2. An Action Plan for Europe: EESC's proposals for a democratic and civic union (Cristian Pïrvulescu, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee).

Canceled

3.3. Preparatory action on a "European Civil society House": presentation on the feasibility study (Petra Van Nierop, ICF-GHK) and follow-up (Cécile Le Clercq, DG COMM).

Petra Van Nierop, ICF-GHK, presented the nearly final results of the feasibility study on the European Civil Society House (see PowerPoint – presentation attached)

She explained the methodology of the research used in the last 10 months and underlined the needs of the citizens and CSOs. In response to currently or partially unmet needs, three possible scenarios were analysed by the study:

a) Baseline scenario

b) Developing and strengthening of activities by existing structures

c) European Civil Society House

Discussion

Several participants agreed that the scenario 2 was indeed the best option, underlying the importance to work with the local authorities, using the existing networks and alliances and trying to reach and engage non organised civil society organisations. The question of the financial and human resources was also raised as well as the lack of information in some cases of the national authorities (and the local Media).

If the cascade model is seen as very efficient, it was strongly recommended having a two ways communication (bottom-up and top-down).

The necessity to strengthen the existing networks and to include all multipliers was also raised underlying the importance to bring together the different European voices. Innovative ways to reach the citizens should be investigated.

Petra Van Nierop agreed on the key role of the local authorities in disseminating the information, on the need to use the local level as a first contact point between the citizens and the CSOs and to take into account the different views of EU citizens on Europe.

Sophie BEERNAERTS underlined some ideas, such as the need of:

- ✓ Better connections between CSOs at EU level, between the local and national level, and with policy makers.
- ✓ Better use existing tools, such as European Direct Information Centers and of the European Public Spaces in the Commission Representations in the Member States, that can help coordinating positions, distributing information and initiating some debates.

Increasing the effectiveness of our collective work and strengthening the voice of civil society in Europe. She welcomed the EYCA Alliance's work in that respect.

She proposed to establish a working group to see how to make the best use of existing structures and alliances. Some participants already expressed their interest to take part in this group: Alexandrina Najmowicz, European Civic Forum; Pierre Baussand, Social Platform; Assya Kavrakova, ECAS; Baumann Mechthild, European Academy; IEP; Thomas Heckeberg, EUnet.

4. Europe for Citizens Programme

4.1. Discussion on the political priorities for 2015 (Jutta Koenig-Georgiades, DG COMM).

Jutta Koenig-Georgiades introduced the debate on the 2015 priorities by presenting the two priorities already identified for the two strands:

Strand 1: Commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II

Strand 2: Debate on the future of Europe/ 65th anniversary of the Schuman declaration

Discussion:

A participant suggested having more balance between the past and the future, to be more creative. He proposed the themes "The EU in 5/10 years"; "How can we bring a positive message to the EU citizens". Another suggestion was to focus on the themes relating with the protection of minorities "Human rights and fight against xenophobia", "how to create a transnational movement for a democratic Europe". The Social Platform requested more focus on the economic and social engagement.

ALDA suggested building on the EYCA recommendations (monitoring of the implementation of the EYCA recommendations). Sophie Beernaerts answered that all EYCA recommendations are not applicable as such for the EFC programme and only some of them can be reframed as annual priorities. Another member asked to focus on the EU enlargement to the Western Balkans and Sophie Beernaerts agreed that we need also to take into account the new architecture of Europe.

CEMR argued that the current “hot” EU topic is unemployment; priorities should therefore focus on job creation and how to give a positive image of the EU to the citizens. IEP recommended to show citizens how they can participate between elections and suggested to focus the debate on the review of the ECI and to speak on policies and not only on the architecture of Europe.

Other participants would like to have a priority on cooperation and intergenerational solidarity and a focus on the future of Europe.

Summary:

- ✓ Future of Europe: architecture AND Policies that have an impact on citizens (Hot topics)
- ✓ Implementation of the EYCA recommendations
- ✓ consequences of the European elections
- ✓ Solidarity and cooperation
- ✓ European integration – new enlargement process (not the 10th anniversary...)
- ✓ Human rights and fight against xenophobia

4.2. State of play of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020 (DG COMM/EACEA).

Inna Petrenko (EACEA) presented the state of play on the implementation of the EFC programme taking into account the late adoption of the programme.

The first consequence was the need to postpone the first deadline for submitting applications for projects under Strand 1 (Remembrance) from March to 4 June 2014. More than 1.000 applications from the 28 member states were submitted within this first deadline, showing that this had not affected the interest of organisations.

The evaluation committee is to take place end of July; publication of the results is foreseen in the beginning of August.

As regards the operating grants, the decision was not made at the time of the meeting (NB: since then the list of selected organisations was published at the link below). EACEA had received 161 applications from 23 member states.

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens/selection-results/comm-c201-2013-selection-results-structural-support-for-european-public-policy-research_en

Discussion/questions:

Regarding the September 1st deadline for projects under strand 2, results of that selection are due, in accordance to the Programme Guide, at the latest four months after the application deadline. As usual - and in particular this year – the EACEA will try to speed the process at the utmost, and aims at publishing the results by mid-November.

4.3. Sharing experience: Multimedia contributions from a training project (Volonteurope).

Powerpoint presentation – attached.

5. State of play of related DG COMM initiatives

5.1. European Year of Citizens 2013: Preliminary results of the external evaluation (DG COMM).

Powerpoint presentation – attached

Discussion:

Alexandrina Najmowicz presented the main achievements of the EYCA during the EYC 2013. The results of the EYC evaluation were satisfactory. EYCA succeeded reaching out 62 organisations representing more than 5.000 networks and articulating the different CSOs' voices. Their next challenge is now to put the EYCA recommendation into practice and they are looking forward to receiving Commission feedback on these.

Sophie Beernaerts suggested inviting representatives of the DGs concerned by the EYCA recommendations at the next Civil Dialogue meeting.

ALDA expressed the need to create a bridge between the EYC2013 and the next European Year on development 2015 and to use the EYCA alliance in order to provide a citizens' dimension.

5.2. Pilot project - the promise of the EU (John Macdonald - DG COMM).

Powerpoint presentation – attached

Discussion:

Some members questioned the title "promise for Europe" arguing that people are fed up with promises and they need concrete actions from the EU. One suggested having as a title: "Benefits of the EU".

Some members would like to be involved and asked how to do so. John Macdonald pointed out that any persons interested in taking part in the keynote event for the 'Promise of the EU' pilot project, at the Maxxi Museum in Rome on 12 & 13 September, should contact the person in charge of the pilot project, Mr Jaime Andreu Romeo (email: Jaime.andreu-romeo@ec.europa.eu, tel.: +32 229-99252).

6. A.O.B.

- Announcement on publication on "Citizens' participation at the local level in Europe and neighbouring countries" *(ALDA*).
ALDA presented their new publication and all the work done ahead of its release. This publication was an opportunity for practioners to express their view on the different subjects of the book. It's a compilation of reflexions, ideas, suggestions and conclusions.

- ENNA invited delegates to EESC for the launch of a job portal.

-Items proposed for the next meeting.

- ✓ Going local, cooperation with EDICs.
- ✓ Follow up to the EYCA recommendations
- ✓ Fears raised by free movement

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