

Dear all

Find below the last weekly news of 2008. In early 2009 they should hopefully appear in new clothes.

We have quite some new readers this week: welcome to them!

Let me also take this opportunity to wish you Merry Christmas and a relaxing holiday!

Yours,
Regula

Civil Society Contact Group raises concerns on EU budget review consultation

The Civil Society Contact Group this week sent a letter to commissioner Grybauskaitė raising concerns about the summery and conference presenting the outcomes of the consultation on the EU Budget reform. Main concerns raised in the letter are

- the too high a level of abstraction in the summary of the consultation responses both in the written form and in the way presented in the conference
- the lack of reference to solidarity as a driver in EU policy and EU budgetary planning in the consultation summary
- the question of legitimacy of the budget and engagement of European citizens with the EU through transparency of the income side is not reflected in the summary
- In terms of the choice of speakers and panel members for the conference sessions (plenary and workshop sessions) we feel that a ratio of 3 women among a total of 38 speakers displays a clear lack of gender balance and a lack of gender awareness.

In the letter we ask for a meeting with the commissioner in order to discuss these concerns and the next steps of the review.

Find the letter [here](#).

Civil Society Contact Group lunch debate on “How to improve the relations between NGOs and the Council of the EU?”

On Monday 15 December 30 NGO representatives coming from all eight sectors forming the EU Civil Society Contact Group met for a lunch debate to discuss the relations between NGOs and the Council. The debate was the opportunity to present the outcomes of a Civil Society Contact Group survey on the issue and draft recommendations. CONCORD, Social Platform and the European Peace Building Liaison Office EPLO, a member of the Human Rights and Democracy Network, presented their experience in working with the Council. Main features of their experiences are:

- all three sector used one specific opportunity as a door opener with the Council and to set the precedence
- it is crucial to explain the representativeness of the network and make use of the complementarity with the activities of the national members
- it is important to anticipate the work at least one year in advance and negotiate with the future presidencies on priorities in order to have an influence on the agenda

The recommendations on how to improve the relations between NGOs and the Council can be commented until January 16 by sending an email to coordinator@act4europe.org.

Find the draft survey report including the recommendations [here](#).

Find notes of the lunch debate [here](#).

Find the invitation including the program of the event [here](#).

The Civil Society Contact Group adopts a strategic plan for 2009-2011

The steering group on December 2 adopted a strategic plan 2009-2011, the annual work program 2009, and a document presenting the updated mission statement and explaining the governance of the Civil Society Contact Group.

You can find the minutes of this meeting covering also some other issue [here](#).

Find here the [strategic plan](#), the [work program 2009](#) and the [“Mission, Vision and Governance”](#) document.

The Civil Society Contact Group recruited a new coordinator

Regula Heggli will leave the position of coordinator of the Civil Society Contact Group at the end of January 2009. The position will be taken over from February by Laetitia Sedou. She has been the European coordinator for the World Organisation against Torture OMCT, a member of the Human Rights and Democracy Network, for the last 7 years. Dates for handover are foreseen in January and she will participate in the steering group meeting on January 15th.

Lisbon Treaty in force by the end of 2009?

During last week's summit the EU heads of states and governments agreed to add an 'Irish protocol' to the Lisbon Treaty in order to allow for a second referendum in Ireland. The protocol will explicitly guarantee

- the Irish neutrality
- the independence in tax issues
- the respect of the Irish laws on abortion, education and family

Most importantly the Lisbon Treaty will be changed in such a way that in the future each Member State will still have a Commissioner. The Treaty originally foresaw to reduce the number of Commissioner and introduce a system of rotation. In return the Irish government committed to ratify the Lisbon Treaty by October 2009.

Read more about the issue on <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/lisbon-treaty-revote-linked-croatia-eu-entry/article-178043> and <http://euobserver.com/15/27295>

Read a comment on <http://euobserver.com/7/27296>

European Parliament elections 2009

The European Socialist at the beginning of December presented their manifesto for the European Parliament elections to be held on 4-7 June 2009. The European Socialists propose a strategy for green growth and jobs. Civil Society Contact Group member CONCORD at the end of November presented its manifesto. For CONCORD the three overarching objectives for the EU are

- sustainable development
- more and better development aid
- democratic accountability

The Human Rights and Democracy Network HRDN has also already published a manifesto. The Civil Society Contact Group will launch a toolkit for civil society actors at local and national level to support them in their actions around the elections in early January.

Read the PES manifesto on http://www.pes.org/downloads/PES_manifesto_2009-EN.pdf

Discuss the PES manifesto on <http://manifesto2009.pes.org/en/documents/>

Find the CONCORD manifesto on

http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/internetdocumentsENG/4_Publications/3_CONCORDs_positions_and_studies/CONCORD-EU-MANIFESTO-FINAL.pdf

Find the HRDN manifesto on

<http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/about.asp?Page=41&menuPage=3>

Parliament calls for structured civil dialogue at EU level

The Constitutional Affairs committee AFCO of the European Parliament last week adopted a report on developing civil dialogue at EU level. Drafted by Genowefa Grabowska (Socialist, Poland), the report calls for

- an interinstitutional agreement on civil dialogue
- the adoption of binding guidelines concerning the appointment of civil society representatives
- methods for organising consultation
- methods for organising the funding of civil society

The AFCO committee also calls on the European Commission to adopt a proposal for statute for European association and proper funding for civil dialogue and civil society. The report will be voted by the European Parliament plenary in January 2009.

Find the report on

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/pr/742/742208/742208en.pdf

Find the amendments on

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/am/749/749790/749790en.pdf

Proposal on joint Commission and Parliament lobby-register in first half of 2009

The European Commission and Parliament on Tuesday December 16 formed a working group with the aim of preparing a proposal for a common lobby-register of the two institutions. The Council of the EU was invited to join but had earlier declared that it didn't see the need for the Council to improve transparency on lobbyism. The working group consists of commissioner Siim Kallas and European Parliamentarians Diana Wallis, Ingo Friedrich and Jo Leinen. Objective of the undertaking is to clarify

- the objective of a common lobby-register
- the main features such as coverage, information requested, code of conduction and sanctions
- technical and financial implications of a single register

Find an article about the issue on <http://euobserver.com/9/27310/?rk=1>

And the worst lobbying tactics in 2008 are...

The Worst EU Lobbying Award is the annual award for deceptive, manipulative or unethical lobbying organised by Cooperate Europe Observatory, Friends of the Earth Europe, LobbyControl and Spinwatch.

- Winner in the worst lobbying tactics category is the Agrofuels Lobby – nominated for their lobbying campaigns trying to convince decision makers that agrofuels are sustainable and green.
- Winner in the worst conflict of interest is Piia-Noora Kauppi, a Finnish member of the European Parliament for having being very active on financial regulation issues while being hired to work for the Federation of Finnish Financial Services, a grouping of banks and insurance firms

For more info go to www.worstlobby.eu

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The EU Civil Society Contact Group brings together eight large European NGO platforms in the following fields: culture (culture action europe), development (CONCORD), environment (Green 10), human rights (HRDN), lifelong learning (EUCIS-LLL), public health (EPHA), social (Social Platform) and women (EWL). Together we work to develop the dialogue between civil society organisations and the EU institutions as an essential part of strengthening participatory democracy.

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