

European Parliament supports civil dialogue

The European Parliament this week adopted a report by Polish Socialist Genowefa Grabowska calling for a more structured dialogue between EU institutions and civil society. The report calls for the adoption of an inter-institutional agreement on civil dialogue including

- binding guidelines concerning the appointment of civil society representatives
- methods for consultations
- funding of civil society

Analysing the report in EurActiv, Roshan Di Puppo, director of the Social Platform said "the Lisbon Treaty recognises that involving citizens beyond traditional representative democracy is actually a fundamental principle of modern democracy. The fact that the European Parliament takes this very seriously and wants to strengthen civil dialogue is very positive since MEPs are the ones representing citizens in the European Union".

Find the report on <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A6-2008-0475&language=EN&mode=XML>

Read the EurActiv article on <http://www.euractiv.com/en/social/europe/meps-push-structured-dialogue-eu-citizens/article-178503>

Find the Civil Society Contact Group study "Civil Dialogue: making it work better" on <http://www.act4europe.org/civildialogue>

Lisbon Treaty: next steps

EU heads of states and governments in December agreed to provide legal guarantees to Ireland that the new EU Treaty would not affect Ireland's neutrality and tax autonomy. The Czech EU presidency now has the task to develop these provisions. Irish lawyers, the Council's legal services and the European Commission will be working on them. The Irish government has not yet announced a date for the second referendum. It is though expected to take place in autumn. A recent poll showed that a majority of Irish voters may support the Lisbon Treaty in a second referendum. UK conservative opposition leader, David Cameron, has promised to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in autumn, if his party wins elections earlier in the year.

Click below to read articles on

the preparation of the legal guarantees on <http://euobserver.com/18/27371>

the recent Irish poll <http://euobserver.com/18/27385>

the UK referendum <http://euobserver.com/9/27408/?rk=1>

ALDE campaign for European Parliament presidency

The leader of the Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Graham Watson announced his intention to run for president of the European Parliament. With his unusual move he aims at opening a debate about the role and priorities of the next Parliament president. Until now presidents of the European Parliament were designated behind closed doors between the two largest political groups, the Socialists and center-right EPP-ED.

Write more about Watson's move on <http://www.euractiv.com/en/eu-elections/watson-runs-european-parliament-presidency/article-178355>

"A social and green agenda for the next decade" - Kick off conference, 29 & 30 January 2009, Residence Palace, Brussels

The European Environment Bureau (EEB), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Social Platform see 2009 as a crucial year in setting a truly sustainable agenda. A new European Commission will start its work with setting out its five year strategic objectives and the budget implications. Therefore, the EEB, ETUC and the Social Platform have decided to launch a participatory campaign to develop ideas and create a broad consensus on a *Social and Green Agenda for the next Decade*, for promotion to the new European Commission and European Parliament as well as to the EU Member States.

As an outcome of this debate a two layered Agenda for the Next Decade will be adopted and consist of:

- A short document agreed by all civil society organizations, outlining the vision, the key challenges, targets and priority actions for the coming decade.
- More detailed proposals/strategies coming from working groups that are supporting the main document but that do not necessarily need to be subscribed by all civil society actors.

On 29 & 30 January 2009 a Kick off Conference will be organized to start the preparatory process of developing a sustainable agenda for the next decade.

Find the conference program, registration form and campaign paper on <http://www.socialplatform.org/Events.asp?event=20005>

If you want to have more information about this event or register to participate as observer please contact: sabrina.bijlsma@eeb.org.

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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.