



Monitoring and Evaluating the State of the Rights to European Active Citizenship

Taking the rights to European active citizenship seriously

Rationale and expected results of the project

30 May, 2008

The project is intended to face and, if possible, overcome two major paradoxes in European attitude towards citizens' organizations operating in the EU policy making realm.

The first paradox is that, despite their growing relevance in official documents as well as in public discourse, the reality of Autonomous Citizens' Organizations is very bad known. Apart the "Brussels-based" NGOs, indeed, few or no information is available on what citizens' organizations do, what problems have to face in their relation with public institutions, what is their contribution to a bottom-up European integration and to the building of European citizenship.

The second paradox is that, while several rights of citizens as individuals have been established in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, on the contrary a juridical void on their rights as organized entities does exist. This void is more and more concerning since citizens' organizations are expected to play a relevant role in policy making at EU level, and it is really damaging if we consider that one of the main features of European citizenship is the paradigm of citizens' daily activism in the public arena.

On the base of the European Charter of Active Citizenship, set up in 2006 with the support of the DG EAC of the European Commission, the project is trying to solve these paradoxes with two main strategies and two corresponding tools. The first strategy is to gather information on the state of the rights to active citizenship at national as well as at EU level with the support of a checklist operated by partner organizations. The second strategy is to carry out an evaluation of the state of active citizenship rights in each country involved in the project and at EU level, using a matrix for the scoring of existing situations.

Thanks to the checklist and the matrix, that are going to be set up, tested and reviewed during the project, a common toolbox for the improvement of the implementation of active citizenship rights in Europe will be available for everyone, especially citizens' organizations, but also experts, public administrations and the media. A first example of this common use is the decision of the Marche Region administration to use the toolbox for reviewing its policy towards citizens' organizations in a European framework.

Lastly, on the citizens' organizations side, it must be highlighted that the use of the toolbox can be considered as a concrete exercise of two very important rights of the European Charter of Active Citizenship: the right to intervention (no. 5) and the right to evaluate (no. 9).