Public Institutions Interacting with Citizens' Organizations:

A survey on public policies
regarding civic activism in Europe

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CITIZENS FOR THE NEW EUROPE PROJECT

INDEX

FOREWORD

This document contains information on the main results and findings of the Survey on public policies regarding civic activism in the 28 "New Europe" countries (25 old and new European Union member states and 3 candidate countries)[1] and at the European Union (EU) level, which is the focus of the Citizens for the New Europe project.

Citizens for the New Europe is a project promoted by Active Citizenship Network (ACN) – the European policy program of the Italian movement Cittadinanzattiva[2] – intended to support national-based citizens' organizations of the 28 New Europe countries in their efforts to be involved in the building of European citizenship. The project was supported by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture, and by private companies (Bristol Myers Squibb, GE Medical Systems, Bank Pekao, Unicredito Italiano, Alitalia). The project was implemented between September 2002 and December 2003 and involved as partners 32 citizens' organizations operating at the national level.

The general aim of the project is to promote a European policy on citizens' organizations, regarding both the European Union institutions and national governments. The rationale for this project can be summarized as follows:
- The gap between EU institutions and European citizens is one of the main reasons behind the needed reform of the European Union;
- Civic organizations – and especially those operating at the national level, in close relationship with common citizens – can contribute to fill this gap;
- A global EU policy on citizens' organizations, which involves national institutions and values their role in strengthening democracy, is missing;
- There is a need to involve national-based citizens' organizations in defining and implementing this policy;
- This involvement should start with the production of relevant information on the situation.

The project has, therefore, two sides:
- A cognitive side, consisting in creating an information base on public policies on civic activism in Europe;
- A policy side, consisting in setting up a program to strengthen citizens' organizations at the national and European levels, to be implemented at the end of the project.

Regarding the cognitive side, Active Citizenship Network chose to conduct a survey, because it's a type of research that aims at collecting a small amount of information in a broad number of situations, privileging breadth over depth. Therefore, surveys are appropriate in situations where basic knowledge is lacking.

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[1] Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom.
[2] www.cittadinanzattiva.it, www.activecitizenship.net

The rationale for this kind of research is precisely the lack of basic information on civic activism in the European Union. This includes both the entire phenomenon of civic activism as well as the attitude and behavior of public institutions and other actors towards citizens' organizations.

The Survey's purpose is simply to create a base of general information on public policies on civic activism in Europe. This base can then further enable more focused and in-depth research, along with policy activities aimed at enhancing national and European institutions' attention to citizens' organizations.

The cognitive value of the Survey regards more the European trends than the specific national situations. Nevertheless, the results can be considered as a benchmarking tool for national situations.

The Survey was implemented involving 32 partner organizations operating in the 28 New Europe countries and directed by the Active Citizenship Network (ACN) staff; Charlotte Roffiaen, Melody Ross and Giovanni Moro (director of the research). Giulia Savarese cooperated in the data processing.

This report is divided into four main sections. The first contains information on the methodology, structure and implementation process of the research. In the second, the main results, on the general part of the Survey, are reported. The third section is devoted to the results of the focuses on health, consumer and environmental policies. The fourth and final section has a summary of the findings and some conclusive remarks. Some relevant documents are published as appendixes of the report.

A. THE SURVEY

a. Conceptual framework

The research design and implementation were developed on the basis of two key-concepts.

The first is *civic organization* (or active citizenship, or civic activism, or citizens' organization): it refers to every organization – whatever its scope, size, juridical status, motivation, membership – which is self-created and self-managed by citizens. A civic organization is set up mainly on a voluntary basis. It is active in the area of public policies and aims at protecting citizens' rights and/or taking care of common goods. It does not seek profit and acts in the general interest[3].

The second is *public policy*, which means the sum of actions taken by public authorities in the face of a public problem. These actions are usually broken down into:
- setting the agenda on public issues;
- planning strategies and programs;
- making decisions in the forms of laws, regulations, operational decisions, etc.;
- implementing the plan through actions, structures, resources, etc.;
- evaluating the outcomes and impact of the plan.

On the basis of these two concepts, the object of the Survey can be more clearly defined as the public policies towards civic organizations in the New Europe, meaning the way authorities recognize and promote the role of citizens' organizations as actors in public life.

It is important to point out some implications of these two concepts as guides for this research:
- that not all "civil society" or "nonprofit" organizations are relevant for this Survey, but only those established by citizens to actively participate in the care for common goods and the protection of rights;
- that not all forms of commitment of the state for citizens' organizations are relevant, but only those related to involving citizens in the exercise of governing responsibilities in public policy making.

The theoretical background of this methodological choice is that civic activism goes beyond the traditional principle of the *freedom of association*, which allows people to freely get together for the fulfillment of their own interests. This implies that the state is indifferent to the citizens' purposes as long as they don't infringe the law.

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[3] The protection of all citizens' rights (which include right to health care, right to education and culture, consumer's rights, rights of people with specific needs like disabled, etc.) and the care of common goods (like the environment and all its components, the cultural patrimony, etc.) cover the main activities of general interest carried out by civic organizations, which is the reason why we will indifferently refer to one or the other.

However, the principle of *horizontal subsidiarity*[4], which is at the core of this study, requires that the state should recognize and encourage the activities of citizens operating in the general interest because they are essential actors of public policies. This is what we mean by public policies on civic activism.

b. Design and methodology

The *subject* of the Survey was therefore the identification and brief description of the current public policies towards civic activism in the 28 countries of New Europe, and at the EU level itself.

Being a survey, the research was limited to pursuing the following *goals:*
- Identifying current public policies on civic activism at national and European levels in the New Europe area;
- Briefly describing their basic characteristics;
- Gathering suggestions for the subsequent analysis of the results, and proposing measures aimed at overcoming obstacles and weaknesses of these policies.

The Survey included two kind of *activities:*
- Gathering data, materials and information;
- Collecting opinions and evaluations.

The *gathering of data, materials and information* had the goal of identifying the existing policies on civic activism at the national and European levels. This was done through a *form* completed by the partner organizations. They drew on national studies and reports, laws, regulations and other official documents as their main sources. The form was structured according to three areas:
- basic information on the civic activism phenomenon;
- general policies;
- focuses on health, consumer policy and environment, plus two other focuses chosen by the partner organizations in relation to their national situation[5].

The *collecting of opinions and evaluations* was used for an early assessment of the actual level of implementation of the laws and programs, identification of problems and obstacles as well as achievements and results. This was done using a brief *questionnaire* that was sent by e-mail to six people (three representatives of civic organizations, a scholar, a journalist and a private sector representative) in each country.

The same methodology and tools were used at the European Union level.

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[4] Cf. Active Citizenship Network, http://www.activecitizenship.net/projects/rethinking.htm

[5] In this report are analyzed only the results of the three common focuses, while the two free focuses (chosen among: social protection, education, international cooperation, women's rights, justice, local development) have been used for integrating the general part of the Survey. The good practices linked to the three main focuses have been also integrated into the general part.

The basic concepts of the Survey, the methodological design and the research tools were discussed with the partners and modified on the basis of their feedback.

c. Development

The preliminary and preparatory phases of the Survey were developed between September 2002 and February 2003. In that period two main activities were carried out: first, the preparatory studies (aimed specifically at identifying possible precedents of the Survey and at collecting any previous national or transnational studies) and then the methodological design of the Survey[6]. Second, the partner organizations were identified and two meetings were held in Rome (January and February 2003) to discuss the methodology and agree on an implementation plan for the Survey. There were 32 partner organizations, one for each country, except for Ireland and Luxembourg, where partners were not found, and Poland, Spain, Bulgaria and Slovak Republic, where more than one organization participated in the project[7]. Therefore, the national data used in this report comes from 26 out of the 28 countries of the New Europe, excluding Ireland and Luxembourg. Cittadinanzattiva directly carried out the Survey for Italy and the European Union. The Italian case was used as a model by the partner organizations.

The implementation phase of the Survey started in March 2003 and lasted until June 2003. During that period, the partner organizations filled out the form with information gathered at the national level, while ACN staff did the same at the EU level, and sent out the questionnaires for the collection of opinions to the people identified by the partners.

July and August 2003 were devoted to reviewing the collected information, making verifications and collecting the completed questionnaires while September and October 2003 were dedicated to analyzing the gathered data and writing the draft report.

The draft report was presented and discussed in a conference organized in Warsaw (Poland) on 7 to 8 November 2003, in cooperation with the Association of Polish Consumers. Some 100 participants, coming from the New Europe countries, took part in the discussion among whom were civic leaders from partner and other organizations, representatives of national and European institutions, the private sector and journalists.

From December 2003 to February 2004, a revision and the final version of the report was written, taking into account the various comments, suggestions and proposals from the Warsaw conference. In particular, a "Citizens' Agenda" presented and discussed in Warsaw has been inserted as a part of the conclusions to this report.

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[6] Active Citizenship Network, "Citizens for the New Europe Project. Methodological Guidelines of the Survey", paper, Rome, 30 January 2003.
[7] The list of partner organizations is published in Appendix 1.

The gathering of information was completed in 26 out of the 28 countries because the work in Ireland and Luxembourg was done due to reasons already mentioned. Therefore, the information reported in this paper comes from 26 countries and the European Union.

In the collecting of opinions, 61% of the questionnaires sent out were returned with valid answers (105 out of 174)[8]. Since the number of questionnaires was not sufficient to provide a reliable view of the situation in each country, we have used them as global indicators of the following phenomena: legislation, implementation situation, good and bad practices. Only in the case of the good and bad practices, the countries are specifically mentioned. Information coming from the questionnaires has been inserted in the pertinent parts of the report.

The material collected through these two research tools was organized by constructing typologies. Typologies are, therefore, one of the main outputs of this Survey. In the cases, in which it was meaningful, the frequency and recurrence of the observed phenomena were taken into account and reported.

d. Value and limits of the results

As we have previously stated, this Survey refers to a real and concrete limitation, that is the lack of a common base of knowledge regarding citizens' organizations and their relations with public institutions in the New Europe area.

Previous cross-national surveys or researches, such as the Johns Hopkins University or the CIVICUS research programs, do not directly address this issue, since they do not cover the entire New Europe area and/or focus on a wider range of organizations or on different issues[9].

This gap of information and knowledge is also linked to specific circumstances, such as:
- differences between institutional structures and juridical systems;
- differences in the classification of data, organizations, and social phenomena related to civic activism and policy making;
- linguistic barriers in accessing data and information.

These constraints required us to use open tools rather than pre-defined indicators. Therefore, both the form for gathering the data and the questionnaires for collecting opinions and evaluations contained open questions. Obviously, this choice implies a lower level of homogeneity of the gathered information, but makes it possible to account for a complex reality, which has not been previously defined.

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[8] The list of the people interviewed is published in Appendix 2.
[9] Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *The Emerging Nonprofit Sector. An overview*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York 1996; Civicus, *The New Civic Atlas. Profiles of Civil Society in 60 Countries*, Civicus, Washington DC, 1997.

The involvement of citizens' organizations, working at the national level, as actors in the collection of data and information was another relevant methodological choice. Though citizens' organizations do not have professional training in research activities, they do have the ability to get data and information on matters that they are engaged in. This attitude and practice is a well known skill of citizens operating in policy making defined as "civic journalism", "production of civic information" and so on. Of course these skills, in the case of our Survey, were supported by appropriate methodology and training to guarantee the reliability of the research.

An added value in involving citizens' organizations in the Survey is the fact that their ability to access certain data and information can be considered as an indicator of the level of relevance of this gathered information. It means that the norms, directives, practices, etc. that they were able to collect may not be all that exists, but they are surely the most relevant ones. The basic assumption of this research is that the features and tools of a public policy must be accessible to the targets of the policy itself, in this case citizens' organizations, and should be relevant for them. For this reason the choice of involving citizens' organizations as actors of the Survey is a strength factor of this research.

Moreover, we are aware that data and information reported in this paper do not reflect the entire national and European situations, but only the more relevant facts and situations operating in the field of research. Therefore, the main value of this Survey is to report the institutions' general attitudes and behaviors towards citizens' organizations in Europe, both at the national and the EU level. While the results of the Survey do not represent precisely any of the specific national situations that have been considered, it can and should be used as a benchmark for each of them.

Finally, this Survey has opened up a new field of research and policy making in the area of public policies on civic activism in the New Europe, which can lead to both further and more in-depth research activities as well as developments and improvements in these policies.

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In order to facilitate the reading of the paper, tables reporting data and information have been published with different table borders to help distinguish the source of information: for example if they contain information coming from the collection of data done by partner organizations, from the answers to the questionnaire , or if they are good practices , coming from both sources.

B. GENERAL PART: MAIN FINDINGS

a. Availability of quantitative and qualitative data on citizens' organizations

As stated above, we devoted a part of the Survey to the collection of basic information on citizens' organizations, both from a qualitative and a quantitative point of view. The quantitative elements include items such as the number of existing organizations, number of members and size of organization. The qualitative elements include features, typology and territorial distribution of citizens' organizations, economic dimension and fund raising activities.

The resulting situation is not that encouraging. Though in certain countries – especially Central and Eastern Europe – there is an effort to produce reliable data on this topic, in general it can be said that there is no valid and comparable official information available on citizens' organizations.

An example of this situation is the availability of quantitative data on citizens' organizations (table B.1).

Table B.1: availability of quantitative data on citizens' organizations

	Number of countries
Defined data, but too broad[10]	15
Defined data, but too narrow or sectional[11]	2
Divergent data	4
Estimation only	4
No data	1
TOTAL	*26*

With regards to the qualitative data, it can be observed the different ways that are used to classify civic organizations, or to create categories to group them. Three of the categories most frequently used are:
- *Nonprofit or third sector*, which stresses the economic aspects and includes for example religious hospitals, schools or even private universities;
- *Civil society*, which emphasizes the non-governmental nature of the organizations and includes usually trade
- unions, professional interest groups, employers associations and often political parties;
- *Association*, which includes all the different ways of citizens getting together, not only to carry out activities of general interest but also associations created for private interests such as sport clubs and leisure associations.

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[10] Including, for example, political parties, trade unions and employers associations, religious hospitals, private universities, etc.
[11] Regarding, for example, voluntary organizations or international cooperation NGOs, etc.

All three categories include citizens' organization but none of them recognize the specific nature and role of civic organizations in public policies.

At the European Union level, estimates are only available on the quantity of citizens' organizations operating in this dimension. An official database of the European Commission (CONECS)[12] contains only a part, since the insertion in this database is done on the initiative of the organizations themselves. Moreover, the same database includes all "civil society" organizations. For this reason reliable information on qualitative elements is also not available.

From a legal point of view, there are some 30 different denominations of organizations that appear in the laws and regulations[13]. We have tried to classify them according to three categories: the legal form of the organizations, their fiscal status or the public policies they deal with (table B.2). In case a denomination could enter into more than one category, we have chosen the predominant one.

Table B.2: tentative classification of organizations' legal denominations

Categories	Denominations
Legal form	Association; federation; foundation; limited liability company; registered society; society; international organization; non-governmental organization; cooperative; collective entity of public law; unincorporated association; trust fund; voluntary organization
Fiscal status	Nonprofit organization; public interest organization; charity; collective entity of public utility; public benefit organization
Policies	International cooperation organization; environmental organization; welfare and health organization; research center/institute; social organization; housing organization; consumer organization; social organization; organization of social solidarity
Others	Friendly society; industrial and provident society

Obviously, legal denominations referring to different categories coexist nearly in all countries. Though some of these legal denominations refer to the same kind of legal entity, their number is impressive and suggests that there is no harmonization at all in this field, which makes a European policy on civic activism very complicated.
It also makes comparisons between the different countries very difficult. Moreover, the legal forms, fiscal status and policies usually interlace (for instance non profit consumer associations).

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[12] CONECS http://europa.eu.int/comm/civil_society/coneccs/

[13] It is important to underline that the legal denominations reported below result from a non-certified, non-official translation in English from the different languages of the Survey countries. The limit of this classification is that many categories are specific to some countries and as such are difficult to translate in English.

[16] The Commission has presented a proposal of "Regulation on the Statute for a European association" more than 10 years ago, but after having been amended by the European Parliament, this proposal is still blocked before the Council.

At the EU level, there is no official definition of citizens' organizations. EU documents, and particularly those of the Commission and of the Economic and Social Committee, mention "non-governmental organizations", "civil society organizations", "community-based organizations" and "voluntary organizations". The various definitions agree on the following features of NGOs:
- they are not created to generate personal profit;
- they are voluntary;
- they have a formal existence;
- they are independent;
- they are not self-serving.

However, the denomination which is most commonly used by EU institutions in official documents is "civil society organizations", which is much larger than citizens' organizations. It was defined in 1999 in an opinion of the Economic and Social Committee as including:
- social partners;
- organizations representing social and economic players;
- NGOs;
- community-based organizations;
- religious communities.

b. Institutional status of citizens' organizations

What is the status of citizens' organizations from the point of view of the national institutional structures? An answer to this question can be found by looking at the different types of legal acts that define the existence and role of civic organizations.

The result – regarding 22 countries in which this information is available – is the following:
- in 16 countries the role of citizens in public life is defined in the Constitution,
- in 22 by laws,
- in 4 by regulations and administrative acts,
- in one in charters and protocols.

It seems that recourse to the Constitution is definitely a positive element; but things are not so simple. If you indeed further check which principle of recognition is contained in such documents, it can be seen that:
- in all 22 countries the principle of the freedom of association is established;
- but only in 13 countries a principle referring to the responsible role of citizens in managing public affairs and in cooperating in the care of common goods also exists;
- only in one case out of 13 the role of citizens' organizations in the management of public affairs explicitly rests on the Constitution.

Since the topic of the Survey is the involvement of citizens in policy making and not the mere freedom of association, the situation is actually less positive than it appears. If we take into account that in all of Europe, citizens do self-organize to define and implement programs and actions regarding the public interest, then we can say that there exists a gap between the legal framework and reality.

From this point of view, we must emphasize that the principle recognizing the participation of organized citizens in public policies is contained only in one Constitution out of 13. This means that in the other 12 cases this principle is stated only in ordinary laws or administrative acts, though it is clearly a principle of constitutional rank.

This gap will emerge again in other collected data and information.

c. Criteria and procedures of recognition

Laws and regulations contain a set of principles and rules for the recognition of citizens' organizations by public institutions. About the *requirements* for recognition, there are some recurrent criteria. They can be grouped as follows (table B.3).

Table B.3: main general criteria for a for the recognition

ITEMS		FREQUENCY
GENERAL FEATURES	▪ No profit making, sharing and or use of profit	12
	▪ Devolution of property in case of closure	9
	▪ Commercial activities only for institutional aims	5
	▪ Acting in the favour of public interest and not of members	5
	▪ Pluralism, equality and democratic procedures	4
	▪ Exclusive/dominant purpose (consumers' rights and protection, environmental protection, etc.)	3
	▪ Budget and balance approved by assembly	3
MATERIAL CONDITIONS	▪ Statute	1
		2
	▪ Founding act	7
	▪ Minimum number of founders	7
CONTENT OF THE STATUTE	▪ Definition of aims and activities	9
	▪ Criteria of admission and exclusion	7
	▪ Definition of resources and ways to collect them	3
	▪ Members' rights and duties	3
	▪ Definition of the governance system	3
	▪ Definition of membership fees	3
GOVERNANCE SYSTEM	▪ Management bodies	9
	▪ Control/audit bodies	6
	▪ Assembly	6
RELATIONS WITH OTHER BODIES	▪ Independence from other organizations and bodies (private, political, public, …)	4

It can be noticed that it is sometimes explicitly emphasized that citizens' organizations are different from:
- Political parties (in 7 countries);
- Trade unions (5 countries);
- Churches (2 countries);
- Employers associations (2 countries).

As it can be easily argued, these sets of criteria are quite formal. They appear therefore more suitable for the recognition of organizations operating under the traditional principle of the freedom of association rather than for those involved in public policy making.

As regards the civic organizations engaged in policy making, other criteria appear more interesting. They come from laws and regulations regarding either specific organizations (for example, consumer, environmental, voluntary, etc.) or the recognition of the status of charitable/of public utility organization.

In the following table B.4, the above mentioned specific criteria related more to the substance (what the organization does) rather than to the form (how it is organized), are listed.

Table B.4 - specific criteria for recognition

- Office
- Proven organizational ability
- Continuous and relevant activity

- Territorial diffusion
- Number of members pertinent to the purpose

- Effectiveness and relevance of activity
- Proven influence at national level

- Amount of income
- Assets
- Proven financial guarantees

- Number of years of existence
- Definition of the service to deliver
- Planned future activities

These specific criteria appear consistent with the need for identifying and/or assessing the capacity of civic actors to collaborate with, and be interlocutors of, authorities. What is prevailing, nevertheless, is the recourse to formal requirements.

About the procedures of recognition, different phases and forms can be distinguished, as it appears in the following table B.5.

Table B.5 - main phases and procedures of recognition

PHASE	PROCEDURE	FREQUENCY
START	▪ Submission of a request with attached documentation	12
	▪ Payment of a fee	4
	▪ List of members	1
	▪ Self-certification	1
CHECK	▪ Check of documentation	5
	▪ Police inquiry	1
DECISION	▪ Recording/taking note	17
	▪ Explicit consensus	9
	▪ Silent consensus	3
OUTPUT	▪ Publication in the Official Journal	4
	▪ Decree	3
	▪ Communication/deposit	2
	▪ Publication on newspapers	1
	▪ Number of registration	1

About the content of this table, it can be noted that:
- Depending on the kind of organization, different procedures are usually applied, which is the reason why there is more than one procedure in each country;
- The prevailing form of recognition is the registration of the organization;
- There are no relevant checks or verification activities .

This seems to confirm a tendency to formal and bureaucratic methods rather than a more operational and "political" approach to the recognition of citizens' organizations.

The analysis of who are the main *institutional actors responsible for the recognition* of citizens' organizations gives us further information. They are listed in table B.6.

Table B.6 - main institutions in charge of the recognition

INSTITUTIONS	FREQUENCY
Ministry (M.) of Interior	8
M. of Justice	6
Register/Statistic office	6
Regional/local administration	6
Ministries dealing with specific issues	4
M. of Finance	3
Tribunal/Chamber of Commerce	2
Government	1
Ad hoc commission/office	1
State Council	1
TOTAL	*38*

What is interesting in this table is the tendency to consider the recognition of citizens' organizations as a matter of public security (Ministries of Interior and Justice: 14 mentions out of 38). This allows us to consider that the "fear of organized citizens" could be one of the reasons behind the states' attitude towards civic activism.

Some further, more concrete, problems can be seen from the answers to the questionnaires.

Table B.7 – Issues related to legislation gaps coming from the questionnaires

ITEM	FREQUENCY	%
Insufficient and incomplete regulations	25	23,8
Instability and ambiguity of the laws, which give advantage to unfair organizations	10	9,5
Lack of general legislation on citizens' organizations and on voluntary work	9	8,5
Registration procedure too complicated	8	7,6
Excess of laws and regulations, which are confusing and contradictory	6	5,7
Laws too general, covering too wide a range of organizations (professional orgs., broad membership orgs., small interest groups, etc.), with no distinction between interest groups and orgs. working in the public interest	6	5,7
Lack of clear procedures, including evaluation procedures	5	4,7

Some good practices have been gathered as well.

Table B.8 - Good practices related to legislation on civic organizations

- Citizens' organizations can act in favor of their members, when they are disadvantaged people (Bulgaria, Italy)

- The operational concept of "permanent job" is used in order to evaluate the jobs of people involved in a civic organization (France, Netherlands)
- The Parliament has asked an ad hoc commission to develop an analysis and recommendations regarding the role of civic initiatives in the strengthening of social cohesion (Germany)

Regarding the EU, there is no formal recognition of European associations yet, which is considered as a bad practice in the answers to the Survey questionnaire[16]. However, some calls for proposals refer to "European organizations". In this case, the main requirement is to have members in more than one member state / candidate country (and sometimes also Balkan countries and EFTA countries), but depending on the policy field, the required number of members may fluctuate considerably.

Moreover, in order to be inserted in the CONECS database, an organization must meet certain basic conditions:
- It has to be a non-profit making representative body with members in two or more European Union or Candidate Countries;
- It has to be active and to have expertise in one or more of the policy areas of the Commission;
- It has to have some degree of formal or institutional existence, operating in accordance with a document that states its objectives and the way they are managed;
- It has to provide any reasonable information about itself required by the Commission, either in support of its request or to be included in the database.

d. Checks, assessment, loss of legitimization

We can find further information on public policies on civic activism in Europe from the analysis of the system of checks and assessment on citizens organizations activity, as well as from the circumstances and behaviors that can result in their loss of legitimization by the state.

The main forms of checks and assessment have been reported in table B.9.

Table B.9 - main types of checks and assessment

MEASURES	FREQUENCY
Financial reports	9
External accounting	4
Governmental inspections and checks	4
Report on activities	4
Administrative and fiscal checks	3
Existent but not specified	2
External assessment	1
Evaluation commission	1
TOTAL	*28*

The available information is not sufficient to precisely establish which kind of controls are developed by authorities (for example: evaluation or assessment). What is clear, however, is that public authorities are mainly concerned with fiscal and administrative matters: since more than half of the control activities mentioned (16 out of 28) regard specifically these aspects.

This confirms that both at the national and the European level, the predominant attitude of public authorities is to suspect citizens' organization of mismanagement or frauds. Obviously, single incorrect or criminal behaviors which may occur, but should not justify this general attitude.

Behaviors and circumstances leading to the loss of legitimization are another useful indicator of the institutions' attitude towards citizens' organizations. They are illustrated in table B.10.

Table B.10 - main cases of inadmissibility and loss of legitimization

CASES	FREQUENCY
1. ORGANIZATION'S MISBEHAVIORS	
Lack of respect of the Constitution, laws, public interest, common habits	10
Activities against statute purposes	5
Exercise of state's and administration's functions	1
Exercise of union's functions	1
Support to and/or participation in political activities	1
Subtotal	*18*
2. ORGANIZATIONS' PERFORMANCE FAILURES	
Insufficient number of members	2
Insolvency	2
Incomplete execution of projects	1
Protracted inactivity	1
Mismanagement	1
Subtotal	*7*

3. ORGANIZATIONS' FINANCIAL MISBEHAVIORS	
Distribution or misuse of profit	14
Remuneration of volunteers/members	5
Conflict of interests and use of the organization for private interests	5
Use of funds not for organizations' aims	4
Commercial activities not related to the aims of the organization	4
Violation of limits to fund raising	1
Subtotal	*33*
4. ADMINISTRATORS' MISBEHAVIORS	
Conviction by court	1
Incompatibility	1
Misconduct	1
Subtotal	*3*
5. PUBLIC SECURITY THREATS	
Armed and paramilitary activities	6
Violation of human rights (discrimination, racism, fascism)	5
Threats to national unity	2
Threats to public security and safety	2
Violation of rights	1
Promotion or use of violence	1
Libel of state's symbols	1
Subtotal	*18*
TOTAL	*79*

Some remarks can be made regarding this interesting table:

- The organization's misbehaviors (22.7% of the mentions) are clearly related to the classic definition of the principle of the freedom of association (people can get together on condition that they do not act against laws);
- The category of organization's performance failures, which should be the most important criterion to evaluate the contribution of citizens' organizations to the management of public affairs, is clearly undervalued (less than 10%):
- The third and fourth categories, which regard financial matters and possible fraudulent behaviors of organizations or their administrators, are by far the most important (more than 45% together);
- The fifth and last set, regarding public security, is important as well (more than 26%).

One can conclude in a provisional way that the two traditional negative paradigms on civic activism – the threat to public security and the tendency to commit financial frauds– are still present in the laws and regulations, as well as in the concrete behaviors of public institutions. They together represent almost 70% of all the items mentioned. These attitudes can be a serious obstacle for developing effective cooperation between institutions and citizens. The lack of attention paid to the effectiveness and performance of citizens' organizations in public policies is another hindering element.

The answers to the questionnaire seem to confirm this analysis and add more concrete elements.

Table B.11 – Issues related to attitudes and behaviors of institutions towards citizens' organizations, shown by the answers to the questionnaire

ITEM	FREQUENCY	%
Distrust and reluctance, lack of consideration, respect and equal partnership towards civic organizations	35	33,3
Attempt of the government to "organize" orgs., to control them through ministries' authorizations, police or infiltration of executive bodies, to influence them through legislation, administrative rules and funding	21	20
Fear of orgs. considered as trouble makers and capable of influencing elections	20	19
Bureaucracy	17	16,1
Paternalism and rhetoric	17	16,1
Lack of training of civil servants on the functioning of orgs. and in techniques of cooperation and partnership building	15	14,2
Gap between political declarations and concrete support	15	14,2
Laws not implemented	8	7,6
Lack of investment in capacity building and empowerment of civic organizations	8	7,6
Corruption	6	5,7
Lack of assessment of organizations' activities	5	4,7

With regard to the European Union, the European Commission does not make any particular checks before inserting organizations in the CONECS database. It just controls that the organizations applying meet all the basic conditions required for their insertion. The Commission assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided by the organizations for their inclusion in the database.

e. Institutions involved

Another important aspect to consider are the kind of institutions which interact with citizens organizations and the activities they develop to support and involve active citizens in policymaking. We have previously analyzed what institutions are involved in the recognition and the control procedures and their activities; now we need to identify the operational attitude of institutions towards civic activism.

A good starting point can be checking if there is a specific institution in charge of the relations with citizens' organizations and a general rule regarding civic activism. This information is summarized in table B.12.

Table B.12 - existence of a general institutional point of reference for civic activism and existence of general/specific rules

	NO. OF COUNTRIES
Existence of a general institutional point of reference	7
A general rule only	7
A general rule and specific rules	9
Specific rules only	7
No rules	3

It can be observed that usually the general rules are either laws on associations and foundations or laws on the nonprofit sector, which regard a more general phenomenon and do not specifically deal with civic activism. On the contrary, the institutions existing in seven countries are usually (but not in all cases) governmental commissions, committees or agencies precisely devoted to coordinate the efforts of governments and citizens' organizations engaged in policy making. They are therefore pertinent with regard to the object of this Survey. The fact that such a body does not exist in 19 out of 26 countries is not good news at all.

We will now consider which are the main institutions dealing with citizens' organizations by dividing them into five categories: political, administrative, judicial, independent, quasi-state institutions.

The results are reported in table B.13.

Table B.13 - main institutions involved in interacting with citizens' organizations

CATEGORY	INSTITUTION	FREQUENCY
POLITICAL	▪ Parliament	9
	▪ Prime Minister	8
	▪ Government (as a whole)	5
	▪ President of the State	2
Subtotal		*24 (18.7%)*
ADMINISTRATIVE	▪ Ministries	16
	▪ M. of Interior	10
	▪ M. finance, treasury and tax authorities	8
	▪ M. of health and welfare	5
	▪ M. foreign affairs	4
	▪ M. economy, industry, consumer protection	3
	▪ M. environment, agriculture	2
	▪ M. justice	2
	▪ Council of State	2
	▪ M. education, culture	1
	▪ Ad hoc bodies	5
	▪ Economic and Social Council	3
	▪ Governmental agencies	8
	▪ Regional administrations	15
	▪ Local administrations	19
	▪ Police	1
	▪ Others	2
	▪ Public administration (generic)	2
Subtotal		*88 (68.7%)*
JUDICIAL	▪ Courts	4
	▪ Public prosecutor	2
Subtotal		*6 (4.6%)*
INDEPENDENT	▪ Authorities	4
	▪ Ombudsman	1
Subtotal		*5 (3.9%)*
QUASI-STATE	▪ Public utilities	2
	▪ Private companies delivering public services	2
	▪ Associations of local institutions	1
Subtotal		*5 (3.9%)*
TOTAL		*128*

The most important remark to be made regarding this table is the absolute predominance of administrative institutions (also including the quasi-state institutions), to the detriment of both political and independent bodies. This matter is in one sense obvious and in another sense concerning. It is obvious, because the cooperation between the state and civic organizations happens in the arena of public policies, which are by definition managed and implemented mainly by administrative bodies. On the other hand, it is concerning because it could mean that citizens' organizations are not recognized as an autonomous and equal actor, of constitutional rank, in the management of public affairs (also in terms of counterbalance), but rather seen as a technical supporter or agency of public administration. This hypothesis should be verified with further research activities.

Now we can consider the main actions that public bodies develop towards citizens' organizations. The results are summarized in table B.14

Table B.14 - main public actions towards citizens' organizations

CATEGORY	ACTION	FREQUENCY
POLITICAL	▪ Hearings and consultations	7
INSTITUTIONS	▪ Organizations' development	4
	▪ Institutionalized dialogue	4
	▪ Legislation and directives on organizations	4
	▪ Support	3
	▪ Promotion of shared projects	2
	▪ Consultation in policy making	2
	▪ Communication with the organizations	2
	▪ Partnership and cooperation	2
	▪ Treatment of petitions and claims	1
	▪ Consultation in law-making	1
	▪ Prizes and awards	1
	▪ Authorizations and permissions	1
	▪ Advisory councils and committees	1
Subtotal		*35 (19.5%)*
ADMINISTRATIVE	▪ Recognition and controls	16
INSTITUTIONS	▪ Funding	13
	▪ Advisory councils	12
	▪ Hearings and consultations	9
	▪ Partnerships	8
	▪ Support for the development of organizations	8
	▪ Promotion of participation	8
	▪ Ad hoc legislation and policy	7
	▪ Collaboration	6
	▪ Support to projects	6
	▪ Inclusion of representatives in public bodies	5
	▪ Non-financial support	5
	▪ Participatory policy making	4
	▪ Support in information and communication	3
	▪ Working groups	3
	▪ Fiscal policy	3
	▪ Technical assistance (training, …)	2
	▪ Research on citizens' organizations	1
Subtotal		*119 (64.4%)*

JUDICIAL	▪ Registration, permissions	2
INSTITUTIONS	▪ Dissolution	2
	▪ Investigation	1
	▪ Confiscation of properties and materials	1
	▪ Supervision	1
Subtotal		*7 (3.9%)*
INDEPENDENT	▪ Management of claims and complaints	4
INSTITUTIONS	▪ Consultation	3
	▪ Cooperation agreements	1
	▪ Information	1
	▪ Support to projects	1
Subtotal		*10 (5.5%)*
QUASI-STATE	▪ Consultation and coordination	3
INSTITUTIONS	▪ Partnership in projects	3
	▪ Management of claims and ADR	2
Subtotal		*8 (4.4%)*
TOTAL		*179*

This table confirms the above mentioned predominance of an administrative approach to citizens' organizations.

In addition, looking at the institutions' roles towards citizens' organizations in general rather than with regard to different types of public bodies, four main categories of roles can be identified:

- ▪ Support and ad hoc legislation: 68 mentions (37.9%);
- ▪ Consultation and involvement in policy making: 49 mentions (27.3%);
- ▪ Operational collaboration: 28 mentions (15.6%);
- ▪ Authorizations and controls: 24 mentions (13.4%);

This list would lead us to believe that institutions' engagement towards citizens' organizations is a matter of highest importance. However, for a more complete view of the situation, the obstacles and implementation gaps identified by the interviews need to be taken into consideration. They are reported below.

Table B.15 – Obstacle to the participation of citizens' organizations in policy making activities, resulting from the answers to the questionnaire

ITEM	NO. OF MENTIONS	%
Lack of recognition of organizations as important actors of policy making (with respect to trade unions and business)	43	40,9
Difficult access to policy makers; Difficult identification of interlocutors because of the lack of transparency and frequent changes in the staff	39	37,1
Poor communication and coordination links	21	20
Lack of transparency; Lack of information on laws, programs and provisions	19	18,1
Consultations take place when decisions have already been taken; Organizations' opinions are not taken into account and joint decisions are not implemented; Government does not listen to the answers to its questions	19	18,1
Slow decision making processes; Low flexibility of governments, only responding to the pressure of the EU; delays in reaction of government to repeated organizations' claims	12	11,4
Limited participation to consultation, excluding decision making; organizations are not associated to final decisions and actions	8	7,6
Exclusion of smaller and less structured organizations from participation processes; Policy makers pretend to negotiate only with umbrella orgs	8	7,6

because they don't want to manage diversity; Lack of transparency of criteria for participation in consultative bodies		
No application of consultative procedures provided by laws and no convening of consultative committees; lack of autonomous and institutionalized structures for consultation and common evaluation	7	6,6
Lack of sufficient time to contribute to consultation process; hours in which the meetings take place make the participation difficult	4	3,8
Lack of interest for and dissemination of the outcomes and results of public-funded projects	4	3,8
Creation of government organizations to compete with civic orgs.	3	2,8
Organizations supply services that should be supplied by institutions; orgs. are forbidden to exercise administrative functions	2	1,9
Excess of committees, with consequent lack of effectiveness	1	0,9

Of course, good practices should also be taken into account.

Table B.16 - Good practices related to the participation of civic organizations in policy making

- Specific ministry, department of State or advice body in charge of the relationships with civic organizations (Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Romania)
- Cooperation between the Parliament and civic organizations concerning the preparation of the law on tax assignations (Czech Republic)
- Creation of a "Good practices code" for the consultation in collaboration between the government and civic organizations (Poland)
- Government brings together business and consumer bodies to work on self regulatory codes and food assurances schemes (United Kingdom)
- In 2001 the government established a working group composed of civic leaders to set up a draft law on citizens' organizations (Latvia)
- Creation of participated councils which take binding decision (Spain)
- Training of civil servants in participative methodologies and techniques and the production of manuals (Finland, Spain)
- Breast cancer policies have been developed with considerable involvement of patients organizations. Their views and expertise have been incorporated into plans and their criticisms are heard (United Kingdom)
- Hearings of citizens' organizations on health matters are mandatory (Bulgaria)
- The government checks the operational agreements between citizens' organizations operating in the health sector and the private companies and puts them into a public register, to make them available as examples to be used (Germany)
- Consumer protection legislation has a provision for transferring some government responsibilities in consumer protection to NGO sector (Slovak Republic)
- Existence of a specific ministry of consumers' affairs (Germany)
- Preparation of the sixth environmental action program with the full involvement of environmental organizations (Italy)

The situation at the EU level can be summarized as follows:

- The European Commission interacts with citizens' organizations in two main ways: consultation and co-funding of projects that implement European public policies. The Commission consults NGOs through different instruments such as: ad hoc meetings, structured dialogue (regular meetings without the formal structure of a committee) and formalized consultation (advisory groups, consultative committees, etc.). The Commission runs nearly 700 consultation bodies. In addition, it is developing an on-line consultation.

- The European Parliament and its committees seek public views through consultation and public hearings. Furthermore, European NGOs can also submit a petition to the Parliament on matters of general concern or ask it to take a stance on a matter of public interest in the sphere of EU activities.
- The European Economic and Social Committee is composed of representatives from organized civil society and would become the *trait d'union* between the EU and civil society. However, its interaction with citizens organizations is still limited to public events, convened to discuss European issues with a broad range of civil society organizations, and hearings, intended to enable civil society organizations to participate in the drafting of ESC opinions.
- Associations with a registered office in the EU member states can complain to the European Ombudsman about misadministration by the institutions and bodies of the European Community.

Also in the case of the EU a number of implementation gaps in the relations between institutions and citizens have been registered.

Table B.17 – Obstacles to the participation of citizens' organizations in European policy making activities, resulting from the answers to the questionnaire

• The European Commission does not always have a friendly attitude and is sometimes arrogant
• The underlying idea that citizens' organizations must conform themselves to institutions' structure and not vice versa
• The European Commission does not usually involve citizens' organizations in the drafting of the calls for proposals, therefore these organizations have to present projects on matters that do not necessarily correspond to their own agenda.   • The role played by citizens' organizations is still limited to periodical consultations   • Very often there is not any feedback, whether it be positive or negative, to citizens' organizations' proposals and remarks   • EU institutions do not really perceive citizens' organizations as their closest link with the European society and a source of valuable feedback on their public policies   • Small size citizens' organizations appear to be left out, having limited access to participation processes and European programs   • Access to EU institutions is limited as official information and activities are centered in Brussels   • European civil servants tend to protect the institutions and therefore, they do not always welcome consultations and criticism   • The confidentiality of documents is exaggerated

Some good practices have been found in the EU institutional environment.

Table B.18 - Good practices related to the participation of civic organizations in European policy making

• Common actions in the frameworks of European projects create synergies among European citizens' organizations regardless of size and member state and this helps them to develop a more global and coordinated approach to the public policies they deal with   • Environmental organizations are effectively consulted by the European Commission (EU)

f. Prerogatives of citizens' organizations

The prerogatives that laws and regulations recognize to citizens' organizations are another interesting issue. By prerogative we mean powers, independent from the goodwill of public authorities, granted according to specific procedures.

In table B.19 there is a typology of these prerogatives divided into three categories: prerogatives regarding the political, administrative and judicial fields.

Table B.19 - main prerogatives of citizens organizations

POLITICAL	▪ Appointment of representatives to public bodies ▪ Right to petition, with a mandatory answer ▪ Proposals and consultations on laws and policies ▪ Taking the floor on public issues
ADMINISTRATIVE	▪ Direct access to information ▪ Control on access to information ▪ Give opinion on advertisement and data management regulation, on minimum level of services to be delivered in special cases, etc. ▪ Initiating and participating in administrative procedures, participation in administrative procedures free of charge ▪ Complaints and reports on public issues and on misadministration ▪ Activation of the ombudsman ▪ Proposal of new structures ▪ Participation in public procurement
JUDICIAL[17]	▪ Start up and participate in legal actions ▪ Cooperation in criminal proceedings ▪ Start collective civil actions ▪ Sue for damages in criminal proceedings ▪ Join individuals in criminal actions ▪ Benefit from legal aid, participation in trials free of charge

The autonomous powers of civic organizations reported in this table appear definitely positive. Nevertheless, this positive attitude of confidence and will to co-operate with citizens seems to be in contradiction with the negative paradigms that we have noticed before. A sort of institutions' schizophrenia towards citizens' organizations seems to emerge.

Citizens' organizations operating at the European Union level do not have any prerogatives. Most of the time, they have the same rights as all European citizens (right to access administrative documents, right to complain to the European Ombudsman, right to submit a petition to the European Parliament, possibility to complain to the European Commission concerning an infringement of Community law by a member state, etc.). Besides, all prerogatives granted by the European directives and case-law refer exclusively to the national level and not the European. Citizens' organizations have no specific right to take legal actions before the Court of First Instance or the European Court of Justice.

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[17] In addition to prerogatives in the judicial field, there is a specific good practice in Hungary which is worth noticing: consumer organizations may file a case against a party causing substantial harm to a wide range of consumers by illegal activities even if the identity of the consumers injured cannot be established.

This is considered as a bad practice according to the answers to the Survey questionnaire.

g. *Forms of support*

The last topic of the general part of the Survey regards the support to civic activism. This support has been divided into three main forms:

- *direct*, when the state supports financially citizens' organizations in different ways, including the fiscal facilities;
- *indirect*, when the state facilitates the collection of funds or gives tax incentives to citizens' organizations;
- *in kind*, when the support concerns goods and services which favor the growth and activities of citizens' organizations.

The table B.20 reports the items related to these three forms of support.

Table B.20: main forms of state support to citizens' organizations[18]

	FORMS OF SUPPORT	FREQUENCY
DIRECT	▪ Organizations' activities are partially or totally tax free	19
	▪ Donations are deductible	13
	▪ Grants to the organizations	13
	▪ Grants to projects, contracts for the delivery of services	13
	▪ Legacies are free of taxes	8
	▪ Gratuitousness or low cost of registration and issuing of official documents, low cost of stamps and postal services, tax relief for water and electricity	7
	▪ Grants for reconstruction and renovation of buildings and for renting headquarters	5
	▪ Membership fees are non-taxable	4
	▪ Support to books, publications, etc.	4
	▪ Low renting cost for public buildings and properties	3
	▪ Car, radio, TV tax exemption	2
	▪ Support / grants for training and educational activities	2
	▪ Support or facilities for nonprofit radios and programs	2
	▪ Grants for services, social services / social canteens	1
INDIRECT	▪ Companies can deduct donations	11
	▪ Individuals can deduct donations	9
	▪ Employment of young people doing civil service	6
	▪ Permission to organize lotteries, shows, entertainment events, etc.	5
	▪ Permission to get loans, sometimes at legal interest rate	3
	▪ Leave of absence for voluntary work	3
	▪ Volunteers are considered as employees by the welfare system	2
	▪ Volunteers can deduct their expenses	2
	▪ Volunteers have opportunities in public jobs	2
	▪ Time of volunteers is relevant for social insurance	2
	▪ Discount for transports, shows, etc.	2
	▪ Use of unemployed people paid by the government	2
	▪ Tax exemption for the users of an organization's service	1
	▪ Incentives for participation in courses on volunteerism	1
	▪ Volunteering is an extra qualification or substitutes apprenticeship in public employment	1
IN KIND	▪ Free use of public buildings, areas and facilities	14
	▪ Awards and prizes	10
	▪ Free access to public broadcast	7

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[18] This general list does also include the forms of support related to the three focuses, which will be dealt with below. For this reason we do not take into consideration this item in the analysis of the three focuses in section C of this paper.

▪ Free access to public events and fairs for advertisement	4
▪ Training courses	4
▪ Information activities to organizations	2
▪ Organizations-oriented TV and radio programs	2
▪ Educational credits	2
▪ Volunteers' day	1
▪ Information to the public on organizations' activities	1
▪ Free use of public transports for volunteers	1
▪ Free access to technical infrastructures	1
▪ Administrative, technical and scientific assistance	1

Among the forms of direct support, the most frequent are:
- ▪ Organizations' activities are partially or totally tax-exempt (mentioned in 19 countries);
- ▪ Donations are tax deductible (13 countries);
- ▪ Grants to organizations and to projects (13 countries);
- ▪ Legacies are non-taxable (8 countries).

Among the forms of indirect support, the most frequent are:
- ▪ Companies can deduct donations (11 countries);
- ▪ Individuals can deduct donations (9 countries).

Among the forms of in kind support, the most frequent are:
- ▪ Free use of public buildings, areas and facilities (14 countries);
- ▪ Awards and prizes (10 countries);
- ▪ Free access to public broadcast (7 countries).

The list of forms of support is quite impressive. Nevertheless, it must be noted that:
- ▪ The amount of money directly invested by the state in citizens' organizations and the rate of fiscal deduction allowed are both fairly low;
- ▪ The positive attitude that underpins the forms of support clashes with the negative paradigms mentioned above.

In any case, it must be borne in mind that not all the forms of support are applied to all organizations in each country. On the contrary, the granting of funds is often reported as a means of political discrimination.

The following table, regarding the answers to the questionnaire, helps to have a more precise picture of the situation.

Table B.21 – Problems linked to the public support of citizens' organizations, according to the answers to the questionnaire

ITEM	NO. OF MENTIONS	%
Lack of public funds for civic organizations	54	51,4
Lack of support of voluntary work (administrative, institutional and technical)	18	17,1
Lack of transparency of funds and clientelism	17	16,1
Fiscal legislation and bureaucratic procedures don't encourage private donors to fund civic organizations	11	10,4

Civic organizations have to pay the same amount of taxes as private companies	10	9,5
Bureaucratic procedures to obtain funds; Late payments; Late publication of tenders and calls for proposals	9	8,5
Funds granted on specific projects and not on running costs of organizations	7	6,6
Lack of continuity and predictability of funds	6	5,7
Funds mainly or totally absorbed by the larger organizations	4	3,8
Lack of modern ceremonies of recognition of citizens' orgs.	2	1,9

On the other hand, there have been reported good practices both in the questionnaires and the gathering of information.

Table B.22 - Good practices related to public support of civic organizations'

- Low registration fee (Romania)
- Tax payers can give 1% of their income tax to civic organizations (Hungary, Slovak Republic)
- The money from the state monopolies on some games (national lottery, coin machines) is dedicated to support civic organizations (Denmark, Finland)
- Incentives for students to work in NGOs during their holidays (Malta)
- Citizens' organizations manage properties confiscated from mafia and other criminal groups (Italy)

- There is no limit for fiscal deduction of companies' donations to citizens' organizations (Cyprus)

- Access to loans at low interest rates, sometimes guaranteed by the government (Cyprus)
- Companies can deduct donations to civic organizations if the amount is at least 850 € (Finland)

- An independent foundation advices both organizations and government with regard to fund raising activities (Netherlands)
- Volunteers are covered by the social insurance system (Portugal)
- Consumer organizations get a certain part of the money collected from fines imposed on companies by the antitrust and consumer protection authorities (Hungary, Italy)
- Courts can sentence people to perform hours of social work in citizens' organizations (France, Greece)

- Citizens' organizations can benefit from legal aid in trials (Italy)

The European Commission direct economic support to citizens' organizations was estimated at over € 1.000 million a year in 1997. It is of two kinds: core-funding for the running costs of the organizations and project funding. Their common characteristics are that they both are "co-funding" and that organizations can apply for these funds through "call for proposals" published in the Official Journal (C) and/or on the website of the Commission. The core-funding is reserved for European NGOs. The project funding is usually open to both European and national NGOs, providing that the project has a European dimension and is carried out in partnership with organizations from other countries.

The European institutions, and especially the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, also directly contribute to the activities of citizens' organizations providing them with the free use of rooms for events and free access to services such as interpretation, photocopies, etc.

Concerning other forms of support, two programs must be quoted:

- The European Voluntary Service, which allows young people (between 18 and 25 years) from an NGO or any type of non-profit-making association to work for a limited period of time (from 3 weeks to 12 months) as a volunteer in another organization located in a different member state. This program is a kind of mutual support for both organizations, since it allows the organization sending to train its young members and the host organization a very cheap human resource.
- Every year, the Commission organizes training programs for NGOs leaders/members, which are often carried out by other specialized NGOs or non-profit organizations. This is especially the case in the field of consumer protection and in candidate and other associated countries, where civil society capacity building is considered a priority.

About the EU financial policy towards civic organizations a number of problems, both in rules and in behaviors, have been registered.

Table B.23 – Issues related to European support to citizens' organizations, shown by the answers to the questionnaire

- Funds exclusively granted for specific projects, through call for proposals or tenders, and not on the organization's general activities. This puts the economical sustainability and independence of civic organizations at risk (except for few European organizations, directly co-funded by the European Commission)
- None (or very little) financial support to enable organizations that are not located in Brussels to participate in the decision-making process at European level
- Problem of late payments
- In-kind contributions are not recognized
- Difficulty to find the large amounts of money necessary to co-finance the European projects
- Administrative rules are unnecessarily complex and chaotic

Some good practices emerged too.

Table B.24 - Good practices related to European support to civic organizations'

- Use of new technologies and funding opportunities to enhance the exchange of data, information and knowledge
- Exchange of best practices at the European level
- Funding of studies by the European Commission
- Continuous vocational training on consumer protection policies, programs and provisions

h. Citizens' actions and institutions' expectations: a comparison

At the end of this section, devoted to the findings related to the general part of the Survey, we want to include another general piece of information coming from the analysis of the three focuses, which are dealt with in the next section of the report.

We mean a significant difference between the actions that citizens' organizations really carry out and the role that, according to public institutions, these organizations should or would be engaged in.

This result emerged from a comparative analysis of the information concerning the actual civic engagement and the citizens' organizations' roles established in authorities' acts and directives. We have drawn the information on the first point from the tables reporting on citizens' tools and strategies; while on the second point from the table reporting on citizens' roles according to institutions. Then, we have classified these items according to five categories of policy actions:

- consultation, dialogue between stakeholders;
- advocacy and representation;
- monitoring and assessment;
- information, education and advice;
- implementation activities, delivery of services.

By calculating the percentage of the items grouped under each of these categories, we have been able to compare the different points of view and experiences of organizations and institutions.

The general result of this analysis from the three focuses is reported in the following table.

Table B.25 - comparison between citizens' activities and institutions' views in the three focuses

	Consultation & dialogue	Advocacy, representation	Monitoring, assessment	Information, education	Implementation activities	Other
citizens' activity	2.3%	22.3%	8.8%	39.8%	22.7%	3.6%
institutions' view	51%	14.6%	6.9%	4.5%	21.6%	0.9%
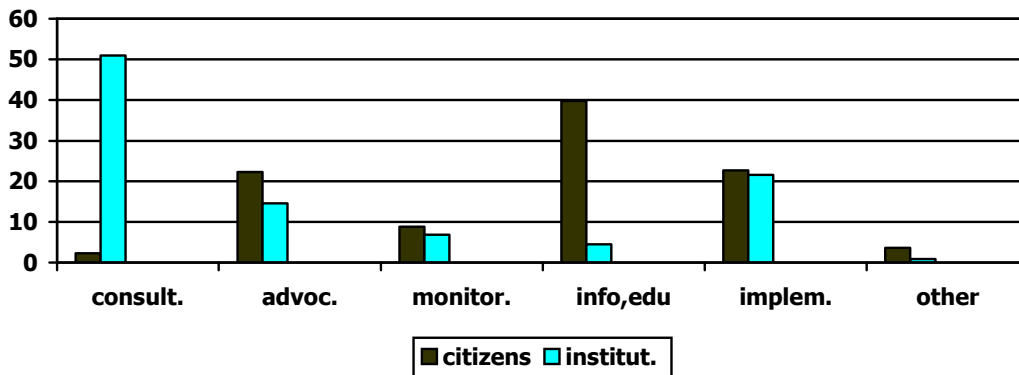
The result of this comparison, and especially the big gaps emerging, are better illustrated in the graph above.

In brief, it can be said that there is clearly a divergent agenda between citizens' actions and institutions' views at least on two points:

- consultation is the top priority for institutions and the bottom in citizens' action;
- information and education is the most engaging activity for citizens and has almost no importance for institutions.

Though there are other points of divergence, these two items are enough to allow us to speak about a kind of double agenda which divides citizens' activity and institutions' view and which is most probably an hindering element for dialogue and cooperation.

This gap in priorities and approaches, seems to be confirmed by other elements coming from the analysis of the gathered information. The main one is the cross-sector nature of citizens' organizations: there are indeed consumer and environmental organizations operating in health care, health-related organizations working on consumer issues, consumer organizations active in environmental policy. On the other hand, often rules and practices of public institutions require that citizens' organizations be engaged only in one policy field.

To conclude this section it must be added that most forms of support that institutions provide for citizens' organizations are implementation-oriented. This could mean that, while institutions think that citizens' main role is to give opinions, they in fact place a priority on implementation.

C. FOCUSES: MAIN FINDINGS

This section of the report is devoted to analyzing the main results of the three common focuses – health care, consumer policy and environment – that were developed in all the countries. For each focus the following topics will be addressed:
- the organizations operating in the field;
- the issues they deal with;
- the citizens' organizations tools and strategies;
- their role according to institutions.

Finally, a cross-focus comparison between the actions that citizens' organizations are actually engaged in and their role as defined in institutions' rules and programs, will be conducted.

a. Focus on health

Organizations operating in the field

There are a number of citizens' organizations operating on health care at the national level. They can be more easily identified using an organizational instead of a legal criterion. They are reported in the following table C.1.

Table C.1: main citizens' organizations operating in health care at the national level

TYPES OF ORGANIZATION	FREQUENCY
Organizations dealing with chronic illnesses	20
Self-help groups	13
Voluntary organizations	12
Organizations dealing with target groups (i.e. disabled persons)	12
Civic organizations of professionals	11
Advocacy organizations	9
Social cooperatives	8
Advice and assistance services	7
Patients and users organizations	7
Health prevention	7
Mental health organizations	7
Consumer organizations	7
Organizations supporting health structures, charities	5
Family organizations	4
Alternative medicine organizations	4
Rescue and rehabilitation services	3
Mutualities and nonprofit health structures	2
Research organizations	2

The most widespread organizations are:
- Organizations dealing with chronic illnesses, operating in 20 countries;
- Self-help groups, in 13 countries;
- Voluntary organizations, in 12 countries;
- Organizations dealing with target groups (i.e. disabled persons), in 12 countries;

- Civic organizations of professionals, in 11 countries;
- Advocacy organizations, in 9 countries.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that in the health care there are relevantly operating consumer organizations in 7 countries. We will find again this cross-sector engagement of citizens' organizations, which makes it difficult to command the criterion of an exclusive purpose and field of action and an exclusive link with one administrative body. One of the most critical problems emerging from public policies on civic activism, both at the national and at the European Union level, is precisely the fact that, while citizens' organizations often deal with multiple issues, administrative bodies usually only deal with one.

At the European Union level, the main organizations engaged in health care are the following:
- umbrella organizations dealing with chronic illnesses;
- umbrella organizations and European networks of organizations dealing with disabled persons;
- European networks promoting healthy lifestyles (smoke prevention, etc.);
- International organizations dealing with ageing;
- Federation of Family Planning Associations.

The main difference with the national level is that organizations operating directly in the field such as self-help groups and voluntary organizations do not exist at the EU level, where there are mainly umbrella organizations or networks.

Issues addressed

The issues that citizens' organizations deal with in the field of health care at the national level are outlined in table C.2

Table C.2: main issues addressed by citizens' organizations in health care at the national level

ISSUES	FREQUENCY
Condition of patients and families	18
Rehabilitation	15
Disability	13
Mental health	12
Safety and quality of structures	12
Chronic illnesses, special illnesses[19]	12
Access to drugs	10
Access to services	9
Public awareness	9
Prevention	9
Emergency and first aid services	8
Home assistance and outpatient care	8
Drug addiction	7
Blood, transplants	5
Lifestyles, pollution	5
Information of patients	4
Immigrants, homeless, refugees	4
Research and innovation	4
Natural medicine	3
Poverty	3
Malpractice and doctors competence	2
Cancer	2
Occupational health	2
Elderly	2
Youth	2
Women	2
Developing countries	2
Catastrophes	2
Terminal illnesses	2
Other	4
TOTAL	*192*

This list shows that the issues citizens' organizations deal with are not additional or residual, but cover all the main areas of health care:

- prevention (mentioned 37 times);
- care (mentioned 108 times);
- rehabilitation (mentioned 35 times).

The most important area is care, mentioned about three times more than prevention and rehabilitation. In this field, the issues, relating to accessibility, quality and safety of services, are about twice as many as those relating to specific conditions or illnesses of people. This suggests that the most critical point in health care is the availability of structures and services.

These issues, which relate to the "core business" of health care, go hand in hand with the issues that have been considered more suitable for citizens' organizations, like prevention and public awareness and assistance to vulnerable sectors of the population such as the elderly, immigrants, homeless, refugees, poor, etc.

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[19] The reason why the frequency of chronic illnesses is inferior in this table than in table C1 is due to the fact that some of them were considered as specific issues (for instance cancer).

On the European level, citizens' organizations operating in health care are engaged in the following main issues:

- chronic illnesses;
- research and innovation;
- conditions of patients and families;
- disability;
- rehabilitation;
- conflict and post-conflict situations;
- disasters;
- public awareness;
- lifestyles;
- sexual education.

There is no major difference with the issues dealt with at the national level.

Citizens' tools and strategies

The tools and strategies that citizens' organizations use to deal with health care issues are summarized in the following table C.3.

Table C.3: citizens' organizations main tools and strategies in health care at the national level

TOOLS	FREQUENCY
Information and education to patients	23
Non-medical assistance	22
Information to the public	19
Lobbying	18
Advocacy, claims and complaints, charters of rights	17
Creation and management of services	16
Communication tools, books and publications	14
Advice services and call centers	12
Public debate and events, exhibitions, campaigns	11
Medical assistance	10
Auditing, monitoring and reporting	10
Fund raising and support for people and structures	10
Counseling	7
Dialogue with stakeholders	7
Training of professionals, patients, etc.	7
Legal support	6
Support to rehabilitation and integration	5
Initiatives in schools	5
Cooperation/dialogue with institutions	5
Creation of organizations, cooperation between organizations	4
Prevention programs	4
European and international networking, international cooperation	4
Group therapy	3
Support to blood donation	2
Support to research and innovation	2
TOTAL	*231*

It is interesting to note that, among the tools that are more widespread, there are two types that go beyond the traditional vision of the role of citizens' organizations.

The first one refers to medical support to citizens: medical assistance, counseling, training of professionals and patients, support to research and innovation, group therapy (mentioned 29 times).

The second refers to the core activities of the welfare system: fund-raising for people and structures, advice centers, creation and management of services, support to rehabilitation and integration (mentioned 43 times).

This should lead to a more updated and comprehensive vision of citizens' role in health care: a role which is not only of demanding, controlling and supporting "relational" needs of people, but also of cooperating in the creation, management and improvement of welfare services.

At the European Union level, citizens' organizations adopt mainly the following tools and strategies:
- lobbying;
- information and education to professionals and institutions;
- networking;
- diffusion of innovation in care; support and monitoring of research;
- conferences and meetings;
- promotion of citizens' organizations and capacity building of individuals and organizations;
- databases;
- fund raising;
- advice services; counseling;
- awareness and opinion campaigns; promotion of behaviors;
- diffusion of good practices;
- training and support of target groups;
- monitoring of political and budgetary process;
- emergency interventions;
- media activity; production of booklets and publications; communication tools.

The instruments used by European organizations are slightly different from those used by national ones because most of them are second-degree organizations (networks, umbrella groups, etc.) and therefore, they rarely intervene in the field and do much more networking, information, advice, etc. to national organizations. Moreover, one of the specificities of the Brussels-based organizations is the importance of their lobbying activities vis-à-vis the EU institutions.

Citizens' roles according to institutions

In the previous section we studied the main activities of citizens' organizations engaged in health care at the national level.

We now turn to examine what their role should be according to institutions, that is, according to laws and policy programs. What do institutions think citizens should do in the health system?

The following table answers this question.

Table C.4: citizens' main roles according to institutions at the national level

ROLES	FREQUENCY
Consultative and advice bodies	11
Management of implementation activities	10
Hearings and consultation on laws	9
Hearings and consultation on policies	9
Participation in steering committees and supervisory boards of public bodies	7
Assistance and services to patients	5
Representation, advice and advocacy	5
Participation in working groups on policies	4
Participation in definition of standards	3
Training of stakeholders	3
Information and education to the public	3
Participation in consensus procedures	2
Making proposals and suggestions	2
Participation in evaluation bodies and procedures	2
TOTAL	*75*

This table highlights three different kinds of roles, according to authorities, that citizens' organizations should play in health policy.

The first one is *interlocution*. It refers to the participation in consultative bodies, in hearings on laws and policies, in the drafting of proposals and suggestions to the government. This cluster was mentioned 31 times out of 75 (41.3%).

The second type of role is *partnership*. It refers to the actions implemented by civic organizations in collaboration with the authorities such as participating in steering committees, in working groups on policies, in the definition of standards and consensus procedures, in evaluation bodies. This cluster has been mentioned 18 times out of 75, about one fourth of the total (24%).

The third kind of role is *autonomous activity*. It refers to management and implementation activities, assistance and services to patients, representation, advice and advocacy, training of stakeholders, providing information and education to the public. This cluster was mentioned 26 times out of 75 (34.6%).

Citizens' organizations operating at the European level in this field participate in consultative bodies on EU public health policy. They are also involved in the implementation of EU policy by promoting projects in response to the Commission's calls for proposals.

About civic organizations' participation in health policy making, some critical points emerge from the questionnaires:

Table C.5 – Obstacles related to the participation of citizens' organizations in health policy making, identified by the answers to the questionnaire

- No clear public policy towards civic organizations in the field of health and welfare
- Monopolization of the health field by professional groups, medical unions, mutual insurance companies. Patients and citizens are not considered as interlocutors.
- Civic organizations dealing with health issues are involved in health education. Since this issue does not have a high priority in the health care public policy, the civic organizations, themselves, are not considered as important.

b. Focus on consumer policy

Organizations operating in the field

As in the case of health policy, citizens' organizations operating in the consumer field at national level are not only consumers organizations, as table C.6 shows.

Table C.6 – main types of citizens' organizations operating in consumer policy at the national level

TYPES OF ORGANIZATION	FREQUENCY
Consumers and users	25
Environmental	14
Target/specialized organizations	13
Health related organizations	9
Federations, umbrella organizations	7
Citizens advice organizations	5
Professional and research organizations	4
Household and tenants organizations	3
Regional and/or local organizations	2
Consumer cooperatives	2
Other	6

From the Survey it results that in 14 countries out of 26, environmental organizations work on consumer policies and there are health related organizations working on consumer policies in 9 countries out of 26. This cross-sector nature of citizens' organizations is even more evident in consumer issues than in the case of health. This important fact runs the risk of being ignored or at least underestimated by authorities, which appear more inclined to having a sectorial and bureaucratic approach rather than a global and political one.

Citizens' organizations operating in consumer policy at the European level are the following:
- national consumers' organizations and coalitions of European consumers' organizations;
- federations of family organizations;
- federations of environmentalist organizations;
- federations of animal protection organizations;
- organizations for disabled persons.

At the European level like in the member states, environmentalist organizations and health related ones deal with consumer protection.

 Issues addressed

The issues that citizens' organizations engaged in consumer policy address are summarized in table C.7.

Table C.7 - main issues addressed by citizens' organizations engaged in consumer policy at the national level

ISSUES	FREQUENCY
Protection of consumers' rights; harmonization with the EU legislation	21
Public awareness	19
Safety and quality of products	12
Public services	12
Sustainable and ethical consumption	12
Drugs: prices, access and advertisement	9
Use of energy and natural resources	8
Public transports and traffic	7
Safety of environment; Electromagnetic pollution	7
Companies' behavior	6
Trade, selling, retail	6
Access to public services for persons with disabilities	5
Fairness of contracts	5
Insurance services	5
Safety and quality of services	5
Standardization	5
Financial services; over indebtedness	5
Consumers' choices	4
Safety of food	4
Accreditation, certification, measurement, labeling	5
Illegal/misleading advertising	3
Antitrust issues	3
GMOs and eco-farming	3
Tourism	2
IT and e-commerce	2
Other	6
TOTAL	*180*

The above-mentioned issues can be grouped to identify larger clusters. As a result, the main issues in which citizens' organizations are engaged in appear to be:
- consumer policy: 37.7% of the references;
- production and selling of goods: 24.4%;
- public services: 22.2% ;
- environment: 15%.

It should be noted that the issues citizens' organizations are engaged in are definitely broader than the traditional, narrow definition of consumer policy. Public services, as well as, environmental issues are indeed examples of a wider vision of consumerism (recently taken into account by the European Union itself), which accounts for about 37% of all the issues of civic organizations mentioned.

The main issues that citizens' organizations operating at the European Union level deal with are:

- EU consumer policies;
- environmental issues related to consumption, i.e. food safety;
- animal protection in production and delivery of goods;
- general interest services;
- protection of disabled people in consumer issues.

It is worth noting that the different kinds of organizations involved in consumer protection all seem to deal with this issue from their own specific point of view: environmental issues related to consumption for the environmentalist organizations, protection of disabled people in consumer issues for the associations of disabled, etc.

Citizens' tools and strategies

Citizens' organizations working on consumer policy issues use several tools and strategies. They are summarized in table C.8.

Table C.8 - main tools and strategies of consumer policy at the national level

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES	FREQUENCY
Information to the public	23
Advice (services), databases on goods	22
Advocacy	16
Communication tools and media, websites	15
Education	14
Intervention in policies, promotion of access to information	14
Auditing, monitoring and reporting; Assessment of goods and services	14
Research and tests	12
Representation of consumers	12
Legal action	11
Promotion of behaviors, self-regulation, prizes and competitions	11
Training for consumers and stakeholders, programs in schools	10
Alternative Dispute Resolution, mediation, arbitration	9
Cooperation between organizations; International cooperation and forums	9
Claims and complaints	8
Lobbying	7
Certification and standardization, labeling	7
Buying and selling of products	2
Promotion of innovation in production	2
Other	4
TOTAL	*222*

At a first glance, if one compares the data of this table with the one of health care policy, citizens' actions in consumer policy seem to be more focused on communicating with the public opinion and supporting people in front of producers/distributors rather than on actions in the delivery of services. This difference could be related to the nature of the two policy areas rather than to different attitudes of citizens' organizations.

In a more systematic way, it can be said that five main clusters of tools and strategies can be identified:

- information and communication activities (27% of all the mentions);

- direct advocacy actions (26%);
- educational activities (15.7%);
- production of data and information (16%);
- direct intervention in policies (9.4%).

The main tools and strategies of citizens' organizations operating in this field at the European level are:
- lobbying;
- information to the public;
- networking and exchange of information and good practices; Information of members on EU activity;
- organization of seminars and conferences;
- publications; Production of targeted information material;
- production of policy papers;
- training of trainers;
- opinion campaigns;
- monitoring and reporting; research and assessment.

At the EU level, the tools used by organizations involved in consumer issues are very similar to those used by organizations involved in health care issues. As a matter of fact, these organizations have the same characteristics (second degree organizations principally involved in lobbying activities). However, the training of trainers, which is very much supported by the EU Commission, has a special importance in consumer issues.

Citizens' roles according to institutions

In the case of health policy, we have observed that there is a divergent view on citizens' role between institutions and the citizens' organizations themselves. Let us examine what the situation is in consumer policy, starting from the report of the institutions' point of view concerning citizens' organizations role (table C.9).

Table C.9 - main citizens' roles according to institutions at the national level

ROLES	FREQUENCY
Participation in national and international councils and committees	19
Consultation on policies	14
Consultation on laws	9
Initiate legal procedures	8
Make proposals and give advice to authorities	8
Research, controls and tests, quality controls	8
Communication with citizens; information and training	7
Injunction actions; Participation in administrative procedures	6
Representation of rights and interests	5
Partnership in implementation	5
Participation in labeling, normalization, standardization, pricing	5
Participation in ADR	4
Acquiring information	4
Verifying trading conditions; advertisement	4
Consultation and dialogue bodies and working groups	4
Information and activation of authorities; verifying laws	3
Protection of rights and assistance of target groups	3
Appointment of candidates for public roles	1
TOTAL	*122*

As in the case of health care, we can observe that the list of citizens' roles can be grouped in three main sets:

- interlocution actions: 42.6% of the mentions;
- autonomous initiatives: 36%;
- partnership activities: 15.3%.

Also, let us highlight the differences between consultation on laws (9 references) and consultation on policies (14 references). While in health care the two series of items were equivalent (though not necessarily referring to the same countries), in consumer policy they are remarkably different. This could reveal a different attitude towards citizens' participation in decision-making and in implementation.

In the European Union, institutions involve citizens' organizations in consultative bodies, giving advice, information and opinions on EU consumer policy and other related policy (for example agriculture) and on its impact on the field. They involve civic organizations also in the implementation phase through the co-financing of projects related to calls for proposals. This is very similar the way in which EU institutions involve citizens' organizations in the health care policy field.

About civic organizations' participation in consumer policy making, some critical points emerge from the questionnaires.

Table C.10 - Obstacles to the participation of citizens' organizations in consumer policy making, resulting from the answers to the questionnaire

- The recognition and consideration of the consumer associations by public institutions based on the expertise of their representatives in their professional life, but not necessarily on consumer issues
- Lack of the implementation of consumer protection laws: civil organizations should be consulted on price regulation but they are not; some government responsibilities should be transferred to consumer NGOs but it is not yet implemented.
- Consultative Council for Consumers doesn't meet as regulated by law
- The director general of the consumer agency serves as the Consumer Ombudsman
- The chair of the national council of consumer organizations is appointed by the Ministry of Industry

c. Focus on environment

Organizations operating in the field

Table C.11 presents the list of the main organizations operating in the field of environmental issues at the national level.

Table C.11: main types of citizens' organizations operating in environmental policy
at national level

ORGANIZATIONS	FREQUENCY
General environmental and umbrella organizations	24
Animal welfare organizations	17
Consumer organizations	12
Cultural heritage organizations	9
Civil defense groups	6
Foundations and charities	4
Tourist organizations	4
Associations of professionals	3
Advocacy and lobbying groups	3
Youth organizations	3
Target, community and direct action organizations	2
Ecological agriculture organizations	2
Educational and artistic organizations	2
Science and research organizations	2
Others	6

With reference to what we have seen in the other two focuses, we can highlight here that there are consumer organizations operating in the area of environment policy in 12 countries. This fact strengthens the impression of the cross-sector nature of citizens' organizations engaged in public policies. This reoccurring phenomenon should carefully considered by institutions.

The main organizations operating in environmental policy making at the European level are:
- international environmentalist organizations and European federations of national environmentalist organizations;
- international animal protection organizations and federations of animal protection organizations;
- federations of youth organizations.

What is specific to the EU level is the presence of youth organizations dealing with environmental issues.

Issues addressed

The issues that citizens' organizations deal with are summarized in table C.12.

Table C.12: main environmental issues dealt with by citizens' organizations at national level

ISSUES	FREQUENCY
Condition of environment	21
Public and policy makers awareness	17
Endangered species	16
Sustainable development, Agenda 21	14
Cultural areas and goods	14
Safety of environment	13
Natural parks, protected areas, botanic gardens	13
Pollution, contamination	11
Urban environment and urban green areas	10
Safety of food	9
Energy, nuclear and alternative power	9
Natural resources	8
Prevention and management of risks	8
Waste management	8
Wetlands, rivers, sea, coasts, mountain areas, less populated rural areas	8
Rights of animals and wildlife	7
Bio-agriculture, eco-labeling	7
Lifestyles	6
Bio-diversity	5
Water and sanitation	5
Abandoned animals	5
Responsible consumption	5
Forests	5
Radioactivity, electromagnetic pollution	4
Agri- and eco-tourism	4
farm animals, pets	4
Landscape	4
Transport system	3
Industry activity (pollution, waste, packaging, …)	3
Construction	3
Animals abused in experiments, animals in captivity	3
TOTAL	*252*

Five main categories can be identified in this list of issues:
- safety of environment (20% of the references);
- sustainable development (37%);
- territory (16%);
- bio-diversity (19%);
- animal welfare (7%).

At the European Union level, the main issues that citizens' organizations deal with are:
- EU environmental legislation;
- common awareness;
- animal rights;
- international cooperation.

Citizens' tools and strategies

The main tools and strategies that citizens' organizations operating in environmental policy adopt to address the issues above mentioned at national level are summarized in the following table C.13.

Table C.13: main tools and strategies adopted by citizens' organizations in environmental policy at the national level

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES	FREQUENCY
Campaigns	21
Education to the public, seminars, meetings	20
Information	17
Monitoring and reporting; impact assessment	17
Lobbying	14
Intervention in policy making	12
Advocacy	12
Promotion of responsible behavior	11
Institution and care of national parks and protected areas	11
Communication tools, media	10
Creation and management of services	9
Training of citizens, school activities	9
Programs for environmental protection and sustainable development	8
Legal actions	8
Research and studies	7
Field work, emergency work, direct action	7
Mobilization of people	6
Dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders	5
Cooperation between organizations	5
Assistance and protection for people in need and at risk	4
Cleaning of environment	4
Advice	4
International forums and cooperation	4
Eco-tourism, camping, excursions	4
Innovation in environmental management	3
Fund raising	3
Promotion of cultural and artistic activities, libraries, etc.	3
Restoration of sites, civic adoptions, planting of trees	3
Promotion of sport and fitness activities	2
Participation in standardization, certification and eco-labeling	2
Production of goods	2
TOTAL	*247*

With reference to the information provided in the above table it is possible to draw a distinction between two kinds of actions:
- those directed at changing or at least influencing *the context* of environmental policy (for example, campaigns, education and information activities, cultural and artistic initiatives, training programs) (112 mentions, 45.3%);
- those directed at having an impact on *the issue* (for example, monitoring, advocacy, institution of national parks, legal actions, cleaning of the environment, eco-tourism, etc.) (135 mentions, 54.6%).

The two categories have a similar weight. Therefore, one could conclude that citizens' organizations have a balanced approach, capable of joining together these two dimensions, which are both of crucial importance.

As to the European level, the tools and strategies of citizens' organizations engaged in this field are:
- lobbying;
- monitoring and reporting;
- publications;
- conferences and events;
- information and education to the public;
- petitions;
- opinion and communication campaigns;
- legal actions;
- research and expertise;
- training and capacity building of NGOs and local communities leaders.

It is worth noting that petitions and legal actions seem to be much more used by organizations dealing with the environment than by those dealing with health care or consumer rights.

Citizens' roles according to institutions

What is the institutions' view of citizens' role in environmental policy? Are there significant differences between this vision and the reality of citizens' engagement? To answer these questions, let us examine the institutions' point of view (table C.14).

Table C.14: main roles of citizens' organizations in environmental policy according to institutions at the national level

ROLES	FREQUENCY
Participation in commissions and working groups	16
Consultation in policy making	11
Consultation in law making	10
Implementation of policies and programs	9
Advice and proposals to administration	5
Assessment of policy implementation	3
Representation, legal representation and advocacy	3
Acquiring information	3
Intervention in administrative procedures	3
Inspections of places and facilities; Request for stopping hazardous activities	3
Participation in impact assessment	2
Activation of the administration for implementation and against misbehaviors	2
Participation in licensing	2
Other	2
TOTAL	*74*

Citizens' roles identified by institutions can be grouped in the three categories we have already used in the previous two focuses:
- interlocution, with 26 mentions out of 74 (35,1%);
- partnership, with 30 mentions (40,5%);
- autonomous activities, with 27 mentions (36,4%).

With regard to the European dimension, citizens' organizations operating in this field are involved in consultative procedures through a number of committees on different issues. They are also involved in the implementation of EU policies through projects co-funded by the Commission in the frame of its calls for proposals. It is again very similar to the situation described in the other two focuses, which might indicate that the policy of the European Commission vis-à-vis citizens' organizations is pretty homogeneous and does not depend on the policy field.

Concerning civic organizations' participation in environmental policy making, some critical points emerge from the questionnaires.

Table C.15 – Obstacles to citizens' organizations involvement in environmental policy, according to the answers to the questionnaire

- No clear public policy supporting civic organizations in the field of environment and sustainable development, relatively new fields for the institutions which don't see the necessity of civic activism in these fields
- Centralization of the funds regarding environment policies
- Removal and reduction of existing funding for environment policies
- Funding of totally inactive environmental organizations because of their political connections, misleading society that these are civic organizations
- Environmental civic organizations' work is exclusively considered as voluntary, therefore no funding is provided
- Environmental civic organizations are considered as extremists with which the government doesn't want to discuss
- Environmental civic organizations are only considered by the institutions as "managers" of protected areas and they often ignore their other contributions, especially at the local level
- Meetings and consultations with environmental civic organizations are organized in hours and ways that make it almost impossible for organizations to participate (volunteers)
- Limited access to environmental information, that citizens' groups have to pay for, which often makes it unaffordable

d. Citizens' actions and institutions' expectations in the three focuses

At the end of the previous section (point B.h.) we have already reported some results of the comparison between citizens' activities and institutions' expectations. This was done to supplement the analysis of the general attitude of institutions towards citizens' organizations in European countries with relevant elements coming from the three focuses. Now we will introduce the results of this analysis related to each of the three focuses.

Let us begin with health care. The result of the above described analysis is outlined in the following table.

Table C.19: health - comparison between citizens' activities and institutions' views

	Consultation & dialogue	Advocacy, representation	Monitoring, assessment	Information, education	Implementation activities	Other
citizens' activity	4,9%	16,8%	4,5%	37,8%	32,5%	3,2%
institutions' view	53,9%	6,5%	0%	7,8%	31,5%	0%

Consultation and dialogue are much more important for institutions than for citizens (more than ten times). Furthermore, monitoring and assessment does not exist in the institutions' expectations. On the contrary, advocacy is very present in citizens' activity (more than twice as much as is considered by the institutions); information and education is five times more relevant for citizens than for institutions. Implementation activities, on the other hand, have about the same rank.

The graph below highlights these results.
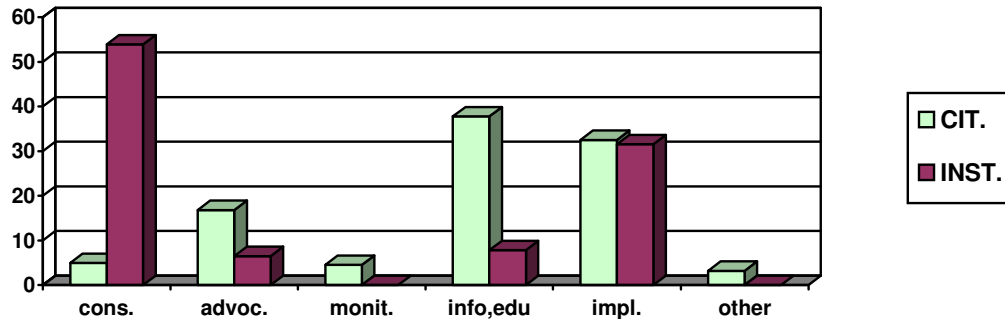
With respect to consumer policy issues, the results of the comparison are reported below.
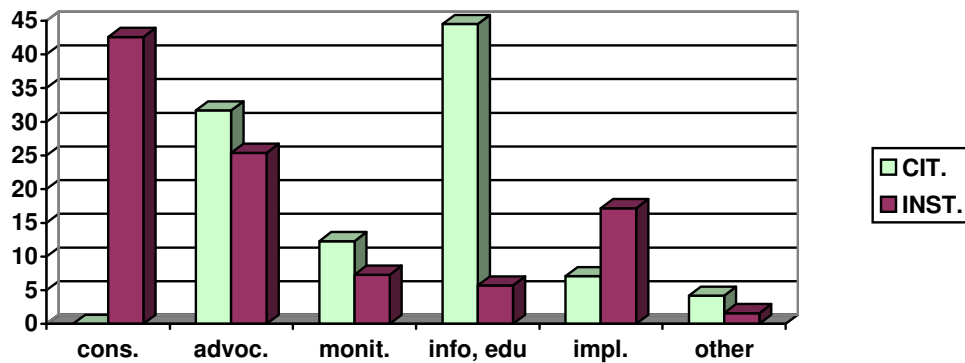
Table C.20: consumer policy - comparison between citizens' activities and institutions' views

	Consultation & dialogue	Advocacy, representation	Monitoring, assessment	Information, education	Implementation activities	other
citizens' activity	0%	31,7%	12,3%	44,5%	7,1%	4,2%
institutions' view	42,6%	25,4%	7,3%	5,7%	17,2%	1,6%

Consultation has absolutely no relevance for citizens' activity, while it covers more than 40% of institutions' vision. On the contrary, information and education is almost ten times more important in citizens' activity than in institutions' concerns. Advocacy, on one hand, and monitoring, on the other, are slightly more important for citizens than for institutions (31,7% against 25,4% and 12,3% against 7,3% respectively). Implementation activities, on the contrary, are more than two times as important for institutions than for citizens. About this last data, it should be considered that a significant part of the implementation of consumer policy is precisely advocacy and representation.

The graph below illustrates these results.

Finally, with reference to environmental policy issues, the results of the comparison are summarized in the following table.

Table C.21: environment - comparison between citizens' activities and institutions' views

	Consultation & dialogue	Advocacy, representation	Monitoring, assessment	Information, education	Implementation activities	Other
citizens' activity	2%	18,6%	9,7%	37,2%	28,7%	3,6%
institutions' view	56,7%	12,1%	13,5%	0%	16,2%	1,3%

The situation is slightly different in this case. We can find the usual, opposite huge gaps between citizens' experiences and institutions' expectations both on consultation (citizens 2%, institutions 56,7%) and on information and education (citizens 37,2%, institutions 0%), while the comparison on the other topics gives results that are the opposite of those concerning consumer policy. Monitoring prevails in the institutions' view, while implementation prevails in the citizens' activity. On advocacy and representation there is instead the same gap (about 6%) in favor of citizens' activities.

The graph illustrates these gap.

49
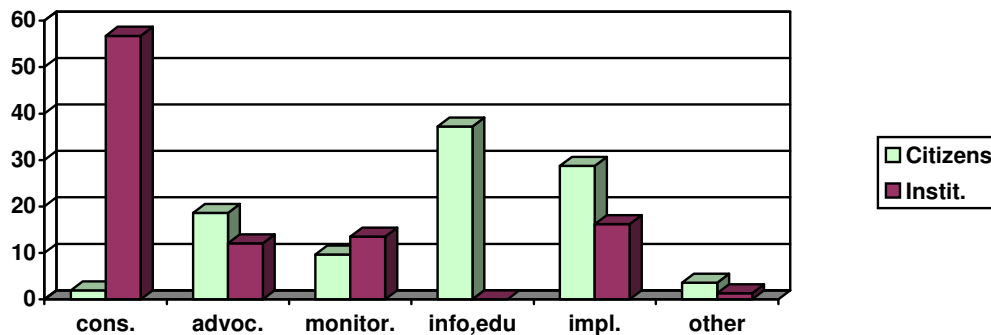
D. CONCLUSIONS

a. Summary of the findings

Findings related to the general part

There is a lack of reliable and/or comparable **qualitative and quantitative data** on citizens' organizations. On the *quantitative* side, out of 26 countries 15 have defined data but too inclusive and therefore just too much, 2 have defined data but too specific or sectorial, 4 have divergent data, 4 have only estimations and one has no data at all. On the *qualitative* side, three main categories are used: nonprofit sector, which emphasizes the economic aspects; civil society, which stresses the non-governmental nature of citizens' organizations; association, which includes all the forms of citizens getting together or organizing. All of them include citizens' organizations, working in public policies, together with very different organizations such as religious hospitals, political parties or game clubs. From a legal point of view, in the laws and regulations there appears some 30 different denominations for organizations, which seem to have three different origins: the Civil Code, the fiscal legislation, the policy-oriented legislation.

Legal status and role of citizens' organizations are defined in 16 countries in the Constitution, in 22 by the laws, in 4 by regulations and administrative acts and in one in charters and protocols. Though this could be seen as good news, it must be noticed that *in only 13 countries out of 22 the principle of the role of citizens' organizations in public policy is established, and it is explicitly contained in only one Constitution out of 16*. In the other cases this principle has merely an administrative rank.

About the **criteria of recognition**, it is important to observe that what clearly *prevails are the formal and bureaucratic requirements rather than criteria linked to adequacy of skills and operational ability of citizens' organizations* in practicing general interest purposes such as a pertinent number of members, effectiveness, continuity and relevance of their activity, adequate assets, etc.

About the **procedures of recognition**, different procedures are usually provided according to the legal status of the organizations. The *prevailing form* of recognition is *the registration of the organization. However, no relevant checks of verification activities are developed.*

About the **institutions in charge of the recognition**, *the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice are the two institutions mostly involved.* This does suggest that the traditional state's *"fear of organized citizens"* still exists.

About the **forms of checks and assessment**, the Survey results state that *about 40% of all the forms of control regard financial and administrative matters.*

This confirms the widespread idea that *institutions tend to suspect citizens' organizations of mismanagement or frauds*. Obviously, any single incorrect or criminal behaviors, which may occur, should not justify this attitude.

This observation is confirmed by the fact that the highest number of practices and circumstances leading to the **inadmissibility of the registration application or loss of legitimacy by citizens' organizations** are related to *financial misbehaviors,* followed by cases of threat to *public security* (confirming the existence of the "fear of organized citizens" already mentioned) and *lastly cases of organization's performance failures*, which normally should be the most important factor to consider for the loss of legitimacy.

Concerning the relation between public bodies and citizens' organizations, *only in 7 countries is there **a specific institution dedicated to deal with such a role.*** This information is relevant because these institutions are usually governmental commissions, committees or agencies specifically devoted to coordinate the efforts of governments and citizens' organizations engaged in policy making.

From the point of view of the **institutions dealing with citizens' organizations**, *the administrative institutions are almost four times more involved than the political institutions are* and in an even lesser extent the judicial, independent and quasi-state institutions. Since the interlocution between the state and citizens' organizations usually occurs in the arena of public policies, it can be seen as logical that the administrative institutions have a predominant relations with citizens' organization. Nevertheless, this matter is concerning since it could imply *the risk that citizens' organizations tend to be recognized only as a technical supporter or agency of public administration*, rather than a political interlocutor or ally of the state.

In relation to **actions developed by the engaged institutions** towards citizens' organizations, they can be divided in three main categories: *consultation* in definition and planning of policies; *involvement in implementation*; *support to the development* of citizens' organizations.

Regarding the **prerogatives of citizens' organizations**, that is powers that are independent of the goodwill of public authorities and must be granted according to specific procedures, many of them have been provided by national laws and regulations. They regard: *a political dimension* (appointment of representatives to public bodies, taking the floor and making proposals on laws and policies, the right to petition, etc.), an *administrative dimension* (access to information, mandatory opinion on certain issues, the right to initiate and participate in administrative procedures, participation in public procurement, activation of the ombudsman, etc.), a *juridical dimension* (initiate and participate in legal actions, start collective civil actions, sue for damages in criminal trials, join individuals in criminal actions, etc.). Though the list of prerogatives is definitely positive, their actual level of implementation is often very low.

About the **forms of support**, a typology was done related to three forms: *direct* support (donations and legacies free of taxes, grants, tax relief for utilities, etc.); *indirect* (individuals and companies' donations are tax deductible, free use of public buildings and areas, welfare and job facilities for volunteers, etc.); *in kind* (awards and prizes, access to public broadcast, educational credits, etc.). Again, in reality the situation may not be so positive.

The result of the **comparison between citizens' actions and institutions' views** in all the three focuses on the basis of five items (consultation, dialogue between stakeholders; advocacy and representation; monitoring and assessment; information, education and advice; implementation activities, delivery of services), is a clear divergent agenda between citizens' actions and institutions' views at least on two points:
- consultation is at the top for institutions and at the bottom for citizens;
- information and education is at the top for citizens and at the bottom for institutions.

Beside other points of divergence, these two items indicate a kind of double agenda which divides citizens and institutions and which is an hindering element for dialogue and cooperation.

On the **EU policy**, it results that:
- Only estimations are available on citizens' organizations operating at the European level;
- There is no official and shared definition of citizens' organization;
- There is no legal status for European associations;
- There is no official recognition of European organizations (the insertion in the CONECS database is done on a voluntary basis, without any control of the Commission);
- No particular special rights or prerogatives are connected to the insertion in the database;
- With regard to institutions involved, the Commission interacts with citizens' organizations either through consultation or through co-funding of projects; the Parliament involves NGOs in consultation and public hearings and receives petitions; the Economic and Social Committee interacts with citizens' organizations mainly in public events and debates, but also through hearings related to the draft of ESC opinions; the Ombudsman receives complaints about misadministration coming from associations with a registered office in the EU;
- Citizens' organizations do not have any special right or prerogative in addition to those recognized to each European citizen. Moreover, all prerogatives granted by the European directives and case-law exclusively refer to the national level and not to European one: citizens' organizations have no specific access to the Court of Justice;
- The economic support – which is estimated at over 1 billion € a year in 1997 – has two forms: core-funding for the running costs of European associations (organizations which have members in more than one member state, usually from three to eight), and project funding, open also to national NGOs. In both cases the EC covers only part of the financing;

- The European institutions (especially the Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee) contribute directly to the activities of citizens' organizations through in kind support;
- Other two forms of support are provided: the European Voluntary Service and the training programs for citizens' organizations' members on different topics.
- The three focuses on health, consumer and environmental policies have given similar results:
  o At the European level mainly second-degree structures such as networks and umbrella organizations operate;
  o Their fields of activity are focused on those issues which the European Union (especially the Commission) is engaged in;
  o The tools and strategies they use are mainly related to information and communication, lobbying, networking with national organizations and training;
  o The institutions tend to involve them in policy making in two ways: participation in consultative bodies and funding of projects in the European policies framework.

As for the answers to the questionnaires regarding problems related to interaction between institutions and citizens' organizations in policy making, the ten issues most frequently quoted were the following:

- Lack of public funds for civic organizations: 51,4%;
- Lack of recognition of organizations as important actors of policy making (in respect to trade unions and business): 40,9%;
- Difficult access to policy makers; Difficult identification of interlocutors because of lack of transparency and frequent changes in the staff: 37,1%;
- Distrust and reluctance, lack of consideration, respect and equal partnership towards civic organizations, at national and local levels: 33,3%;
- Insufficient and incomplete regulation: 23,8%;
- Attempt of the government to organize orgs, to control them through ministries' permissions, police or infiltration of executive bodies, to influence them through legislation, administrative rules and funding: 20%;
- Poor communication and coordination links: 20%;
- Fear of orgs considered as trouble makers and capable of influencing elections: 19%;
- Lack of transparency; Lack of information on laws, programs and provisions: 18,1%;
- Consultations take place when decisions have been already taken; Organizations' opinions not taken into account and joint decisions not implemented; Government does not listen to the answers to its questions: 18,1%.

As regards the EU level, from the answers to the questionnaire some recurrent problems and gaps were identified:

- lack of involvement of citizens' organizations in the definition of policies and operational programs;
- limitations and obstacles in the access and management of EU funds;

- weakness of the consultation process (bad organization of the consultation, lack of serious engagement of institutions, lack of feedback to citizens' proposals and remarks);
- limited possibilities of participation for small and not Brussels-based organizations;
- limited access to institutions, officials and documents;
- negative attitude of institutions towards citizens' organizations (non-friendly attitude, misperception of citizens' organizations as links with civil society, protection of institutions against claims and criticisms of citizens' organizations).

Findings related to the three focuses

Health care:
- The most widespread organizations are: Organizations dealing with chronic illnesses in 20 countries; Self-help groups in 13 countries; Voluntary organizations in 12 countries; Organizations working with target groups such as people with disability in 12 countries; Civic organizations of professionals in 11 countries; Advocacy organizations in 9 countries. In 7 countries there are consumers' organizations working on health issues. This reveals the cross-sector nature of citizens' organizations, which is confirmed by the other focuses.
- The issues that citizens' organizations deal with are not additional or residual, but actually cover all the main areas of health care: Prevention (37 references); Care (108 references); Rehabilitation (35 references). Among care issues, those related to accessibility, quality and safety of services are about twice as many as those related to specific conditions or illnesses of people. This could suggest that the most critical point in health care is the availability of facilities and services.
- Among tools and strategies that citizens' organizations use in health care, there are only two of them that go beyond the citizens' traditional role. The first refers to medical support to citizens: medical assistance, counseling, training of professionals and patients, support to research and innovation, group therapy (29 references).
- The second refers to the core of the welfare system: fund raising for people and facilities, advice centers, creation and management of services, support to rehabilitation and integration (43 references). This implies a citizens' role which is not only of demanding, controlling and supporting "relational" needs of people, but also of cooperating in the creation, management and improvement of welfare services.
- Regarding the roles that institutions entrust citizens with, three different areas can be identified: The first is interlocution. It refers to the participation in consultative bodies, in hearings on laws and policies, in the drafting of proposals and suggestions to government. This cluster has 31 references out of 74. The second role is partnership. It refers to those actions implemented by civic organizations in collaborating with the authorities. This is the case of participating in steering committees, in working groups on policies, in the definition of standards and consensus procedures, in evaluation bodies.

This cluster has 18 references out of 74, about one fourth of the total. The third is autonomous activity. It refers to management and implementation activities, assistance and services to patients, representation, advice and advocacy, training of stakeholders, information and education to the public. This set sums 26 mentions out of 74.

Consumer policy:
- The most widespread organizations are: Consumers' and users' organizations (25 countries), environmental organizations (14 countries), target / specialized organizations (13 countries), health related organizations (9 countries), federations and umbrella organizations (7 countries). The existence of environmental and health-related organizations operating in consumer policy confirms the cross-issue nature of citizens' organizations.
- The most important issues that citizens' organizations deal with can be grouped in: consumer policy with 68 reference, commerce with 44 references; public services, with 40 references; environment with 27 references. The fact that consumer organizations are involved in public services and environmental issues means that there exists an approach to consumer issues broader than the traditional one.
- Five main clusters that identify citizens' organizations actions are: information and communication activities (60 references); direct advocacy actions (58 references); educational activities (35 references); production of data and information (29 references); direct intervention in policies (21 references).
- About citizens' role according to institutions, as in the case of health care, we can observe that the list of citizens' roles can be grouped in: interlocution actions with 52 mentions out of 113; autonomous initiatives with 44 mentions and partnership activities with 17 mentions.

About the **environmental** policy:
- The more widespread organizations operating in this field are environmental (in 24 countries), animal welfare (17 countries), consumer (12 countries), cultural heritage (9 countries).
- About the issues citizens' organizations are engaged in, five categories can be identified: Safety of environment (52 references); Sustainable development (94 references); Territory (42 references); Bio-diversity (50 references); Animal welfare (19 references).
- About tools and strategies used by citizens' organizations, they can be grouped in two clusters having the same relevance: actions directed at changing or at least influencing the context of environment policy (for example campaigns, education and information activities, cultural and artistic initiatives, training programs); those directed at having an impact "in the field" (for example monitoring, advocacy, institution of national parks, legal actions, cleaning of the environment, eco-tourism, etc.).

- The role of citizens' organizations, according to institutions, can be grouped in the three categories that we used already in the previous two focuses: interlocution with 30 mentions out of 78; partnership with 21 mentions; and autonomous activities with 27 mentions.

As regards **good practices**, 29 were identified in the member states and 10 at the European Union level.

b. Conclusive remarks

1. In concluding this report, we must try to answer the question that was the starting point of this Survey: what is the public policy towards citizens' organizations operating in the New Europe?

Of course, answering this question has two implications, which are typical of policy analysis:
- It means generalizing situations that are profoundly different,
- It means taking for granted that a sum of rules, choices and activities makes up a consistent unity, which can be referred to as policy, that is, a program developed by an authority in order to manage an issue of public importance.

The "European public policy on civic activism" that we are referring to is, therefore, a generalization and, in a sense, an abstraction coming from empirical situations, but not able to completely represent the whole of them. We have already discussed this matter in the point of the section A, devoted to the value and limits of the Survey; but it is necessary to recall it here.

After this warning, we will try to synthesize the main features of the public policy on civic activism in New Europe countries and at the EU level identified in this Survey.

Before doing this, another premise is needed: citizens' organizations operating in the field of public policy making (agenda, planning, decision, implementation, evaluation of ways to manage public problems) with the aim to protect rights and care for common goods do exist in the New Europe area. They reflect the phenomenon of active citizenship, which has a global dimension and does not depend either on the existence of democratic institutions, or on the existence of a welfare system. Active citizens do exist in each New Europe country and, despite obvious differences, show strong similarities in terms of fields of activity, issues dealt with, tools and strategies adopted, organizational patterns, expressed needs as well as political, institutional and economic obstacles they face.

2. After this preamble, we will try to briefly define the main features of the European public policy on civic activism, as it results from our Survey.

The *starting point* of this policy seems to be a double crisis of governments and, generally speaking, of institutions:

- A crisis of resources and operational ability in fulfilling tasks such as those related to welfare, consumer or environment protection;
- A crisis of trust and legitimacy despite the existence of fully developed democratic institutions.

Therefore, the *objective* of this policy is to involve active citizenship organizations in the management of public issues in order to increase the resources and enhance the legitimacy of public intervention.

This aim is pursued through two *strategies* of involvement:

- In the phases of definition, decision and evaluation of public policies;
- In the implementation phase.

The *tools* used to put into practice these two strategies are of various kinds:

- Law and regulation tools;
- Financial and fiscal tools;
- Symbolic and material tools.

3. With regard to its effects, such a policy has achieved some very important results. Three of them appear of the utmost importance:

- The policy has placed citizens' organizations in the realm of policy making, overcoming the traditional approach of freedom of association and the corresponding division of labor (the public affairs to the State, the private interests to civil society associations);
- The policy has enhanced the awareness of citizens' organizations regarding their powers and responsibilities in managing public affairs;
- The policy has increased the expectations of citizens' organizations' and consequently, has pushed institutions into being more accountable on a daily basis.

These results cannot be underestimated. They are the promise of a new age of cooperation between governments and citizens, a democratization of everyday life in Europe, and an improvement of democratic institutions at the national and European levels.

4. Nevertheless, a number of *implementation gaps* emerged from the Survey, which seriously question the achievement of the expected results. These gaps go together along with the above-mentioned positive effects achieved in terms of an increased level in the protection of rights and care of common goods and the building of Europe as a space of social cohesion. This is the reason why identifying and tackling implementation gaps is a task of utmost importance. Five of these gaps appear to be a priority.

The *first* gap is *between what is established in theory and what happens in reality*. Very often, forms of support or rights of citizens' organizations stated in laws are not implemented due to the lack of funds, arbitrary public choices or mismanagement.

This element emerges particularly from the interviews with experts and civic leaders, which have identified a number of implementation gaps that are capable of frustrating any positive intention and effort.

The *second* gap is *between the reality of citizens' organizations and how they are perceived by the institutions*. Citizens' organizations are cross-sectorial, they practice at the same time advocacy activities and service delivery, they mix voluntary work with paid work, while according to institutions they would have univocal features in order to be embedded in laws and correspond to bureaucratic structures. This phenomenon can be a real source of misunderstandings and conflicts.

The *third* gap is *between two visions of citizens' organizations: as a resource and as a threat*. This sort of "Dr. Jekyll - Mr. Hyde" situation emerges from the legislation itself, where, on the one hand, citizens are suspected of misusing funds and being a threat to public safety and national unity, and on the other hand, they are asked to cooperate in managing the core issues of the welfare system, to counterbalance strong powers in consumer policy and to strengthen environmental awareness and behaviors.

The *fourth* gap is *between the activities of citizens and the agenda of institutions*. In the focuses, information and education is at the top of citizens' organizations' activities and consultation is at the bottom, while the institutions' view is precisely the contrary. This is only one example of the divergent perception of the reality that exists between citizens' organizations and institutions, which can be a real obstacle to partnership.

The *fifth* and last gap is *between the constitutional provisions and the operational reality of citizens' engagement* in public policies. The Survey illustrated the following: in the existing constitutional framework, citizens' organizations' role comes from the traditional principle of the freedom of association, while in fact their actual involvement and work correspond more to the new principle of horizontal subsidiarity, which regards the cooperation between institutions and citizens for the fulfillment of public interest goals.

5. Regarding the *impact* of this policy on citizens' organizations caring for common goods, three negative or risky effects can be noted.

The *first* effect is *uncertainty*. Citizens' organizations are asked and expected to cooperate in the management of public affairs, but at the same time they do not seem to be put in a position to do it. This can result either from cultural reasons or due to the lack of resources.

The *second* effect is a *latent conflict*. Instead of creating a sense of mutual confidence, the implementation of this policy seems to increase distrust and fall short of citizens' expectations to be taken seriously by institutions.

The *third* effect is *the risk of reducing citizens' organizations to quasi-administrative bodies*, which are involved in the implementation of policies but without any political dialogue and interlocution with institutions. This lack of recognition of the specific value of civic activism is one of the most concerning phenomenon that we have noticed.

These negative elements can jeopardize the success of the entire strategy of citizens-institutions partnership, which is one of the most important resources for the development of Europe. It is above all the responsibility of national and European institutions to try to remove all these obstacles, fill the gaps and make this policy effective.

However, citizens' organizations themselves are partially responsible for this negative situation, above all especially because of their "double complex" vis-à-vis institutions: a political inferiority complex and a moral superiority complex. These two complexes are a tremendous obstacle to developing a mature, equal and effective partnership with institutions, capable of achieving concrete results.

6. Though these conclusions come mostly from the analysis of national situations, the European Union institutions do not show relevant differences in respect with national institutions' attitudes and behaviors towards civic activism. In other words, differences related to the non-standard and second-degree nature of European Union institutions do not produce another pattern of relation with citizens' organizations, but rather a variation of the same model. The European Union institutions have a certain regard for citizens' organizations, they tend to consider them as either mere suppliers of services or "representatives" of the whole "civil society", in the same way that trade unions and employers associations represent social forces. It demonstrates that they are not aware of the very specific nature of civic organizations.

c. Research recommendations: overcoming the knowledge gap

Despite its objective limitations, this Survey has demonstrated the lack of an adequate base of empirical knowledge on civil society and citizens' organizations phenomena in the New Europe. As the Survey has shown, we do not know even how many citizens' organizations do exist in Europe, either at the national or at European levels. Moreover, we are not able to distinguish for example between a private university and a grassroots educational service.

This situation depends certainly on the existing theoretical gap regarding civic initiatives; but also depends on the low level of engagement of researchers on this issue.

This Survey has tried to contribute to overcoming this gap. But it can only make sense if it is the first step to a systematic and shared engagement of the European scientific community. It is worth mentioning, from this point of view, that the main research efforts on civic activism involving European countries come from the United States of America (see the note 8). Scholars and research centers, both public and private, should and could engage in an effort aimed at building a shared and reliable empirical basis on the phenomenon of civic activism in the New Europe.

This engagement should also involve statistical authorities, and should be supported by public institutions, not only through grants and financial means. An important support should also come from private companies, a very important actor which is presently redefining its own role in the development of European civil society and institutions.

A specific objective could also be to establish a common system of identification and classification of civic initiatives that is capable of producing an homogeneous database at European level, while respecting national approaches.

d. Policy recommendations: managing the "Citizens' Agenda"

The above mentioned lack of knowledge corresponds, on the policy side, with the lack of a clear and coordinated strategy by governments towards citizens' organizations. The "Dr. Jekyll - Mr. Hyde" situation comes from this circumstance.

To overcome this situation, a considerable increase in the degree of attention, understanding and commitment of governments and public institutions is needed, both at national and European levels.

This task is of crucial importance if we want the building of the European community to be a process involving not only institutions and the establishment, but also people.

A special responsibility, in this context, pertains to the European Union and its institutions. After the promising edition of a discussion paper on its relation with NGOs (the 1999 Prodi-Kinnock paper), the Commission has given up the effort to formulate and discuss a global policy towards citizens' organizations, while the White Paper on Governance has failed to meet expectations on this regard. The Parliament appears at the moment not engaged in this issue, perhaps because of a sense of competition on representativeness with citizens' initiatives. The Council appears indifferent to civic phenomena, apart from solemn principle declarations. The Economic and Social Committee's attitude and behavior seem to oscillate between the impossible pretension to represent the whole civic world and too timid efforts to involve citizens' organizations in its daily work.

On the other side, national governments should definitely stop considering citizens' organizations as a threat, as low-cost operational agencies, or else as a tool for the consensus building and start considering them as a resource, a partner and a necessary support in the governance framework.

As we said, citizens' organizations themselves have an irreplaceable role in this effort. Therefore, they must overcome their dependence and inferiority attitudes and become promoters of a new era in their relations with governments.

The starting point for this common effort could be the Citizens' Agenda, drawn up , during the final conference of the Citizens for the New Europe project, held in Warsaw in November 2003.

We report the text of the Agenda here below, as an appropriate conclusion for this document.

The Citizens' Agenda
Warsaw, 7 November, 2003

1. The political attitude towards civic activism
No results can be achieved if the attitude of political representatives towards civic activism does not change. Active citizens are not only a resource, but also a common good for the development of democratic practices and structures. Citizens and citizens' organizations have to be empowered and not assisted; they are not competitors but facilitators of institutions; they are a factor in problem solving and not in trouble making.

2. The legislation
Frequently it is the legislation, itself, which instead of facilitating the existence and activity of citizens' organizations, makes it even more difficult. In other cases, legislation either reflects an underestimating vision of citizens' role and ability or a distrust in their intentions and motivations. Identifying and removing the legislative obstacles seem to be a real priority for the development of an effective policy on civic activism in Europe.

3. The consultation process
Where there are no clearly stated and practical procedures and no pertinent criteria of selection of the relevant organizations, what prevails is often an arbitrary, "fake" or merely symbolic process of consultation, where most of the time decisions have already been taken beforehand. Some organizations are privileged for reasons unrelated with the object of the consultation, while timing and other organizational constraints deny in practice what has been established in principle. In other cases, consultation does not take place at all.

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4. The implementation process

Too often the management of partnerships in the implementation process results in the waste of resources, time and energy on the citizens' organizations' part. In some cases governments are in competition with citizens' organizations, in other cases they ignore the results of citizens' activities and do not take into account the results of their programs as a tool for the assessment of the outcomes of public policies.

5. The culture of public officials

To deal with citizens is as complex as dealing with trade unions or businesses. It cannot be based on the common wisdom or the good will of single public servants, but requires specific know-how and sensitivity which must be built with motivational and training activities towards the human resources of public administration. On the contrary, when a bureaucratic approach prevails, frustration, anger and conflicts are usually the results of the interlocution or the cooperation.

6. Financial matters

The present situation risks to make the rich, richer and the poor, poorer. Citizens' organizations are not a way to manage "marginal" public affairs and they must be involved not because they are cheaper, but because they can do better. The amount of funds invested in civic activism, as well as, the rules and practices related to financial matters put at risk the existence of citizens' organizations everywhere in Europe, and also at the EU level, in spite of solemn principle declarations.

7. Checks and assessment of citizens' organizations

The excess of administrative and fiscal controls and the lack of assessment of the real ability and effectiveness of citizens' organizations risk privileging those that excel in the paper flow to the detriment of those that are really active. Citizens' organizations that cooperate with institutions must be seriously evaluated and assessed as regards to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, knowledge of situations, ability to solve problems, and so on.

APPENDIX 1
List of the organizations involved in the project

Country	Organization
Austria	The world of NGOs
Belgium	Fondations pour les générations futures (fgf)
Bulgaria	Federation of Consumers in Bulgaria NGO Development Center Index Foundation
Cyprus	KIDDA – Patient Rights Action Group
Czech Republic	Consumers Defence Association
Denmark	Danmarks Aktive Fobrugere - Active Consumers Denmark
Estonia	Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation
Finland	Kuluttajat-Konsumenterna r.y. - The Consumers
France	Consommation Logement et Cadre de Vie (CLCV)
Germany	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Versicherte und Patienten e.V (DGVP)
Greece	Europaiki Ekfrassi - European Expression
Hungary	National Association of Consumer Protection in Hungary (NACPH)
Latvia	Meridian Plus
Lithuania	NGO Information and Support Centre (NISC)
Malta	Ghaqda tal-Konsumaturi - Consumers' Union
Netherlands	Centrum for Europese Studies en Opleidingen (CESO)
Poland	European Environmental Center Association of Polish Consumers
Portugal	Associação Portuguesa Para o Desenvolvimento Local - Animar
Romania	APC Romania
Slovakia	Association of Consumer Organizations in Slovakia Association of Slovak Consumers
Slovakia	Slovak Academic Information Agency – Service Center for the Third Sector (SAIA- SCTS)
Slovenia	Legal Information Center for NGOs
Spain	Asociacion Valenciana de Consumidores y Usuarios (AVACU) Confederación De Consumidores y Usuarios (CECU) Asociación para la Defensa de los usarios de Bancos,y Cajas de Ahorros de Espana (ADICAE)
Sweden	Sveriges Konsumenter i Samverkan - Swedish Consumer Coalition
Turkey	Helsinki Citizens Assembly
UK	Rutland Citizens Advice Bureau

APPENDIX 2
List of the persons who answered the questionnaire

Austria
Franz Nahrada, Scholar

Belgium
Gerard Pirotton, Scholar
Myriam de Spiegelaere, Civic leader
Marc Vandercammen, Civic leader
Toby Johnson, Journalist
Pierre Guilbert, Representative from the private sector

Bulgaria
Diana Iskreva, Civic leader
Vassil Kadrinov, Civic leader
Monica Christova-Metodieva, Civic leader
Vlatko Gligorov, Civic leader
Kapka Panayotova, Civic leader
Diana Savateva, Journalist,
Milen Ganchev, Representative of the Private sector

Cyprus
George Penintaex, Civic Leader
Christina Argyrou, Representative of the Private sector

Czech Republic
Jindriska Prokopova, Scholar
Yvonna Gaillyova, Civic Leader
Josef Mrázek, Civic Leader
Frantisek Lobovský, Civic Leader
Miriam Vránová, Journalist
Tomás Pechar, Representative of the Private sector

Denmark
Bo Nomander, Civic Leader
David Rehling, Journalist

Estonia
Rein Ruutsoo, Scholar
Aado Luik, Civic Leader
Peep Mardiste, Civic Leader
Kertu Ruus, Journalist

European Union
Katherine Varin, Civic Leader
Mauro Albrizio, Civic Leader
Olga Stavropoulou, Journalist
Eva Grut, Representative of the Private sector

Finland
Tuomo Mörä, Scholar
Karl-Gustav Södergård, Civic Leader
Sinikka Turunen, Civic Leader

Eero Yrjö-Koskinen, Civic Leader
Erja Lahdenperä, Representative of the Private sector

Germany
Thomas Olk, Scholar
Ekkehard Bahlo, Civic Leader
Frank Rösch, Journalist
Peter Kusidlo, Representative of the Private sector

Greece
Iro Nicolacopoulou-Stephanou, Scholar
Sotiris Paschalidis, Civic Leader
Sotiris Papaspyropoulos, Civic Leader

Hungary
Éva Kuti, Scholar
György Baranovszky, Civic Leader
Gábor Fischer, Representative of the Private sector

Ireland
Fergus O'Ferrall, Civic Leader

Italy
Antonio Longo, Civic Leader
Mariadelaide Franchi, Civic Leader
Riccardo Della Valle, Representative of the Private sector

Latvia
Inara Groce, Journalist
Angelina Krumina, Civic Leader
Tekla Zabova, Civic Leader
Janis Brizga, Civic Leader

Lithuania
Arunas Poviliunas, Scholar
Birute Garbaraviciene, Journalist
Mykolas Okulic-Kazarinas, Civic Leader

Luxembourg
Pascal Husting, Civic Leader
René Winkin, Representative of the Private sector

Malta
Godfrey A. Pirotta, Scholar
Joseph M Mangion, Civic Leader
Eric Saliba, Civic Leader
Alfred Grixti, Journalist

Netherlands
Karin van der Leeuw, Civic Leader
Jikky Dinçelek, Civic Leader

Poland
Marek Golinczak, Scholar
Teresa Pałaszewska-Reindl, Scholar

Jerzy Jendroska, Civic Leader
Sławomir Postek, Civic Leader
Magdalena Kłodecka, Journalist
Roman Stachowiak, Representative of the Private sector

Portugal
Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Scholar
Álvaro Cidrais, Civic Leader
Luís Silveira Rodrigues, Civic Leader
Nuno Sarmento, Civic Leader
Carlos Alberto Gomes, Representative of the Private sector

Romania
Resmerita Razvan, Scholar
Emil Bojin, Civic Leader
Valentina Grigore, Journalist
Ioan Sabau, Representative of the Private sector

Slovakia
Erich Mistrik, Scholar
Pavol Molnar, Scholar
Josef Lounek, Civic Leader
Zuzana Šranková, Civic leader
Marta Hanečáková, Civic Leader
Halka Typkalová, Journalist
Stanislav Zicho, Representative of the Private Sector

Slovenia
Zinka Kolarič, Scholar
Bojan Žnidaršič, Civic Leader
Breda Kutin, Civic Leader
Barbara Gnilsak, Representative of the Private sector

Spain
Francisco Javier Garrido, Scholar
María Consuelo Reyna, Journalist
Jose Manuel Lopez Granda, Civic Leader
Theo Oberhuber, Civic Leader

Sweden
Maria-Pia Boëthius, Journalist

Turkey
Hale Akay, Scholar
Ela Anil, Civic Leader
Sunay Demircan, Civic Leader
Sinan Gokcen, Journalist
Mehmet Kurma, Representative of the Private sector
Sukru Hatun, Doctor

UK
Frances Harrison, Civic Leader
Judy Wilson, Civic Leader
Kay Sutton, Consultant