

Dear Participants of the NGO Forum – Riga 2015,

Please find below the draft Roadmap which is planned as one of the key outcomes of the Forum. If there are important things to add or change, please send us your **amendments with track changes (!)** and with a short background information in a comment “bouble” **prior Wednesday, 25 February 13:00 h Riga time: info@eiropaskustiba.lv**

An annex with best practice examples and additional information is also in preparation and should be published here soon. The draft has been prepared under the leadership of committed NGOs from the EESC Liaison group.

Thank you in advance,

the organisers

Draft – 20.2.2015

Article 11

- 1. The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.*
- 2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.*

Roadmap for the implementation of Articles 11(1) and 11(2) of the Lisbon Treaty

Towards better EU civil dialogue and involvement of citizens for better policymaking

1. Introduction

This roadmap outlines a vision, a structure and the actions needed for the implementation of better civil dialogue¹ in the EU and the involvement of citizens and their associations. It reflects citizens' calls for better decisions, better policymaking and better governance responding to citizens' needs.

Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty provides the legal basis for this. EU institutions, Member States and civil society, both individuals and representative associations, must work together to give practical effect to Article 11. Civil dialogue has the potential to extend and strengthen the European model of democracy and is a key tool in securing ownership, completion and modernisation of the model.

The roadmap sets out a vision of what the dialogue should seek to achieve and how it could be implemented in an effective, constructive and realistic manner with the widest range of supporters and stakeholders. It lays the groundwork for civil dialogue in which representative associations play a key role while, at the same time, the full potential of individuals is harnessed.

2. A vision for civil dialogue

Multi-level

Civil dialogue reaches out to, involves and includes representative associations and civil society² at all levels – local, regional, national and European.

¹ The European Economic and Social Committee defines civil dialogue as a democratic and public opinion-forming process which can take various forms, depending on the players involved.

Open, transparent and inclusive

Civil dialogue supplements direct participation methods - citizens, organised in associations representing their interests, will be able to participate in and contribute to civil dialogue at the level that best suits them. Digital tools e.g. e-platforms and other new-tech approaches should be used for collaboration along with traditional ones.

Building on, not duplicating, existing dialogues or consultations

Civil dialogue gives an overarching structure to existing dialogues, as well as those yet to be developed, between EU institutions and civil society focused on particular themes. Any confusion between dialogue, consultation and communication should be avoided.

Better policymaking - ideas for a new Europe

Civil dialogue is a process for exchanging expertise and connecting with innovation in grassroots citizens' organisations. It is a space for identifying and reflecting and building on the values, principles and objectives of the European project, creating a European public sphere by closing the gap between policymakers and citizens and also harnessing the potential of direct participation by the citizens. It will lead to better policy development for the common good which is closer to the citizens' needs and expectations, generating a greater sense of common ownership. The role of civil dialogue is crucial in the drafting of legislation, as it allows the impact of the legislation on the citizens to be assessed.

Joint actions on agreed EU priorities

A place for civil society and the EU institutions to cooperate and build joint projects for better implementation of EU policies, contributing to better understanding amongst citizens of the added value of the European Union and evaluating the impact that policies have on civil society and citizens. The value of cross-sector and cross-thematic initiatives should be borne in mind.

European integration through civil society

Civil dialogue is an opportunity to create links between the citizens themselves and their elected representatives from across the EU. It can lead to EU-wide cooperation, exchange and projects for change encouraging the development of stronger ownership and a stronger sense of European identity.

3. Action towards dialogue at different levels

The roadmap outlines three levels of dialogue reflecting Article 11 (1) and (2):

3.1. Dialogue with representative associations and civil society at national level

Structure (Article 11.2)

Although national traditions and legal frameworks differ considerably, EU decisions are, to a large extent, prepared by national departments and have greatest impact at national, regional and local levels. Treaties are binding upon Member States and joint commitments and aims (such as the Europe2020 Strategy) cannot be achieved without broad ownership and participation by the citizens. The thematic dialogues that often already exist at national level need better EU recognition and support measures so that they can be extended to other Member States. National dialogues should form part of the debate in the annual EU dialogue.

Building on

Existing dialogues on EU issues at national level e.g. health, youth, sport, trade etc. EYC 2013 Citizens' Dialogues (adapted and restructured),

² The term civil society covers both active individuals and organized civil society here.

Partners

Member States, European Commission DGs, civil society representatives involved in the dialogues (also via Economic and Social Councils or other national level structures (where existing)).

Next steps

- Gathering information about existing successful dialogues at national level. Consultation with stakeholders from sectors and fields with need for improvement regarding regular dialogue.
- A recommendation from the Council to establish national dialogues across the Member States, including on the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy.
- Establishing mechanisms for exchanging and disseminating best practice and some level of coordination between existing dialogues, while respecting their differences. Starting a discussion on quality criteria for participation and minimum standards, compulsivity, including the time necessary for proper, effective participation.
- Member states should find appropriate finances and the EC should review its instruments/programmes to support CSOs operating in the field of participation, democracy and rule of law at national level; EC should include citizen participation/democracy among the horizontal priorities of its national programmes.
- Supporting new projects, both in terms of information and practical contribution to better decision-making and revitalising and reforming EU Citizens' Dialogues across EU Member States (which began again in Latvia in January 2015), ensuring broader outreach to civil society through common conclusions and feedback from each dialogue.

3.2. Dialogue with representative associations and civil society at EU level

Structure (Article 11.2)

Appropriate regular and structured dialogue forums to link each and all the EU institutions with civil society while creating synergies between the institutions where possible. Existing best practice should be extended and strengthened. Among other tools, this would include a yearly event bringing together EU institutions represented at the highest levels and representative associations/civil society as well as representatives from sectoral dialogues and local, regional and national dialogues.

This annual meeting could be structured along the lines of the Open Days, with workshops and thematic meetings feeding into a comprehensive closing session and a final joint declaration or annual work plan. Online engagement and *ad-hoc* structures could be developed over time. Any declaration would be forwarded to all the EU institutions, and all would be required to issue a formal reaction.

Building on

The European Economic and Social Committee NGO Liaison group, EESC Civil Society Day.

Partners

European Economic and Social Committee, European Commission, European Parliament and European Council, Committee of Regions.

Next steps

- Appropriate measures should be taken to identify, extend and strengthen existing best practice (e.g. EU Migration Forum, etc.) and make visible the changes in EU decision-making resulting from civic engagement. Policy areas with improvement potential should be identified and a mechanism supporting and coordinating these actions and existing dialogues should be set up.
- Make use of the rich experience and intense evaluations made in Commission funded pilot projects to test citizen participation approaches under the programmes Plan D, Debate Europe and Europe for Citizens and develop scaling up strategies clearly linking participatory processes to decision-making processes. Improvement of online participation possibilities is needed. Agreeing the Statute for European Associations and appropriate and sustainable funding opportunities from EU sources.

- Establishing a civil dialogue group/committee and observatory with representatives from all interests involved to measure and monitor civil dialogue and levels of citizen engagement with the EU institutions and adopt a yearly report on this. The Europe 2020 Strategy review in June 2015 offers a great potential for planning/piloting these processes.
- Entrust without delay a specific Commissioner with the responsibility for civil dialogue coordination and allocate the relevant human resources to be able to implement it. Each DG should have staff responsible for dialogue and appropriate finances for the support of participation in decision making. Also, establishing a specific unit and political position and specific staff responsible for dialogue in the Parliament and the Council.
- Building on the EESC Civil Society Day – giving it broader outreach to sectoral dialogues and local/regional/national dialogues.

3.3. *Opportunities for citizens and representative associations to make known and publicly exchange views in all areas of Union action (Local, Regional, National and EU Dialogues)*_(Article 11.1)

Structure

All citizens, through the associations representing their interests, will be able to access civil dialogue at the level that suits them best – be that local, regional, national or EU level. These dialogues should be self-organised by the representative association/civil society organisations, with the support of the relevant public authority, thus getting as close to the citizens as possible and helping to reduce feelings of isolation and distance. Citizens should also be able to feed in as individuals.

The format, agenda and topics for discussion would be decided by the representative association/civil society organisations themselves. Agreed reports and representatives would feed into the national and EU-level dialogue process.

Building on

NGO networks, councils, initiatives, EYC 2013 National Alliances

Partners

Public authorities from different levels, Member State European Affairs Departments, Economic and Social Councils (where existing), civil society platforms.

Next Steps

- Relevant public authorities should establish an enabling environment to facilitate civil dialogue at EU, national and subnational levels.
- Appropriate resources and tools should be available with a special focus on coalition building, consensual approach and sustainability as a basis for high-quality input for better decision-making.
- Special focus on the potential of new media. In this respect both organisations and individuals can develop necessary synergies in their work and find appropriate opportunities for participation, e.g. by launching an EU participation 2.0 Strategy to enable the exchange of promising examples between all levels (local, regional, national and European), set up the objectives and envisage the steps for the creation of a digital ecosystem for citizens' engagement.
- Based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and by recognizing the Freedom of Association, promote participation in decision making by regularly monitoring the existing situation, reporting on it and spreading best practice.
- Increasing awareness of the European dimension with regard to situations at national and sub-national level and increasing motivation for exchanging views.