

The Concept and Development of the Civil Dialogue at EU Level

Indira Hasanovic

International University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

indira.hasanovic@gmail.com

This paper analyzes the concept of civil dialogue as well as its development in the EU level. Civil dialogue is an expression of participatory democracy; therefore the participation of citizens in decision-making and policy is essential to democracy. However, democracy becomes quite complicated when discussing the issue at the European level because of the structure of the European Union which is based on an ad-hoc approach. The other reason for the increasing validity of the dialogue with citizens in the Union should search for partial and troubling results of public opinion surveys that show a low level of understanding of mechanisms of action of the European institutions among citizens of the member states of EU. As result, French and Dutch referenda on the Constitutional Treaty have shown that there is a serious disconnection between citizens and policy makers at the European level. Therefore, the role and contribution of CSOs (especially NGOs) in the process of EU policy is extremely increased, in the last decades. Civil dialogue between civil society and public institutions at all levels is seen as a powerful tool that could help improve communication and citizen participation in decisions and policies made. Still difference in the level of development of the dialogue between the various EU institutions and NGOs is directly related to the degree of their work. From all EU institutions, European Commission has made the most progress in formalizing and institutionalizing consultations and dialogue with NGOs. Importance of growing engagement NGOs within the EU is indeed evaluated, both in terms of the policy process, and as a contribution to solving the democratic deficit through more participating forms of participation. The aim of this paper is to review the current practice of the civil dialogue at EU level through the analysis of several cases, and through them deficiencies and problems of previous practices of dialogue between the EU and NGOs will be shown.

Keywords: European Union, Civil Dialogue, Democratic Deficit, Participatory Democracy, Ngos, European Commission.