



Group III "Various Interests" of the
European Economic and Social Committee



European Economic and Social Committee



Malta Press Conference on Citizens Initiative -15 March 2012
Ewropa House , St Paul's Street, Valletta 5.30pm
Organised by the MCESD CS and Malta EESC Delegation

The Malta Conference was a joint initiative organised by the MCESD Civil Society Committee and the Maltese EESC Delegation to find out how the European Citizens' Initiative can be implemented and why it is a useful instrument that will serve as a link with citizens of all EU member states and to create awareness of this important instrument so that every European citizen will be in a position to make use of it.

From 1st April 2012, European citizens will enjoy a new right, which will give them a stronger voice in EU affairs when the European Citizens' Initiative enters into force. From that moment on, citizens will be able to express their demands in a new, unprecedented way. By collecting one million signatures across Europe, they can call upon the European Commission to propose or change European legislation. In this way, citizens can push a question onto the EU's agenda and thus become an active player on the European scene.

The recent years have witnessed a build-up during which the EU Commission together with the EESC have established the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010, The EU Year on Volunteering 2011, the current EU Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012 and not less important the forthcoming EU Year of European Citizenship 2013

For many years The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has played an active part in the development of participatory democracy both in its initiatives for member states and also in its external relations policies. The EESC has an active role as a bridge between the EU Institutions and the Citizens to ensure that the necessary instruments and mechanisms are in place to implement participative democracy. During the February Plenary Session, EU Commission President Mr Barroso sealed an agreement with the EESC President Staffan Nilsson to provide the necessary structures for the Committee to assist organisations in implementing this initiative.

Participants were welcomed by Ms Grace Attard, EESC Civil Society Representative and Mr. Ryan Mercieca, President MCESD Civil Society. The opening speech - ***Giving visibility to Civil Society in Malta - a process of increased participation*** was delivered by Hon Dr Chris Said, Minister for Justice, Dialogue and the Family. An audiovisual message was transmitted by the EESC Vice-President, Communication Ms Anna Maria Darmanin. Mr Christian Weger, Relations with Civil Society, Constitutional Affairs, EESC made a detailed presentation on ***the guide to the implementation of the Citizens Initiative - the role of the EU***. Mr Martin Bugelli, Head EU Commission Representation in Malta spoke about ***the role of the EU Commission***. Mr Joe Sciberras Malta EU Action and Steering Committee, MEUSAC, traced the development of Maltese Civil Society in the EU Consultation Process. ***The role of the European Parliament*** was presented by Mr Massimo Farrugia, Acting Head European Parliament Office, Malta

Comments from the floor focused on the need for education on EU issues for children and young people in schools. The Institutions must work together where more discussion on EU matters is allowed more frequently. There was a general agreement on the importance of networking so that proposals are jointly recommended to the Commission.

Grace Attard, EESC member Varied Interests Group



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