

Leadership in the Voluntary Sector
Training Conference

Challenges in Leading a Voluntary Organisation in today's world

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Valletta, Malta

1. ACN presentation
2. Defining Civic Participation
3. Italian Civil Society: an overview
4. The EU Charter of Active Citizenship
5. State of Civil Society at Global Level
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Cittadinanzattiva & Active Citizenship Network

- **Cittadinanzattiva** (Active Citizenship) is an Italian civic participation movement founded in 1978 that advocates for protection of citizens' rights.
- Since 2001, at the European and international level Cittadinanzattiva has promoted its ranch Active Citizenship Network (ACN).



- **ACN** is part of a widespread, open and flexible European network of more than 100 civic, consumer and patients organizations, addressed to encourage active participation of citizens in European policy-making.

- ✓ Promote the **protection of citizens' rights** and their **empowerment**;
- ✓ Encourage **active participation** of citizens in **European policy-making** in order to promote the construction of a European citizenship as an “active citizenship”, meaning the exercise of powers and responsibilities of citizens in public policies. This includes:
 - recognizing the primary role of citizens and civic organizations in the **care of the common good**;
 - supporting citizen's **participation in policy making** at local, national and EU level;
 - involving them in the **defense of their fundamental rights** as citizens, patients, consumers, passengers, users, savers, etc.
- ✓ Share abroad all the successful experiences achieved by Cittadinanzattiva in Italy. For this reason, ACN mirrors Cittadinanzattiva's Italian policies, such as patients' and consumers' rights, civic activism, education, etc.

Since its inception, the partnership within the network has been enhanced by the activities of partners in common projects, discussions and participation in initiatives founded on strong co-operation ties, as the Malta Health Network can testify. Over the years, ACN has promoted several political activities and carried out 30 EU projects together with partners from 27 EU Countries, working as leader coordinator, partner in a consortium or consultant as civic advisor.

This network of diverse civic organizations is both the strength and the uniqueness of ACN and makes it one of the most extended communities of active civic associations in Europe.

ACN is also official member of....

- “EU Health Policy Forum”, led by DG Health & Food Safety, an EU platform dealing with health and patient’s rights
- “Active Citizenship Structured Dialogue Group”, led by DG Home, an EU platform dealing with civic participation

....and active at international level in Colombia since 2009, with a Citizen Advisory Centre on Public Services and Health.

- 2002: drafting of the **European Charter of Patients Rights** which has become a reference for EU citizens' rights in the healthcare.
- 2005-2006: in collaboration with FONDACA, drafting of the **European Charter of Active Citizenship** to bridge the gap among the EU rules about the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities of civic organizations acting in public policies.
- 2007: launching of the **European Patients Rights Day**, celebrated every year on 18th April with local, national and EU events all over Europe.
- 2007: awarded the **Civil Society Prize of the European Economic and Social Committee** for its work on citizens' rights.
- 2009-2012: in Colombia, **technical advisor to the United Nation Development Programme** for the development of activities in the field of civic participation.
- 2011: proclamation of the **First Charter of Patients Rights in Colombia**.
- 2015: promoted inside the EU Parliament the MEPs Interest Group **"European Patients' Rights and Cross-Border Healthcare"**.



Acn was awarded the second *EESC Civil Society Prize* for its contribution to the promotion of **European integration and identity**



Civic activism

Civic activism, active citizenship, civic engagement and civic participation are alternative terms to express the ways citizens gather and work together:

- to participate actively in policy-making, or
- to address issues of public concern, having as final goal common goods, or
- the empowerment of weaker or disadvantaged shareholders.

This implies that:

- **not every citizen actively exercises his rights;**
- **not every civic organisation concerns civic activism.**

For example, sport or leisure organisations (with the exception of those addressed to disabled people or acting in a poor areas of a city) cannot be considered organisations promoting civic activism.

In general, the same applies to all those associations which gather people on the basis of private interests.

Therefore, we may say that all the organisations promoting civic activism are civic organisations, but not all the civic organisations concern civic activism.

We may define organisations promoting civic activism those **associations dealing with activities of public interests**. Those activities imply consistent actions aiming at:

- protecting citizens' rights and common goods,
- empowering disadvantaged people,
- supporting and promoting civic activism.



Protection of rights

Any action **promoted by citizens** with the purpose of:

- Making effective rights established by national or international laws and adopted by a specific country
- Promoting the institutionalization of new rights
- Recognising and introducing new rights

These outcomes may be reached in various ways and with the help of a variety of actors, but the initiative should be promoted by citizens.

Common goods

By common goods we refer to all material and immaterial goods, of a public or private nature, which must be free, accessible and usable for everyone, in defense of the right of citizenship and safeguard of the future generations.

Common goods include natural resources (such as air, water, soil) virtual/immaterial goods related to society (trust, legality, public institutions, security), material goods created by citizens (networks, such as Internet, pieces of art, public infrastructures).

Common goods protection implies:

- actions planned to identify a good as public good;
- actions intended to prevent or minimize impoverishment or neglect of public goods (forest protection, road maintenance);
- actions meant to facilitate wide access to common goods and to educate people to a responsible usage (access to museums, monuments for disabled people, Internet access in rural areas).

Empowerment

With the term empowerment we mean a ***cognitive process*** through which an under advantage person becomes aware of his ability/power as citizen.

Empowerment applies to both individuals and collectivity.

The status of “disadvantage person” may be either occasional or temporary (hospitalization, natural disasters), or permanent (disabilities, chronic diseases).

The process and effect of **empowerment allows an individual to exercise his own prerogatives**: “I can do it and I will do it”.

The process of empowerment concerns providing individuals in difficult situations with assistance and care, but also helping them **to become autonomous** and key players in their life as well as de facto citizens.

- In Italy there are more than **220.000 civil organisations**, and **86.000** of them are citizens' organisations involved in issues of **public interests**: they are not market-oriented and advocates for the whole collectivity and not just for the members of the organisation;
- Civil associations are **mainly located in the North of Italy (51%)**, rather than in the South (27,7%) or in the Centre (21,2%);
- **50,8%** of the members of these organisations are **women**, who, however, have leading roles only in 3 organisations out of 10;
- **42% voluntary organisations** are supported by public **funds**, while private companies are becoming more interested in funding CSOs: **70% of companies support CSOs with donations.**

The **Civil Society Index** (CSI) in Italy was carried out by Cittadinanzattiva with the scientific support of Active Citizenship Foundation (FONDACA) and in cooperation with a wide range of organisations and individuals.

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for Italy shows us the following paradox:

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and civil society as a whole, have a **low weight** in Italian society compared with other forces and sectors.

But the degree of trust in social forces goes precisely in the opposite direction of their weight, meaning that:

while **CSOs** have a very low weight, they are at the **top level in terms of trust** in Italian society, because of their role, and vice versa.

This divide between weight and trust is a peculiar feature of Italian civil society.

23 ¹⁶	National, regional and local Governments	8.5
21	Legislative power (National, Regional and local parliaments and councils)	8.3
39	<i>Public and private media</i>	8.2
2	Trade Unions	8.1
27	Municipal and local administrations	8.1
24	Central public administration	8
25	Regional administrations	7.7
22	Judicial power	7.6
40	<i>Companies delivering public interest services (Ferrovie dello Stato, Ente Poste, etc.)</i>	7.6
1	Religiously-inspired organisations	7.5
37	<i>Financial institutions</i>	7.5
20	Social movements (for peace, land, etc.)	7.4
28	Local health agencies	7.4
38	Multinational companies	7.4
14	Environmental groups	7.2
34	Economic public bodies	7.2
36	Big companies	7.2
10	Professional and business organisations (chambers of commerce, professional associations, employers associations, etc.)	7.1

12	Economic interest organisations (cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, microfinance organisations, etc.)	7
33	Public universities	7
41	Representative associations of enterprises (Confindustria, Confcommercio, Confartigianato, ecc.)	7
17	Foundations, donor organisations and fund raising institutions	6.8
18	<i>* Political parties*</i>	6.8
32	Public schools	6.7
29	Municipal agencies and companies	6.5
3	Civic organisations engaged mainly in advocacy activities (civic actions, social justice, peace, human rights, consumers' groups, etc.)	6.4
4	Service organisations (support to development, alphabetization, health, social welfare, etc.)	6.1
35	<i>Small and medium enterprises</i>	6
30	Authorities	5.7
19	Networks, federations and CSOs support organisations	5.6
31	Non-economic public bodies	5.6
15	Art and cultural heritage organisations	5.5
26	Province administrations	5.5
7	Women organisations	5.4
13	Cultural association, groups for the protection of ethnic minorities	5.2
16	Sport and leisure associations	5.2
9	Socio-economic marginalised people groups (poor, homeless, landless, refugees, immigrants, etc.)	5
11	Community groups and associations (self-help groups, parents' associations, burial associations, etc.)	5
8	Youth and Students Associations	4.8
5	CSOs active in education, training and research (think tanks, nonprofit schools, etc.)	4.2
6	Nonprofit media	4.1

Level of trust on:	%	Level of trust on:	%
1. Voluntary association	86,6%	15. Judges	44%
2. Presidency of Republic	79%	16. Media	39%
3. Public order forces	73,7%	17. Big companies	37,4%
4. EU	68,7%	18. Parliament	34%
5. UN	67,9%	19. Health care services	36,7%
6. Civil Society Organisations	65,5%	20. Social movements	36,2%
7. Consumer associations	63,5%	21. Social security services	34,1%
8. Small enterprises	63,3%	22. Civil services	33,2%
9. Church and other religion institutions	62,8%	23. Government	32,9%
10. Nato	55,7%	24. School institutions	30,7%
11. Education system	53,2%	25. Trade unions	22,8%
12. Armed forces	51,6%	26. Public administration	19,8%
13. Social cooperatives	50,7%	27. Political parties	8,8%
14. Local administrations	48,5%		

The European Charter of Active Citizenship draws its inspiration, among others, from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and particularly from:

- article 11 on the freedom of expression and information,
- article 12 on the freedom of assembly and association,
- article 21 on non-discrimination and article 41 on the right to good administration.

Annexed to the Charter is a summary of national examples of good practices gathered in 10 European countries; they testify to the fact that these rights are attainable and shall, therefore, be considered as an integral part of the Charter.

The European Charter of Active Citizenship is also used at EU level to:

- explore the extent to which CSOs are actually active citizenship actors and contribute to participatory democracy.
- To monitor the state of the implementation in the EU countries of the rights and duties of CSOs in relation to European and national institutions.

Definition of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): created and managed by citizens to contribute to the protection of the fundamental rights and to the enhancement of the democratic life.

1. **Right to Participation**, through **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**, in public life.
2. **Role of Public institutions** is to encourage CSOs' activities
3. **Responsibilities of Civil Society Organisations** concern the promotion of a greater European awareness among citizens and increasing people's participation in the Union's democratic life.
4. **Right to Intervention** with opinions and actions, as well as publicly disclosing the actions and/or omissions which may have an effect on such rights and general interests.
5. **Right to carry out Prevention Activities** aimed at preventing injuries and damages to persons and common goods.
6. **Right to Consultation**
7. **Right to Access** to all the sources of information and documentation.
8. **Right to Evaluate** public and private actors' activities concerning common goods and/or general interests, as well as to the respect of citizens' rights.
9. **Right to a Qualified Interlocution** in their relations with Public institutions.

Public institutions shall:

- **Respect Time and are obliged to give feedback**, by adopting swift and simple procedures and provide timely and motivated replies to CSOs' inputs
- Act with CSOs on the basis of **trust, equal dignity and the principle of non-discrimination.**
- **Facilitate and support the development of civic activities**, providing tax relief to CSOs, contributing to their expenses and facilitate their access to logistical resources.

Share of people who are active members of socially-based and politically based organisations



Source: CSI Population Surveys / World Values Survey

As for 2015, according to the State of Civil Society Report challenges for CSOs are:

- lack of **space, under-resourcing** and **limited access** to decision-makers;
- constant need to **prove its connection with and relevance to citizens**, and it needs to demonstrate its **ability to stay ahead of trends and innovate**;
- attempts to suppress civil society's essential role of telling the truth;
- in 2014, there were significant **attacks on the fundamental civil society rights** of free association, free assembly and free expression **in 96 countries**;
- **threats to civil society come from both state and non-state actors** that benefit from governance failures and denying human rights, such as corrupt politicians, unaccountable officials, businesses and religious fundamentalists;
- new attempts, even in democratic states, to **reduce long-established human rights norms**, which are described as obstacles to national development and security, while critical voices are conflated with terrorism;
- **hostility to civil society is increasing**, and CSOs' energy is being forced into fighting it.

- Taking into consideration the definitions given in the presentation, would you say that your organisation involves civic activism?
- We have seen in Italy there is a paradox in terms of CSOs' weight/trust. What is the situation in your country?
- As for the global challenges, to what extent would you agree with those listed here?



Thank you for the attention!



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