

## U-IMPACT DEBATE

# *“Civil Society and the EU”: Opportunities for Citizen Participation*

November 6, 2015

Nicosia, Cyprus

1. ACN presentation
2. Milestones
3. Civic participation & our commitment:
  - at Eu level: The EU Charter of Civic Activism
  - at national level: in Cyprus

## 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.



ACN's strategy is to promote the point of view of European citizens in all public policies areas, focusing on healthcare, consumers and corporate social responsibility issues.

1. This point of view is always based on civic information, i.e. civic audit, monitoring, data collected and analyzed by citizens' organizations themselves.
2. It is embodied in civic instruments such as: the European Charter of Patients' Rights, the European Charter of Active Citizenship, the Guidelines for good CSR partnerships in Europe, etc.
3. ACN website and newsletter are two essential networking and advocacy tools.

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. Over the past 10 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.

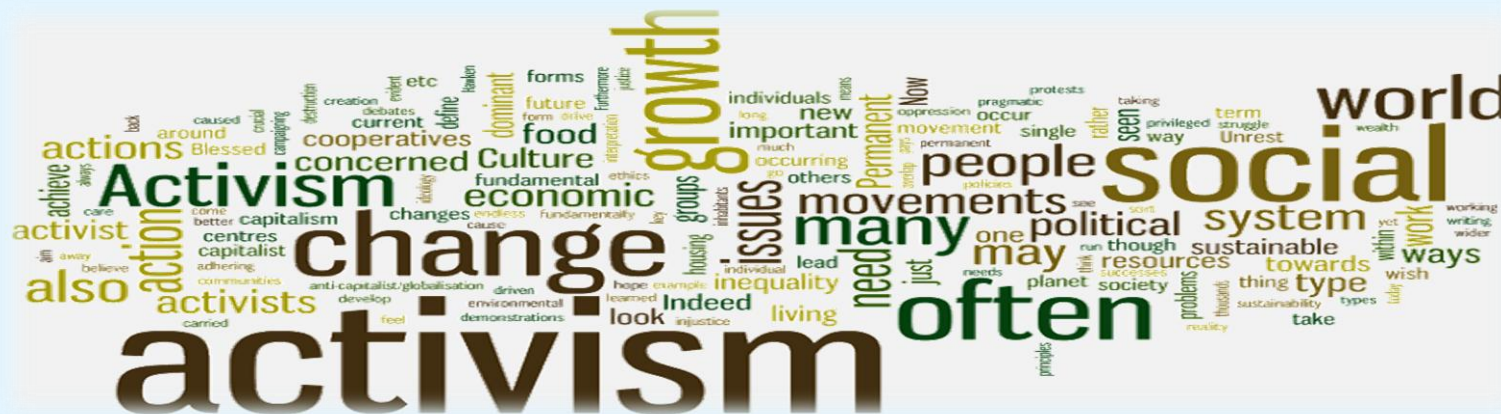
- 2002: drafting of the **European Charter of Patients Rights** which has become a reference for EU citizens' rights in the healthcare.
- 2005-2006: in collaboration with FONDACA, drafting of the **European Charter of Active Citizenship** to bridge the gap among the EU rules about the rights, duties, 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**

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.
- It's founded by a selection of good practices in the field of civic activism realized all around Europe





**Definition of Autonomous Citizens Organizations (ACOs):** 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 Autonomous Citizens' Organizations, in public life.
2. **Role of Public institutions** is to encourage ACOs' activities
3. **Responsibilities of Autonomous Citizens Organizations** 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 ACOs' inputs
- Act with ACOs 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 ACOs, contributing to their expenses and facilitate their access to logistical resources.

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.

Here are two examples:

- **General Principles & Rights of Civic Participation:**

- ACO participating in the entire policy-making cycle

The Association for the Protection of the Diabetics in Portugal participated from the beginning in the public policy making process concerning the control of diabetes and continues to collaborate with the Ministry of Health through a formal partnership that includes, for instance, the training of health professionals.

- **Public Institutions' obligations:**

- Public Institution facilitated access to training and logistical resources

The Office of the President of Gdynia in Poland set up and financed a center for ACO activities. In this center, ACOs can organize meetings, conferences, campaigns and access to legal assistance and advice on fundraising and on how to fill application forms and implement projects. The center has also a database of local ACOs.

## Cypriot project “Patients’ Voice”

The **Universal Patients’ Rights Association** (UPRA - Evrensel Hasta Hakları Derneği) and Active Citizenship Network (ACN) are engaged in a common multi-annual activity with the aim of **decreasing violations of patients’ rights in the Turkish Cypriot community**, in order to contribute to the promotion of human rights in general and patients’ rights in particular, in the northern part of Cyprus.

The overall objectives of the action are to contribute to:

- 1) the strengthening of integrity and dignity of patients in compliance with fundamental human rights.
- 2) the enhancement of quality of life of patients in the Turkish Cypriot community.
- 3) Affirm the role of civic society organizations in the taking care of public policies and common goods (such as the health).
- 4) Strengthening the European citizenship, putting in practice the benefits that the EU offers to patients

The framework of the activity is the EuropeAid programme of the EU Commission.

ACN and UPRA intend to achieve these goals through a set of activities implemented for 24 months, and aimed at:

- 1) building the capacity of Professionals and Employees in health care, and health-related CSOs, through assessments, followed by trainings to these persons according to the results of the needs assessment. This initiative will also include a study visit abroad to view the best practice, and improving the technical capacity.
- 2) increasing awareness and respect of the public regarding patients' rights, through different media channels and an open-to-public conference about patients' rights;
- 3) increasing the civic engagement and advocating for rights of patients, through specific advocacy activities, as well as the advocacy and civic participation trainings for the members of the wider community.
- 4) promoting opportunities for networking between health-related civil society organizations (CSOs) and providers, and civic engagement.
- 5) strengthening the relationship with the Public Administration and other relevant stakeholder.

*Thank you for the attention!*



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