

# **“It’s your (Fundamental) Right!”**

How the EU Constitutional Treaty matters for the citizens

The main rationale of the project rests on the assertion that, although the presently under-ratification ‘Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe’ has been popularly understood as regulating the institutional structure and establishing a framework for the main policies of the new E.U. of 25, little attention has been put in the national debate, to the provisions, incorporated in the Draft Treaty, that relate to the fundamental citizens’ rights. This is highly problematic, since the inclusion of the entire Charter of fundamental rights declared in Nice, December 2000, is one of the defining features of the essentially constitutional scope of the Draft Treaty.

In the face of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty by the Greek Parliament and its expected coming into force in November 2006, a certain degree of public debate upon its provisions will take place in the national context of Greece, mainly through the government’s and/or political parties initiatives. In a complementary fashion, the proposed project is focusing around specific themes (fundamental citizens’ rights and duties, society of pluralism) and targeting specific audiences (youth, NGOs) that are unlikely to be effectively approached by such centralised, top-down initiatives.

Moreover, in Greece, as in other countries of the E.U., while the majority of citizens have pro-European Union viewpoints and possibly would be positive towards the Constitutional Treaty, there is not enough information on several of its provisions. As a result key issues for Europe’s Future are not part of the public agenda: Fundamental rights, Governance, citizenship and democracy, Culture, Social Agenda, Sustainable Development, Health and Consumer protection. Those are issues that many NGOs in Greece focus on from a European / global perspective and have important expertise to contribute, especially regarding methods and tools for effective awareness-raising of citizens.

## **The Aims and Objectives of the project**

In accordance with the objectives set by the Community action programme to promote active European citizenship (civic participation) and the relevant Call for proposals, the proposed project aimed to encourage citizens’ reflection and discussion on the consolidation of the European Union, and to promote and disseminate its values and objectives; to bring citizens closer to the European Union and its institutions and to encourage them to engage more frequently with its institutions; and to stimulate initiatives by the bodies engaged in the promotion of active and participatory citizenship.

Especially, the project focused in the thematic areas of:

- Rights and duties relating to Citizenship of the E.U.
- Reinforcing active citizenship on the basis and through the rights guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the E.U.

- Society of pluralism (tolerance, solidarity and respect for diversity) and non-discrimination

## Target groups

The target groups that were reached comprised of:

- Young citizens and non-citizen permanent residents (aged 18-35)
- Members of environmental, social and cultural NGOs active in the national level
- Opinion leaders and stakeholders (municipal authorities, education community, civil society & business associations etc.) at the local level

It is estimated that hundreds of persons from the above categories participated in the project's public events while a larger audience was reached indirectly through the publicity activities and the networking initiatives of the project.

## Project's partners

- MEDITERRANEAN SOS Network (applicant/project manager NGO)
- ANTIGONE – Information & Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non Violence
- CITIZENS IN ACTION

## Project Activities

The three main tasks that were carried out in the framework of the proposed project are analysed as follows:

### 1. Organisation of five public events

[i) three thematic seminars and ii) two conferences] with the participation of trainers, experts, NGO leaders, local opinion leaders and stakeholders and the general public

#### Detailed task description:

i) The chronologically first three public events in the framework of the project, the thematic seminars were organised in respective small-medium sized Greek cities, namely Corfu, Chania and Volos. Those locations were selected so as to cover geographically large sub-regions of Greece (western, southern and central respectively) and because they combine certain features such as the existence of an active local civil society with well-established links with the project's partners. There is a strong potential to 'locate' the 'abstract' themes of European Citizenship -as defined in the project- within the specific local contexts and problems, such as immigration and multicultural relations, environmental degradation etc.

Those three public events had mostly an awareness-raising and educational character, aiming at informing and training local citizens, associations and stakeholders. The themes were differentiated regarding their focus, either, environmental, social or political citizens' rights, while each one will be organised with the responsibility of relevant partner NGO, MedSOS, Antigone and Citizens in Action, respectively. In order to effectively reach the target-groups, the thematic seminars were accompanied by one day of outdoor publicity activities, in central public spaces of those cities, which is to be organised one day prior to the seminar. Moreover, the first open publicity day aimed to attract the attention of local media so that greater publicity could be achieved for the second day of the main seminar in each city.

ii) The two large conferences organised in Thessalonica (located in northern Greece) and Athens (capital city). Those two-day events summarised and elaborated on the results of the previous seminars aiming to the larger audiences of the two largest urban areas of Greece. Because of the metropolitan character of Athens and Thessalonica, publicity was sought mainly through existing mass e-mailing lists, broadcasting of radio spots and invitations to media, selected organisations and individuals associated with the project partners.

In all five public events -seminars and conferences- background documentation and print training material were handed to participants (info briefs, collection of papers/reports on the project's themes etc.)

## **2. Production of information, publicity and networking tools**

[i) leaflet/poster, ii) radio spot, iii) web-portal, iv. booklet-guide] for the purposes of the project. Those tasks were designed by the project's partners, while their final production were subcontracted to external specialized companies / professionals (graphics designer/typist, recordings studio and website developer respectively) and supervised by the applicant (project manager) NGO.

### **Detailed task description:**

i) The 2-sided leaflet / poster of the project was an initial 'tool' to publicise the project, inform on its framework, aims, partnership and activities. It was produced in 4000 copies that had been distributed widely through the existing means of communication of partner NGOs, as insert in magazines sent to subscribers/supporters, in open display rooms / offices of partner NGOs or other organisations, youth centres etc. throughout Greece and mainly in cities where project's activities were to take place.

ii) The radio spots were designed as to comprise basic information on the project (framework, aims, partnership and activities) as well as, an additional differentiated supplement for the respective five public events. Those five variations were sent for broadcasting in local radio stations prior to the local events, seminars and conferences, as 'public service announcements'.

iii) Production of an interactive web-portal, carrying resources in Greek language on the relevant to the project's themes such as policies and instruments at the European, regional and local level, civil society contributions to the E.U. Constitution debate, information on international networks for the promotion of European citizenship, etc. The web-portal were developed with an interface for dynamic community websites and allowed the direct uploading of content (announcements/agenda, reports, briefings, working papers etc.) by project partners and host discussions in designated e-forums and networking among registered individuals and groups.

iv) Production of info-sheets/booklet (approx. 32 A5 pages) "Guide to fundamental rights in the EU Constitution", in 2000 copies, for distribution among project participant organisations and individuals. For additional future reproductions, the entire booklet was made freely accessible through the web-portal of the project.

### **3. Set up a wide national network of environmental, social and cultural NGOs**

...interested and active around issues of European Citizenship

#### **Detailed task description:**

Anticipated outcome of the project was to establish permanent relations of communication and cooperation among Greek NGOs around issues of European Citizenship. Main tool for networking was the dynamic / interactive web-portal to be produced in the framework of the project that was maintained at least one more year.

The expansion of the network -during and after the project implementation period- was sought among the existing diverse contacts of partner NGOs, as well as through collaborations and joint actions among numerous local and national NGOs and civil society associations that were active on environmental, social and cultural fields with a focus on the European dimension of activities.