



Project no. CIT1-CT-2004-506392

NEWGOV **New Modes of Governance**

Integrated Project
Priority 7 – Citizens and Governance in the Knowledge-based Society

Practitioner Workshop:
Civil society and Expertise
reference number: 11/D06

Due date of deliverable: February 2007
Actual submission date: 16 July 2007

Start date of project: 1 September 2004

Duration: 48 months

Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable:
University of Trento, Stijn Smismans

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)		
Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

Summary

In collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee, we have organised a ‘practitioners workshop’ on ‘Civil Society and Expertise’ on 16 July 2007. The workshop had the objective to create a forum for practitioners to exchange information and experiences on the relation between civil society participation and the provision of expertise in EU policy-making, with equally an element of reference to practices of the WTO. The workshop has brought together 20 representatives from the European Institutions and civil society organisations and social partners, as well as experts engaged in different areas of EU risk regulation, such as food safety, occupational health and safety, environmental and research policy. The experience of the practitioners shows that the two dimensions of better governance, namely enhanced involvement of civil society and reliance on scientific expertise are at times difficult to differentiate and may overlap. On the one hand, civil society actors do not only represent interests, they also provide expertise. On the other hand, ‘scientific experts’ are often linked to particular interests.

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I. Report on the Practitioner Forum

In collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee, we have organised a ‘practitioners workshop’ on ‘Civil Society and Expertise’ on 16 July 2007. The workshop had the objective to create a forum for practitioners to exchange information and experiences on the relation between civil society participation and the provision of expertise in EU policy-making, with equally an element of reference to practices of the WTO. Over the last decade, both institutional actors and scholars have stressed the importance of civil society participation in European policy-making. The European institutions, and in particular the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee have developed important initiatives to improve the dialogue with civil society organisations. At the same time, the relevance of scientific expertise particularly in technical areas of risk regulation has become more evident and the EU has been proactive in incorporating it into its policy-making strategies. Academically much of this debate has focused on the areas of biotechnology, food safety and environmental policy. However, there is a tension in promoting the importance of civil society involvement on the one hand, and of (scientific) expertise on the other. To a certain extent the attention paid to civil society stresses aspects of ‘interest representation’ rather than its added value in terms of expertise, while part of the debate on scientific expertise and some of the institutional solutions adopted focus on the assumed neutrality of scientific expertise, thus placing interest representation as external to it. For instance, it is often argued that risk assessment should be left to ‘neutral’ experts, while risk management is the domain of more political institutions.

The workshop has confronted practitioners with central questions regarding the relation between civil society participation and providing (scientific) expertise:

- What sort of expertise are civil society organisations able to provide?
- How does civil society’s expertise differ from that of scientific experts?
- Does the provision of expertise entitle civil society organisations to participate?
- Do civil society organisations have the resources to follow scientific debate?
- Is the strict distinction between risk assessment and risk management possible and desirable?
- If the participation of civil society is considered to be important, how can this be realised in technical areas of risk regulation?
- What are the best procedural solutions to ensure both civil society participation and the provision of scientific expertise?

The workshop has brought together 20 representatives from the European Institutions and civil society organisations and social partners, as well as experts engaged in different areas of EU risk regulation, such as food safety, occupational health and safety, environmental and research policy. The first session has focused on how civil society organisations can bridge the distance between citizens and policy-makers in technical areas of risk governance by activities that can stimulate citizens to participate directly. The three following sessions have focused on the interactions between civil society organisations and policy-makers in different areas of risk governance. Two sessions have been devoted to cover two areas in a representative way including representatives of the main policy actors involved. For both the area of occupational health and safety and for the area of food safety regulation each session has aimed at a balanced representation of actors from civil society and from the institutions. Another session has provided evidence from additional sectoral experiences, such as research, enterprise and consumer and health policy. The session on food safety has also been broadened to include the experience of the WTO in this field.

The different sessions have allowed comparing experiences both within and across sectors.

The experience of the practitioners shows that the two dimensions of better governance, namely enhanced involvement of civil society and reliance on scientific expertise are at times difficult to differentiate and may overlap. On the one hand, civil society actors do not only represent interests, they also provide expertise. On the other hand, ‘scientific experts’ are often linked to particular interests.

The power point presentations of all interventions have subsequently been circulated among the participants.

II. Programme

	Welcome
09.00-09.30	Stijn Smismans and Jens Steffek, description of the project and aims of the workshop
	Session 1: Participation in risk governance: civil society and lay citizens
	Chair: Stijn Smismans
09.30-09.45	Stéphane Baudé (Mutadis): Trustnet-in-Action
09.45-10.00	Giovanni Moro (Active Citizenship Network)
10.00-10.30	Debate
10.30-10.45	Matteo Lener (Fondazione diritti genetici)
10.45-11.00	Irina Michalowitz (European Platform of Women Scientists)
11.00-11.30	Debate
11.30-11.45	Coffee break
	Session 2: Civil society and expertise input in occupational health and safety regulation
	Chair: Stijn Smismans
11.45-12.00	Antonio Cammarota (Commission OH&S unit, Secretariat tripartite Advisory Committee)
12.00-12.15	Brenda O’Brien (Representative Occupational Health and Safety Agency Bilbao)
12.15-12.30	Laurent Vogel (European Trade Union Institute)
12.30-12.45	Natasha Waltke (BUSINESS EUROPE)
12.45-13.15	Debate
13.15-14.30	Lunch
	Session 3: Sectoral experiences with organising civil society and expertise input
	Chair: Jens Steffek
14.30-14.45	Viviane Willis-Mazzichi (DG Research): Science in society
14.45-15.00	Pieter Bouwen (DG Enterprise and Industry)
15.00-15.30	Debate
15.30-15.45	Petteri Mäkelä (DG Enterprise and Industry): REACH
15.45-16.00	Petra Cadova (Commission peer review group SANCO stakeholders)
16.00-16.30	Debate
16.30-16.45	Coffee break

Session 4: Civil society and expertise input in food safety regulation

Chair: Maria Paola Ferretti

16.45-17.00	Victoria Villamar (European Food Safety Authority)
17.00-17.15	Pirkko Raunemaa (EESC member and Board EFSA)
17.15-17.30	Alberto Alemanno: Science and participation in the WTO
17.30-17.45	Debate

Conclusion: Learning from different experiences

17.45-18.00	Stijn Smismans and Jens Steffek: Comparing civil society and expertise input across sectors and organisations
20.00	Dinner in restaurant

III. List of Participants

1. Stijn Smismans, University of Trento, co-leader of project no. 11
2. Jens Steffek, University of Bremen, co-leader of project no. 11
3. Alberto Alemanno: Science and participation in the WTO
4. Stéphane Baudé (Mutadis): Trustnet-in-Action
5. Pieter Bouwen (DG Enterprise and Industry)
6. Petra Cadova (Commission peer review group SANCO stakeholders)
7. Antonio Cammarota (Commission OH&S unit, Secretariat tripartite Advisory Committee)
8. Maria Paola Ferretti, University of Bremen
9. Hélène Hiessler (Eunited)
10. Athanasios Kafkalidis (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work)
11. Matteo Lener (Fondazione diritti genetici)
12. Petteri Mäkelä (DG Enterprise and Industry): REACH
13. Irina Michalowitz (European Platform of Women Scientists)
14. Giovanni Moro (Active Citizenship Network)
15. Brenda O'Brien (Representative Occupational Health and Safety Agency Bilbao)
16. Pirkko Raunemaa (EESC member and Board EFSA)
17. Monica Ruffa (Active Citizenship Network)
18. Michael Shackleton (Secretariat European Parliament)
19. Benoit Vergriette (Agence française de sécurité sanitaire de l'environnement et du travail, AFSSET)
20. Victoria Villamar (European Food Safety Authority)
21. Laurent Vogel (European Trade Union Institute)
22. Natasha Waltke (BUSINESS EUROPE)
23. Viviane Willis-Mazzichi (DG Research): Science in society