

**Online consultation on the representativeness of
European civil society organizations
June 21st 2006**

Referring to Opinion SC/023-CESE 240/2006, Brussels February 14th 2006

Concerning the criteria meant to define which kind of organisations are to be considered representative:

1) We would suggest the following paragraph to be changed, since it is clearly favoring a certain scenario of Europe's future:

- have member organisations in most of the EU member states

should be changed to:

- have members in most of the EU member states.

We see no reason for this limit imposed on civil society organisations' membership structures. The states' civil societies and their organisations do of course have an interest in keeping the kind of monopoly on voicing interests that they have traditionally had. But this multiplying of existing power is not necessarily in the interest of the common.

Let there be space for other memberships structures within European organisations.

As a European organisation with individuals in all the countries as members, we do of course see this blind spot immediately.

2) We would like to call into question the following paragraph as well:

- comprise bodies that are recognised at Member State level as representative of particular interests.

The ACC is working for developing a European public sphere that in principle would include supplementing the national public spheres with European media, European political literacy (Bildung) for the citizens and a European civil society.

The paragraph does prevent a European civil society from developing, since it urges organisations to organise themselves and become recognized at state level as the first. One could say that there is a built in conservatism in the clause - that interests per definition cannot be common European before they are national.

3) These paragraphs do as well contradict the ambition expressed in the Whitepaper on Communication that was released by Commissioner Wallström on February 1st, 2006: to develop a European public sphere.

/JP