



Europe
for Citizens

Joint Citizen Action for a Stronger,
Citizen-Friendly Union

JoiEU

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Romanian NGOs and citizens – a solidarity story just beginning

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The first social movements/street protests in Romania – January 2012; citizens not organized, for the first time visible in the public sphere as a voice (meetings in central squares)

NGOs were excluded from the Square, as they were seen to be far away from citizens` demands and interests; citizens questioning NGOs agenda and constituencies. Citizens – the new civil society!

Citizens` demands related to social rights – the Square showed solidarity among different social groups: middle class, football fans, retired people all supporting each other`s demands

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Following the protests, however, some NGOs internalised the citizens` critique and included new issues on their agenda.

Also the solidarity among citizens showed during the protests took the form of citizens groups after the protests, with some more organised than others

Aim: to work on issues of interest to them – fracking, housing, relationship with banks etc.

Citizens` groups - process of trial and error for citizens in representing their interests.

Some of these groups reached to NGOs

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Some NGOs started to work with citizens, but their work and relationship are still at a very incipient level, and still, very local.

When they do work together, NGOs and citizens touch very little in their work on the EU level and mostly address national institutions in their campaigns, even if for some of the issues/policies, the EU has an important say in the decision making/final decisions.

Also citizens and NGOs in Romania are not so connected to European networks.

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The main challenge for NGOs is to sustain this work with citizens groups:

First - because it happens in specific areas not covered by donors;

Second - because donors do not, usually, sponsor advocacy campaigns, citizens involvement in the decision making;

Third - because when it comes to EU level, a new set of skills and resources (expertise) are necessary (which many NGOs do not have).

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Challenges for fostering this new story of solidarity:

How do we support this relationship between citizens and NGOs, so that it develops, in a meaningful way?

How do we encourage NGOs and citizens' groups to incorporate the EU level in their work? What resources do we offer? Do we find the right channels to offer or communicate these resources?

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