

| Working Seminar • 17 December 2008 |

Focusing on civil society organisations' ethics, governance, legitimacy, accountability, responsibility, transparency...

Burdensome, dangerous? Or vectors for improved impact?

Context: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are under external pressure (donors, governments, corporate, broader public) and internal demand (members) to further address the issues of their own responsibility, ethics, governance, legitimacy, accountability and transparency.

This evolution raises major questions, pinpointed by European CSOs leaders themselves ⁽¹⁾:

- Who should be responsible? To whom? What for? And how?
- Will CSO legitimacy be formal, bureaucratic and subordinate to sponsors and government or conferred by the roles of CSOs in the democratic functioning of society?
- Do CSOs control the terms of the debate or do they leave it to sponsors and authorities?
- Are good governance and transparency first and foremost vectors for reflection? Tools for dialogue? Opportunities for self-evaluation, learning and progress? Or are they rather comparative advantages in the search to obtain subsidies?

As of today, a number of CSOs have, alone or with peers, engaged into designing and endorsing a variety of charters, codes of conducts, better practices and other initiatives.

Focus:

- **Where do current initiatives stand regarding these questions?**
- **What are the conditions - and pitfalls to avoid - for such initiatives to support CSOs in the realisation of their mission rather than burdening them with yet another layer of work?**

Who: *The Foundation for Future Generations, the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation and the Bernheim Foundation invite representatives from CSOs and European CSO networks that face these issues to share experiences and findings on these key questions. Please register (for free) before December 12th.*

Date: Wednesday 17 December 2008

12:30 welcome with standing lunch & networking

13:30 - 17:30 working seminar

Please register before December 12th.

Place: Foundation for Future Generations / Café de Fiennes, 77 rue de Fiennes - 1070 Brussels

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¹ Notably summed up in the publication « *The accountability of citizen associations. A contribution to the international debate on civil society responsibilities* ». A European survey layed the foundations for this critical publication on the responsibility, ethics and governance of civil society associations. It has involved dozens of representatives from civil society organisations and platforms of NGOs across Europe and at European level, through workshops and interviews. The survey has been carried out since 2003 by the Foundation for Future Generations in partnership with the Bernheim Foundation, the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation, the CEDAC and the GRESEA.