
Normative Power of the EU and Civil Society Dimension: Capabilities, Instruments and Perspectives

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The 5th December open lecture was entitled “Normative Power of the EU and Civil Society Dimension: Capabilities, Instruments and Perspectives” and was presented by **Dr. Sima Rakutiene** from Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas. The seminar was the continuation of the “The EU's Eastern Partnership as International Governance” (4th December) and it was focused on two main points: the first one was about the Civil Society, while the second one dealt with the NGO's role in the European process.

For the better understanding of the lecture, it has been necessary to give a definition of these two terms. We call “Civil Society” the combination of non-governmental organizations and institutions as, for example, research centers. While with “NGO” we mean an organization completely independent from any form of government or business activity.

Very recently, civil society and NGOs have been affected by that phenomenon defined as “Europeanization” which makes these two elements relevant subjects in the European life participation. It is important to understand how civil Society and NGOs work, for looking at the role that these assume in the international relations.

The chief aim of civil society is to manifest interests and will of citizens, independently of the government, cooperating with local, national and international institutions. While the NGO's main task is to support movements in all countries where democratic situation is in danger, supporting civil and human rights, creating civic and political consciousness and supporting “resistance” to the regimes in that countries which need it. But lately, there is less trust in the NGO's sector, while the civil society's one has seen a big increase. In fact, civil society dimension has been defined as “vital for the overall success of the European Neighborhood Policy” in particular and for the international relations in general. These organizations are relevant especially in the negotiation and counseling processes and in the “Frozen Conflicts” studies: this appears more and more if we look at the Civil Society Facility, established in 2008 by the EU, to support the development of civil society financially.

Despite all these implications, in the end it is emerged that the role of Civil Society is still minimal in two of the most important current topic: the Association Agreements negotiations and the discussions within the Eastern Partnership framework.

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