

This section contains documentation and tools focused on the development of active citizenship phenomenon in the European Union.

A lot of vague and generic definitions of active citizenship are diffused nowadays, especially with reference to the European construction. In the framework of the EUProact project, a more material and organization-based definition is used. We mean for active citizenship a form of citizenship practice consisting in collective initiatives aimed at implementing rights, taking care of common goods and/or empowering people in condition of weakness. It can be addressed both to governmental or private interlocutors as well as to the general public. It is in any case based on the citizens' right to initiative towards the general interest.

The main distinguishing elements of this definition of active citizenship can be summarized as follows:

- It is related to the participatory component of citizenship, but goes beyond the exercise of the right to vote and cannot be reduced to the consultation on norms and policies ("participatory democracy", a part of democratic governance programs promoted by public institutions).
- Also in case it addresses the political establishment, it is an autonomous practice of the citizenry, well distinguished from the traditional political participation through parties.
- It requires some degree of organization to be really effective and is therefore based on the ability of citizens engaged in common problems to gather and collectively act in a variety of forms, motivations and operational patterns.
- It implies the exercise of autonomous citizens' powers in the public realm, such as those to produce information and knowledge, to change the common awareness, to give or to take the "social license to operate", to constrain public institutions to effectively work, to change material conditions, etc.

Active citizenship organizations do exist and operate in the whole European territory. What makes them similar is definitely more than what makes them different. Whatever the scope and level of engagement, their role is directly linked to the definition, implementation and evaluation of European public policies. Their roles and operational patterns are well shown analyzing policy fields such as urban safety.

The European Commission supports the development of organized civic activism in Europe through programs such as "Europe for Citizens". Thanks to this support, between 2006 and

2008 FONDACA, in cooperation with Active Citizenship Network and several national-based citizens' organizations, has worked to define a European Charter of Active Citizenship and a toolbox aimed at monitoring the degree of implementation of these rights at national and local levels.