### How to Use the Code

The Code can be used by NGOs in various ways. In their internal work, planning activities and finding ways on how to engage, in their discussions with public authorities on how to start co-operation or take stock of existing co-operation and identify means for improvement. They can also use it to build awareness to their work, to promote the key principles for a good working relationship with authorities and to develop mechanisms for engagement.

### What Can Public Authorities Do?

By referring to the Code and the different possibilities of participation and interaction that exist, public authorities can take stock of their existing procedures and the Code and take the necessary steps to modify their practices to encourage increased NGO participation in the decision-making process.

### Using the Matrix of Participation: Mapping the Process

In order to illustrate and clarify the relationship, the matrix visualises the steps of the political decision-making process and their connection with levels of participation. At each stage in the decision-making process (from left to right) there are different levels of NGO participation (from bottom to top). It shows the different steps of the political decision-making process and their connection with levels of participation. At each stage in the decision-making process (from left to right) there are different levels of NGO participation (from bottom to top). It shows the different steps of the political decision-making process and their connection with levels of participation.

### Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>Working group or committee</th>
<th>Co-drafting</th>
<th>Joint decision-making</th>
<th>Strategic partnerships</th>
<th>Working process or committee</th>
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### Dialogue

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<tr>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Inquiries and public forums</th>
<th>Citizen forums and future councils</th>
<th>Key government contact</th>
<th>Hearings and public seminars</th>
<th>Expert seminars</th>
<th>Multi-stakeholder committees and advisory bodies</th>
<th>Open plenary or committee sessions</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Conferences or seminars</th>
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<th>Follow-up consultation</th>
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### Consultation

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<tr>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Public hearings or other techniques</th>
<th>Hearings and QA panels</th>
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### Information

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<th>Information</th>
<th>Drafting and open access to policy documents</th>
<th>Open and free access to key documents</th>
<th>Campaigning and lobbying</th>
<th>Open access to information</th>
<th>Website for information access</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
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<th>Reformulation</th>
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### Presentation

The Code of Good Practice for civil participation in the decision-making process is available in different languages.

For further information:

- **Directorate of Democratic Institutions**
  - Address: 16, rue du petit-Quevilly, 75745 Paris, France
  - Website: www.coe.int/ngo
  - Tel: (33) (0)3 90 21 47 66
  - E-mail: civil.participation@coe.int

**CIVIL PARTICIPATION: WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CODE?**

NGOs have been a vital part of society and the benefits they bring to society and improved governance are generally accepted. NGOs bring knowledge and experience to the process of decision-making which has so far governed to base on the experience of NGOs to assist them in policy development and implementation.

The Code, drawing upon practical experiences and tried-and-tested methods from various countries in Europe, defines a set of good principles, guidelines, tools and mechanisms for civil participation. Elaborated using a multi-stakeholder approach, the Code has the support of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Code of Good Practice for civil participation in the Decision-Making Process aims at facilitating NGO participation in the political decision-making process at local, regional and national level.

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The Code of Good Practice for civil participation in the Decision-Making Process aims at facilitating NGO participation in the political decision-making process at local, regional and national level.
The Code is addressed to public authorities and civil society. It can be used by NGOs from local to national and international level in their dialogue and co-operation with parliament, government and public administration. In relation to the Code of Good Practice the term NGOs is taken to refer to organised civil society including voluntary groups, non-profit organisations, associations, foundations, charities, as well as geographically or interest-based community and advocacy groups.

The highest level of participation where NGOs and the public authorities are engaged directly and where the NGOs continue to be independent and have the right to campaign and act irrespective of a partner-monitoring system that ensures the policy/programme achieves the intended purpose.

How to engage:
How civil society may participate in the decision-making process

The different levels of participation

The involvement of NGOs in the different steps of the political decision-making process varies based on the intensity of participation. There are four levels of participation sorted from least to most participative.

- Information: A relatively low level of participation which usually consists of a one-way provision of information from the public authorities to NGOs in response to an international aid from the EU.

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- Dialogue: The initiative for dialogue can be taken by either party and can be either broad or collaborative. Broad dialogue is a two-way communication built on mutual interests and potentially shared objectives to achieve a regular exchange of views. It ranges from open public hearings to bilateral meetings between NGOs and public authorities. Collaborative dialogue is built on mutual interests for a specific policy development. Collaboration dialogue is more in-depth than the broad dialogue as it consists of joint, often frequent and regular, meetings to develop joint policy strategies and often leads to agreed outcomes such as a joint recommendation or legislation.

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PARTICIPATION NGOs collect and channel views of the citizens. This is a valuable input to the political decision-making process, enhancing the quality, understanding and longer term applicability of the policy initiative.

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INDEPENDENCE NGOs must be recognised as free and independent bodies in respect of their aims, decisions and activities. They have the right to act independently and advocate positions different from the authorities with whom they may otherwise cooperate.

THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

THE ROLE OF LAW

ADHERENCE TO FUNDAMENTAL DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

POLITICAL WILL

FAVOURABLE LEGISLATION

CLEAR AND PRECISE PROCEDURES

LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

FOR A FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

SHARED SPACES FOR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

WHO CAN USE IT?

The Code is addressed to public authorities and civil society. It can be used by NGOs from local to national and international level in their dialogue and co-operation with parliament, government and public administration. In relation to the Code of Good Practice the term NGO is taken to refer to organised civil society including voluntary groups, non-profit organisations, associations, foundations, charities, as well as geographic or interest-based community and advocacy groups.

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CONSULTATION: Public authorities may ask NGOs for their opinion on a specific policy topic or development. The initiative and themes signify with the public authorities, set within the NGOs.

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INFORMATION > CONSULTATION > DIALOGUE > PARTNERSHIP

HOW TO ENGAGE:

HOW CIVIL SOCIETY MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

THE POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

There are six steps in the cycle of the decision-making process and NGOs and public authorities can interact at each of these.

AGENDA SETTING

In the form of political decisions taken based on national criminal and legislative, common characteristics are the establishment of a government policy. This must be based on access to information and opportunities for public authorities, such as passing a law by parliamentary vote or public referendum. Draft laws and motions should be open to input and participation of NGOs so the public authorities can evaluate different views and opinions before the decision is taken.

REFORMULATION: Usually well-established processes for policy drafting exist. Here NGOs are also involved in identifying problems, preparing evidence and providing evidence for their preferred proposal. Facilitating opportunities for consultation should be a key element in this step to collect input from key stakeholders.

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IMPLEMENTATION: This is the step at which many NGOs are most active, for example in service delivery and project monitoring. The success is critically important to ensure that the intended outcome will be fulfilled. Access to clear and transparent information with parliament, government and public authorities is crucial at this stage, as well as active partnerships.

MONITORING: This stage NGOs monitor and assess the outcomes of the implemented policy. It is important to have in place an effective and transparent monitoring system that ensures the implementation processes achieve the intended purpose.

REFORMULATION: The knowledge gained from assessing the policy implementation, coupled with evolving needs in society, often require a reformulation of policy. This must be based on access to information and opportunities for dialogue on societal needs and initiatives.
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2. Adherence to Fundamental Democratic Principles
3. Political Will
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**HOW TO ENGAGE: HOW CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES MAY INTERACT IN THE CYCLE OF THE POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

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**DIALOGUE** The initiative for dialogue can be taken by either party and can be either broad or collaborative. Dialogue is a two-way communication built on mutual interests and potentially shared objectives to ensure a regular exchange of views. It ranges from open public hearings to specialised meetings between NGOs and public authorities.

**PARTNERSHIP** The highest level of participation where NGOs and the public authorities engage closely together while ensuring that NGOs continue to be independent and have the right to campaign and act irrespective of a partnership obligation. Partnership can include activities such as provision of services, participation in the decision-making process, providing evidence for their preferred proposal (facilitating opportunities for consultation should be a key element in this step to collect input from key stakeholders).
Civil participation throughout the whole decision-making process can be greatly helped by the provision of practical tools. In order to illustrate and clarify the relationship, the matrix visualises the interaction that exist, public authorities can take stock of their existing procedures and bring them to the attention of NGOs and public authorities alike. The Code can be used by NGOs in various ways: in their internal work when planning activities and finding ways on how to engage, in their discussions with public authorities on how to start co-operation or take stock of existing co-operation and identify areas for improvement. They can also use it to build awareness to their work, to promote the key principles for a good working relationship with authorities and to develop mechanisms for engagement.

WHAT CAN NGOs DO?

The Code can be read by NGOs in several ways. In their internal work when planning activities and finding ways on how to engage, in their discussions with public authorities on how to start co-operation or take stock of existing co-operation and identify areas for improvement. They can also use it to build awareness to their work, to promote the key principles for a good working relationship with authorities and to develop mechanisms for engagement.

WHAT CAN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES DO?

By referring to the Code and the different possibilities of participation and interaction that exist, public authorities can take stock of their existing procedures and bring them to the attention of NGOs and public authorities alike. The Code can be used by NGOs in various ways: in their internal work when planning activities and finding ways on how to engage, in their discussions with public authorities on how to start co-operation or take stock of existing co-operation and identify areas for improvement. They can also use it to build awareness to their work, to promote the key principles for a good working relationship with authorities and to develop mechanisms for engagement.

HOW TO USE THE CODE

The Code of Good Practice for civil participation in the decision-making process is available in different languages. For further information:

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European Department of Democracy and Political Affairs
Conseil de l'Europe
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Tel: (33) (0)3 88 41 31 07
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WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CODE?

NGOs have become a vital part of society and the benefi- cts they bring to society and improved governance are generally accepted. NGOs bring knowledge and expertise to the process of decision-making which has made governments to trust in the experience of NGOs to assist them in policy development and implementation. The Code of Good Practice aims to provide a framework and guidelines for improving the participation, to learn from each other through sharing good practices and bringing them to the attention of NGOs and public authorities alike.

WHAT IS THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE?

Drafted by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe and adopted in October 2009, the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process aims at facilitating NGO participation in the political decision-making process at local, regional and national level. The Code, drawing upon practical experiences and tried-and-tested methods from various countries in Europe, defines a set of general principles, guidelines, tools and mechanisms for civil participation. Elaborated using a co-constructive approach, the Code has the support of both the Council of Europe and of NGOs. The Committee of Ministers gives its support in a Declaration in Co-operation with INGOs of the Council of Europe. The Code is a reference document for the Council of Europe and, as a basis for the recommendations that could be asked for in corresponding public authorities in European countries.

The Code has resulted from the observation that “the door is open for guidelines and good practices in this field” and “the Committee of Ministers has given its support in a Declaration in Co-operation with INGOs of the Council of Europe. The Code is a reference document for the Council of Europe and, as a basis for the recommendations that could be asked for in corresponding public authorities in European countries.”
HOW TO USE THE CODE

WHAT CAN NGOs DO?

The Code can be used by NGOs in various ways. In their internal work when planning activities and finding ways on how to engage, in their discussions with public authorities on how to start co-operation or take steps of existing co-operation and identify areas for improvement. They can also use it to build awareness to their members, to promote the key principles for a good working relationship with authorities and to develop mechanisms for engagement.

WHAT CAN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES DO?

By referring to the Code and the different possibilities of participation and interaction with NGOs, authorities can take stock of their existing processes and mechanisms and take the necessary steps to modify their practices to encourage increased NGO participation in the decision-making processes.

USING THE MATRIX OF PARTICIPATION: MAPPING THE PROCESS

To illustrate and clarify the relationship, the matrix visualises the different levels of participation and the connection with levels of NGO planning of policy activities. It can identify ways to enhance participation by NGOs and identify areas for improvement.

WHAT IS THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE?

The Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the decision-making process is available in different languages. For further information, please contact the Directorate of Democracy and Human Rights.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The Code can be used by NGOs in various ways: in their internal work when planning activities and finding ways on how to engage, in their discussions with public authorities on how to start co-operation or take steps of existing co-operation and identify areas for improvement. They can also use it to build awareness to their members, to promote the key principles for a good working relationship with authorities and to develop mechanisms for engagement.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CODE?

One of the major concerns of modern democracies is the alienation of citizens from the political process. Participation is therefore an important element providing citizens with an alternative way to express their views and interests, making their voice heard and working for the community.