

# **Civil Society: What's This Central Idea?**

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# Origin

- Civil Society is derived from the Latin term *societas civilis*.
- The term ‘Civil Society’ has been presented with different meanings a long of the history.
- From *civitas sive societas civilis sive res publica* (city-state or civil society or commonwealth) to a fashionable “catch-phrase”.

# Definition

- lobbying
- political interest groups
- special interest groups
- voluntary associations
- pressure groups
- organised interest groups
- non-governmental organizations
- non-profit groups
- Business groups
- policy networks etc

# What it means today

Civil society according to the nature of the organisations as follows:

- Trade Unions and Employers Federations,
- Professional Federations and Organisations representing social and economic players,
- NGO's "which bring together people in a common cause", community-based organizations and religious communities.

# Global Context

- Potential in terms of democratization in the context of decision-making
- Politicians acknowledge need to listen to “Civil Society”
- To bridge the gap between citizens, political and bureaucratic actors
- Popular among diplomats, civil servants, parliaments, non-governmental organisations and others
- The words themselves (and their synonyms) are as fickle as they are fashionable

# National Context

- Citizens' interest in theme-related information
- Political engagement, political institutions and political parties
- Transfer of powers
- Interacting with other stakeholders
- Essential for Governments

# Role of the civil society

- to generate ideas
- and to ask for
  - Transparency
  - Accountability
  - Responsibility
  - as well as to back up reformists efforts in the Government.

# Reflection

- Effectiveness and legitimacy of the governance
- To respond to the expectations of the citizens
- Create more confidence in the end-result



# Conclusion

- Participation and the choice of the consulted groups remains in the hands of the institutions.
- The participation of the Civil Society is limited.
- It is not involved in the decision making but its views should be taken into consideration.
- Citizens should not only be given the opportunity to participate, they should be encouraged to do so.