



# Charter of Representation



Preconditions for the voluntary sector • The principles of representation • The representee's commitments • The representative's commitments

## Editorial information

The *Charter of Representation* was completed in its present form in October 2008, following a process of elaboration which started in 2006. Through this process, opinions, contributions and proposals from the voluntary sector and the *Third Sector* in general were collected and evaluated.

The draft of the *Charter of Representation* was published in January 2007, as one of the outcomes of the Licurgo Project, promoted by Celivo, Volunteer Support Centre of the Province of Genoa, with the aim of enhancing contacts between “the voluntary sector, the Third Sector and public administration”.

The original version of the *Charter* was presented and assessed in the Liguria Region, in accordance with a programme defined by Celivo and the Liguria and Genoa-based Third Sector Forums.

In June 2007, the *Charter of Representation* was included in the programme of CSVnet, the Italian Voluntary Support Centres Coordination Body, to become an Italian national project.

In Italy, the *Charter* was disseminated and analysed with the full participation of CONVOL (Permanent Conference of Italian Voluntary Associations and Federations) and the Italian National Voluntary Council of the Third Sector Forum, which, together with CSVnet, organised the final assessment conference.

This document was originally elaborated by Stefano Tabò, President of Celivo, who worked on the drafting and revision of the text, with the advice of psycho-sociologist Fiorella Capasso.



The logo features a mirror image of the “C” for Charter encompassing the “R” for representation. The two “C”s provide a sense of circularity and refer to their meaning: unity, harmony, belonging and movement. This interrupted circle is both a limitation and an access route, thus expressing the Charter’s vocations. The “R”s mark a passage that is the symbol of crossing and change. The double vertical profile and the centrality of the door refer to the figure of Janus.

### The Charter of representation: a tool and a proposal

The *Charter of representation*:

- begins with the “preconditions for the voluntary sector”. It is divided into nine “principles” which provide a base for the concrete and exemplary commitments that *representees* and *representatives* should honour;
- endeavours to contribute to the quality and effectiveness of agreements signed by *Third Sector* stakeholders, by involving and connecting different systems, genders, generations, territories and various levels of representation;
- is prepared to defend the dignity, visibility and skills of individual member organisations and networks, regardless of their denomination;
- guides both *representees* and *representatives*, providing them with the tools necessary to carry out their day to day activity and enriching their spheres of identity, culture and community;
- implements the principle of horizontal subsidiarity granted by the Italian Constitution. It fosters responsible consensus on the planning and assessment of social policies, also from a European and international perspective;
- encourages and facilitates the definition of shared and mutually respectful rules in the relationship between the Third Sector and public administration, as well as in the participation in the consultative and coordination processes of the various decision-making levels and contexts;
- is the result of Volunteer Support Centre programming based on the Third Sector aims and experience in the framework of a project that began in Genoa and triggered an initiative of national networking to promote processes of sharing at a conceptual level, role recognition and experimentation of good practice;
- is supported by a growing number of bodies committing themselves to promoting its existence and adoption, to monitoring its diffusion, to networking targeted initiatives aimed at specific aspects of institutional, organisational, technical and human skills, which are characteristic of *representation*;
- due to its very nature and the nature of its aims, becomes a complex of maps for the interaction of the voluntary sector and all the Third Sector components;

## Preconditions for the voluntary sector

1. The voluntary sector adopts, interprets and promotes the “principles” and “commitments” illustrated in the *Charter of representation*, implying the assumption of the contents of the *Charter of the Voluntary Sector Values*.
2. No individual, acronym or flag can ever fully embody the rich, multi-faceted contribution offered by volunteers, that is to say all those people who in their daily life, in various situations, *generously offer their time and skills free of charge to other people, the community they belong to or the whole of humankind*.
3. Stable and organised voluntary associations nurture the cultural and value-based heritage, on which their own significant *representation* can be built and expressed, based on shared proposals and perspectives carried out with specific, autonomous and interdependent procedures.
4. The distinguishing feature of the voluntary sector is the myriad of organisations that it is made up of and which differ in size, affiliation and field of action. This justifies the need for *unity* and, at the same time, is a factor of the significant complexity of *representation*.
5. The voluntary sector, in pursuing its aims, is committed to the undertaking of *comprehensive representation* as the necessary condition for the growth of its identity and its active participation in community life.
6. The voluntary sector is close to all forms of organised solidarity and to the bodies that promote it institutionally. With these bodies it also sets out appropriate cooperation strategies which can jointly *represent* shared values and objectives.
7. The voluntary sector finds appropriate interactions with the other *Third Sector* stakeholders it is linked to through their shared solidarity and responsibility for the common good. The voluntary sector is entitled to express specific forms of *representation*, as well as take part in the *unitary representation* of the *Third Sector*, on an equal footing with other stakeholders.
8. By taking on the principle of subsidiarity and in view of a greater community unity, the voluntary sector has developed original experience-based ideas and engaged in dynamic interaction with public institutions and all the components of society, in order to share actions and services of public interest, that are moulded by common binding rules and aimed at producing resources for the common good.
9. Voluntary sector *representatives* are people who are “bearers of an concrete, significant and continuous experience in associations”, who have experienced and personally matured the principles and attitudes described in the *Charter of the Voluntary Sector Values*.

## The principles of *representation*

1. The commitment expressed by a host of organisations through *unitary representation* is an exercise of dialogue, a recognition of diversities, a reflection on the issues that require monitoring, promotion of shared values, and development of common objectives. An active participation in community life urges the experimentation of forms of *unitary representation*, such as cooperation and co-responsibility at all time and in all places.
2. The activation of *unitary representation* entails compulsory attitudes of loyalty and consistency with aspects that are jointly assessed, decided and/or delegated, at the same time without limiting the responsibilities of individual organisations, or surrendering their independence. Participation in *representation* systems is free by nature, and points to a conscious choice on the part of individual organisations. An organisation may withdraw its membership at any time, following a decision-making process which is completed and shared within its executive body.
3. Ethical and value-based roots, the fragmentation or territoriality of the activity, similar identities or operational procedures, as well as managerial cooperation lay behind the activation or involvement in purpose-built networks that are forms of partial and intermediate *representation*, whatever their denomination. In compliance with the limits spelled out in their respective articles of association, these bodies contribute to the general processes of *representation* on behalf of their members, while drawing inspiration from the “principles” herein formulated and adopting the ensuing “commitments” in internal relationships.
4. The simultaneous presence of different expressions and levels of *representation* calls for an increasing *unity*. The *unitary representation* thus achieved is the expression of attitudes in which both large and small organisations can identify; in which every territorial context and each operating sector recognise themselves; in which various ideas are enhanced and different identities and affiliations respected.
5. *Unitary representation* implies a commitment to maintain relationships with *representees* and involve them in important evaluation processes. It opposes arbitrary, vague and strict delegations; expresses and acts according to social entrepreneurship with a view to producing shared innovation and cohesion. If *representation* is founded on clear and shared rules, on planned, lasting and participative processes, on recognised, revocable and temporary mandates, and strengthens trust and cooperation, it will ease the diffusion of democratic practices, as well as the procedure and habits used to assign and receive roles and delegations.

6. The availability of people who can interpret the spirit of *unitary representation* is an essential condition for its implementation and consolidation. Every organisation may propose one of its members as candidate to *represent* the system he or she belongs to, through its democratic rules and practices, ensuring that they have the human qualities, skills and experience needed to cover the necessary functions.
7. The process that leads to the selection of *representatives* is free, autonomous, democratic, participative and wants to see the *represented* organisations themselves acting as protagonists. The procedure is characterised by an accurate selection activity, applies clear incompatibility criteria and draws its inspiration from the human, vocational and charismatic resources, that are present in the organisations themselves.
8. Decision-makers choose *representatives*, thus ensuring a shared balance between the consideration of the various requirements and the relevance that each member has achieved and shown. The plurality of organisations and the multiplicity of contexts in which members express their *representation* suggest that the principles of alternation between people and the diversification of the organisations of origin should apply over time as criteria for an equal distribution of the responsibilities and tasks that need to be developed for a period which is adequate for the mandate to be effective.
9. *Unitary representation* has a double function: it raises awareness of *representees'* views and stances among interlocutors and interlocutors' views and stances among the *representees*. Every *representative* specifies the identity of *represented* organisations to his or her interlocutors and clarifies what they jointly share, what prevails, their extreme differences, and what can still be studied in depth.

## The *representee's* commitments

As an organisation, **I COMMIT MYSELF TO**

1. Nurturing my identity, guiding the association's choices and tapping available sources of energy. Facilitating and supporting virtuous shared processes of representation with other organisations in view of local, provincial and regional contacts and cooperation, also from a national, European and international perspective.
2. Being available and creating conditions aimed at attributing and receiving delegations of *representation*; being consistent and reliable whatever consequences the delegations might bring.
3. Consolidating trust-based relationships with other organisations who have the same guidelines as mine, so that common contacts with the processes of *representation* can be eased, particularly when I cannot take direct part in them for long periods of time .
4. Identifying people with the right skills and expertise to achieve the proposed goals and tasks who also have an effective, significant, and continued experience in associations and assigning them to processes and systems of *representation*.
5. Backing *unitary representatives* during their term, whether they are members of my association or not. Contributing through encouragement, information and ideas to the exercise of their function.
6. Making sure I am periodically informed on the work carried out by *representatives*, studying their reasons and contents, and presenting any comments and criticism constructively.
7. Ensuring institutional contacts capable of receiving and conserving correspondence addressed to me, as well as providing available interlocutors authorised to read it.
8. Identifying points of reference who are valued and trusted within my organisation for any institutional debate and who can provide a continuous presence, can make a commitment for my organisation or who are at least authorised to make decisions on its behalf.
9. Carrying out the tasks required, in line with the time schedule envisaged to achieve the proposed objectives whilst keeping in mind the dialogue conducted up to that point and the commitments taken, revealing my positions in an appropriate and comprehensible fashion.
10. Introducing true and reliable information into institutional communications on the consistency and activity of my association, as well as on my membership to networks of various types, such as councils, consortiums, forums and conferences.
11. Contributing to processes of *representation*, by proposing and ratifying rules which are feasible, functional to the proposed objective and aim at ensuring participation on equal terms and the need to deliver joint analyses, coordination strategies and decisions within reasonable deadlines.
12. Knowing how to take a back seat when it is necessary to privilege the *represented* group, in order to pursue public interests and strategies.
13. Keeping the exercise of inalienable responsibilities active and preserving a critical spirit, independence of thought and the ability to differentiate while recognising and pursuing opportunities for consensus, mediation and renunciation.

14. Excluding tendencies to justify negative behaviour or delegitimizing positions towards unitary representatives, which may result from the opposition to ideas discussed in a debate.
15. Promoting and using specific activities to train a whole generation of representatives, who will lay the foundations for a renewed participative cooperation in view of the further responsibilities of public interest that they will take on both in their private and public life.
16. Considering the energies devoted to participative processes inspired by the Charter of representation an investment as a means to pursue institutional objectives better, with a vision which goes beyond immediate gain, and in a logic of wider affiliation.

## The representative's commitments

By accepting the mandate, **I COMMIT MYSELF TO**

1. Taking an active part in the body that elected (or appointed) me for my term; dealing with issues and holding relationships that only concern the mandate I received.
2. Studying the story and nature of the body I work for in depth; checking its functionality, promoting changes, if need be, to enable it to meet today's challenges and needs, keeping in line with its objectives.
3. Complying with the functions and roles of the body I am part of, as spelled out in the rules that govern its existence and which have been legitimately established.
4. Being present on every occasion I am called to do so; organising meetings and initiatives with a specific schedule and time scale so that volunteers can attend.
5. Preparing myself appropriately to deal with items on the agenda, accepting assessments and advice from those whom I represent, especially if they are official documents or declarations,.
6. Making my skills, experience, and ideas available; enhancing the knowledge produced within my organisation of origin; developing and updating my skills.
7. Respecting and imposing the respect of laws, rules, and agreements with loyalty and consistency, whilst proposing that they be modified should they prove inappropriate to reach the goals for which they were taken on.
8. Defending the identity of the organisation I represent, supporting the principles defined in the *Charter of the Voluntary Sector Values*, drawing inspiration from the *Charter of representation*, and adopting the relative "commitments".
9. Publicizing the myriad of organisations that I represent, respecting their pluralism, while avoiding supporting the visibility of the experience and denomination of my organisation of origin.
10. Bearing in mind that as well as the organisations that have chosen to be listed in the registers set up according to the current laws, there is a universe of legitimately unregistered associations that express concrete and valid solidarity free of charge.
11. Taking a stance which always considers the diversity of the organisations represented along with all the various forms of spontaneous and organised solidarity, thus avoiding making my organisation of origin the only or main point of reference.
12. Keeping a constructive and correct attitude in personal and institutional relationships, without being influenced by the background or affiliation of my interlocutors.
13. Respecting differences and adopting a non-violent attitude in conflict management; favouring dialogue, the integration of different competences, synthesis; countering and eradicating extremism and fundamentalism of any nature or inspiration.

14. Working to achieve objectives aimed at the common good and the public interest; not letting positions and trends prevail which result from opposition to *someone* or *something*.
15. Supporting a logic that is functional to social cohesion, heedful of the integral dimension of the person, appreciative of direct and genuine relationships, and rooted in the daily life of local communities.
16. Promoting a productive, fertile outlook, while respecting operating times and the history of both the voluntary sector and organised solidarity, looking beyond fragmented views and particular group interests, and paying attention to the ethical, and cultural dimensions of choices and guidelines.
17. Nurturing and valuing the foundations of citizenship and democracy, while recognising the authority of public institutions according to the principles of the constitution.
18. Expressing the political value that is typical of the exercise of an active and responsible citizenship independent from any political party or group, in view of the achievement of the common good.
19. Never inducing or accepting direct or indirect favours either for myself or my organisation of origin, in exchange for courtesies not aimed at public common interests.
20. Refraining from the participation in decisions where either my organisation of origin or myself are an interested party.
21. Ensuring that the meetings of the body I am called to participate in are recorded accurately and functionally.
22. Periodically reporting the outcomes of the meetings to those I represent and adequately updating them on the evolution of the relationships I am in charge of.
23. Welcoming and urging scrutiny on my work as *representative*.
24. Giving up my role, were I unable to guarantee my presence and commitment and cooperating in my replacement.
25. Not accepting or holding other roles that are incompatible with the one I was entrusted with, according to the rules set by the law or agreements, my personal conscience or the assessment of those who elected (or appointed) me.
26. Guaranteeing, at the end of my mandate, the exhaustive transmission of information and documentation, in order to enable my successor to effectively carry out his or her work with continuity.

Information and proposals:

[www.cartadellarappresentanza.it](http://www.cartadellarappresentanza.it)

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