

**BUILDING CAPACITIES OF PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS AND PROMOTING  
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN ARAB COUNTRIES AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

**Pilot Phase**

LEBANON – JORDAN – IRAQ

# **Politics and civil society in the market economy: values vs. interests**

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To appreciate the political action of the civil society, it is necessary to start from the traditional function of political parties, to which was, and still is, attributed the main task of advocacy of the citizens in a democracy.



Basically, political parties:

- combine different interests of the citizens and the components of the society into political 'platforms', that are in fact a reasonable and consistent number of political alternatives and options;
- recruit political personnel by selecting and appointing candidates to the elections;
- organize political campaigns for informing and mobilizing voters;
- conduct an activity of mediation between the society, the government and the other state institutions



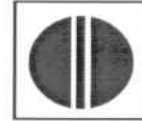
In many democracies, the political party system suffers from a profound crisis, basically due to the progressive lack of trust by the citizens/voters.



The crisis also derives from the fall of socialism/communism, one of the leading ideologies of the 20th century.



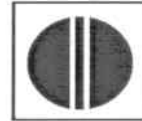
Political party platforms tend to become similar and it is increasingly difficult for the voters to understand the differences among the positions of the political parties and the politicians.



The strong interests within the different components of the society are increasingly emerging through the sensitiveness and the actions of associations, media, NGOs and other different groups.



These associations tend to attract politicians and decision makers on the basis of their strength in terms of potential votes and funding that could go to the ones that shall support their interests.



The term 'lobbying' was created to define the action of businessmen and economic groups towards the politicians to obtain support for their specific interests.

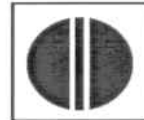
Today 'lobbying' is not limited to economic interests, for example:

- the supporters of the environment;
- the opponents of the death penalty;
- the promoters of sustainable development;
- the advocates of children etc.



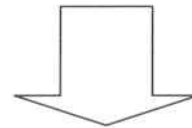
In the experience of the MPs attending this seminar:

Are they now more inclined to be advocates of specific interests, or is their actual action still oriented by the political parties they belong to?

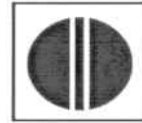


The variety of the interests of the different civil society components is extremely wide.

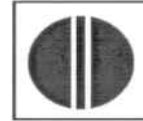
In Italy we can mention:



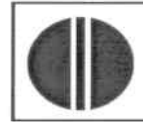
- social security and public health;
- environment;
- protection of minorities (ethnic and religious minorities women, homosexuals, children, the elderly and retired, poor and homeless);
- employment, lowering of labor cost, energy, etc.



Do some of these interests  
deserve special attention by some  
of the attending politicians?



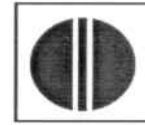
Which group, association or other entity is credited with the rise of such interests?



Which actual actions were eventually taken?



Which such actions brought attention to public opinion in order to ensure transparency and the linking of the politicians involved with the supported interests?



Some of such interests are cross cutting, in the sense that they can be common in different political parties, ethnic and religious groups.

Could this be an asset for a politician?



Business is often criticized for its relations with politics and individual MPs.

Can economic interests be promoted transparently?



Can some cases of support of economic interests be quoted and discussed?