

Interested in our work? Want to become a member? Or are our activities of interest to your organization's funding targets? Or simply want to talk to us about citizens' advice work?

Correspondence address:

Citizens Advice Scotland
1st Floor, Spectrum House
Powderhall Road
Edinburgh EH7 4GB
Tel: 01315501003
Fax: 01315501001

Organization's details:

Citizens Advice International (CAI). Registration number: 872 309 320
Country of incorporation: Belgium. Legal form: AISBL (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif – international non-governmental organization)

Officers of the Board of CAI:

Chairwoman: Pili Rodriguez (Citizens Advice Bureau Gibraltar)

Vice-Chairwoman: Olympia Neagu– National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau –Romania

Treasurer : Hynek Kalvoda-Association of Citizens Advice Centres- (Czech Republic)

For more information please refer to our website:

<http://cabgib.wixsite.com/cainternational>



Designed by Michael Recagno
Citizens Advice Bureau
Gibraltar

Citizens Advice International



2016

Introduction:

As I write this information booklet on Citizens Advice International, it is encouraging and gratifying to look back over the years of our existence and appreciate how the Citizens Advice International network has grown and expanded in tasks, projects and conferences undertaken.

It is also a substantial testament to the energy and creativity of all involved.

Our work has seen us campaigning strongly both locally and internationally for improvements in policies and services that benefit us all.

The impact of our work continues to have a profound effect on many people. We play a vital role in combating social exclusion and have direct influence on policy making.

Whilst we plan to go from strength to strength, we don't doubt that during the next years there will be some challenges and changes ahead. But we are not waiting for these changes and challenges to take us by surprise, we are actively preparing and planning for these transitions to become opportunities and new horizons for all the citizens that we serve.

Pili Rodriguez
Chair.



Conclusion

Changing Needs/ Evolving Services

While it is "truism", that change is constant, in the past years and for the foreseeable future, an organizations ability to adapt quickly and effectively to changing and challenging circumstances will be essential.

Writing this booklet I have realized that the CAI has tried and proven track record. Looking back at the origins and subsequent development of CAI it is clear that we have responded to new opportunities and challenges.

Our ability to both adapt and innovate has seen CAI embrace a wide range of partners and organizations thereby strengthening the service and ensuring that we are able and willing to meet the peoples changing needs both locally and internationally.

We have been actively involved in a united team to help improve the lives of people in our communities.

Citizens Advice International gives us the opportunity to give people a voice and take their anxieties, worries and concerns to a higher level thereby building a bridge which they by themselves could not access.

Strategic Aim

Indicators of Progress

Access to services	New database and website developed. Establish secretariat & central base for the organization.
Quality of Advice & Guidance	Share experiences & methodologies & make greater use of partnerships & strengths of other members.
Partnership and New Opportunities	Develop a wider range of partnerships and members and establish ourselves to be able to signpost clients to all other services both locally and internationally.
Promote the Services and Campaign	Represent our members in supranational bodies including European Union, and other international institutions. Attracting new members and finders Carry out a publicity campaign to promote the network.
Sustainability of the Service	Develop a project based finding strategy. Ensure that finders have a clear understanding of where their donations have made a difference.

Citizens Advice International

is a non-profit non-governmental international organisation representing interests of free advice giving associations throughout the world.

Our mission is to support independent providers of free impartial and confidential advice and information to the public about their rights and thus to contribute to advancement of the civil society.

Our aims are:

To promote throughout the world the provision, by independent non-government bodies, of free impartial and confidential advice and information to the public about their rights;

To represent the interests of its members with all supranational bodies, including the European Union and other international institutions;

Provide a platform and mechanisms for information exchange, co-operation and joint projects among citizens advice associations.

Who We Are:

We address a fundamental need of people...

"One of the basic needs of all those people feeling disadvantaged, vulnerable or afraid of change is the need for information and advice provided in a clear, concrete, comprehensive manner, free of charge and by a reliable agent that is not attached to the main source of change (be it government, political party or more informal influential group) and distant from the power holding body."

The International Partnership for Rights

Citizens Advice International is a non-governmental international body, representing interests of free advice-giving organisations around the world. It was set up in 2004 and is now in its 12th year of existence.

Our Purpose

It was set up with a mission to:

1) Promote throughout the world the provision, by independent non-governmental bodies, of free, impartial and confidential advice and information to the police about their rights.

2) Represent the interests of its members with all supranational bodies, including the European Union and other international institutions.

3) Provide a mechanism for information, co-operation and joint projects among citizen's advice associations.

Citizens Advice International exists to represent its members in front of supranational bodies, but at the same time, acting based on the knowledge, experience and full support of the member organisations.

Increased co-operation between CAI and its member organizations, the European Union (EU) and international institutions and national government will be vital to ensure quality of information provided to citizens.

Strategic Aims and Priorities 2017 / 2019

We have carried out a strategic review of the Citizens Advice International network and identified a number of priorities for the period 2017/2019 which if achieved will enhance our service and extend its reach.

Improve Access to Services

- a) Consider where to base ourselves in the future. Improve our website, database and develop an online contact service. Reach out to all groups and communities who currently make little use of our services
- b) Undertake a feasibility study of how we might achieve this.
- c) Develop partnerships with different bodies in the different countries.

Promote the Service and Campaign

Organize regular high level briefings with politicians and senior civil servants.

Represent the interests of our members with all supranational bodies, including the European Union and other international institutions.

Publicise issues and campaigning where we believe that changes to policy may be necessary.

Continue to campaign on issues which impact on our client's issues.

Improve the Sustainability of the Service

Demonstrate to our principal donors the achievement of positive outcomes and value for money.

Attract new donors so we have the funding for extending our services.

Promote our joint projects and work in order to encourage new donors to support our services.

Recruit and Attract new members to the network.

Prague – 2016

May 2016 saw CAI members in the capital of the Czech Republic participating and giving speeches in a conference aimed to compare the availability of solutions focused methods to help people facing, hardship or distress. There were also members from the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW).

ICSW represents thousands of community organizations working directly with people facing poverty, hardship or distress. Many of these organizations have been established by people who are experiencing hardship themselves.

The network also helps a wide range of people who are poor, ill, disabled, unemployed, frail or oppressed. It also supports the elderly, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who might be experiencing special hardships.



CAI Members

Citizens Advice International is made up of a network of national and local organizations from Europe and New Zealand, which have as main object of activity information and advice services for citizens.

All Citizens Advice International organizations share the same values, principles and concerns:

- To be committed to and act in accordance with the principles of democratic governance: openness, transparency, participation and accountability;
- To observe and maintain human rights and better access to justice;
- To observe the principles of independence, impartiality and confidentiality when providing services to citizens;
- To carry out their activities independently of governments, political parties and commercial interests;
- To ensure a high standard of free and impartial advice and information service provided to citizens;
- To possess the expertise of working with the public and for the public.

CAI Members continued:

Citizens Advice International has full members, associate members and honorary friends.

Common characteristic of all CAI members is the concern and shared feeling of responsibility to provide their fellow citizens and individuals with sufficient information on their rights and responsibilities in order to enable every citizen to make sound personal decisions.

The Citizens Advice International current membership is made up of representatives of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, New Zealand and Gibraltar.



Pathways to Resolution – Gibraltar 2015

Gibraltar Citizens Advice organized an international conference, “Pathways to Resolution”, Ending Negativity / Ending conflict during June 2015.

The aim of this conference was to explore diverse avenues and learn constructive ways to approach conflict. Individuals have differing needs and interests when approaching conflict. In appreciation of the complexity and uniqueness of conflicts that require sophisticated approaches we offered in this conference a spectrum of services that may be tailored to meet individual circumstances resulting in resolution. The Guest Speaker at this conference was Assya Kavrakova, Director of European Citizens Action Services (ECAS). This is an international non-profit organizations based in Brussels, with a pan-European membership and 24 years of experience in EU Citizens’ rights enforcement and civil participation in the EU decision-making process.

There were representatives from Rumania, Poland, Ireland, Scotland, UK, Brussels and Czech Republic. There were also members of an ongoing project to develop and introduce Citizens Advice services in the West Balkans, Turkey, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia.

This project co-ordinates citizen involvement with the public authorities on national and European levels to offer concrete solutions to European citizen’s problems.

Solutions for Equality and Growth London 2015

The overall objective of this conference was to identify innovative solutions for Equality and Growth. Its overall objective was to identify innovative solutions to help people who are disabled, from ethnic minority, LGBT and women to overcome discrimination, barriers to employment

BUCHAREST – ROMANIA 2015

CAI also took part in the second U-Impact conference held in Bucharest, Romania during September 2015.

The impact of the refugee crisis, the freedom of movement as well as EU citizens rights were the topics discussed.

Attending this event were various renowned Romanian and International journalists, political commentators, experts in fields of Citizens Advice, representatives from national and local authorities, national MEP's from their respective countries and non-governmental organizations throughout Europe.



Synopsis of Citizens Advice International participation in International events

European Parliament (Forum) Brussels 2009

Another event CAI members participated and organized was the 6th European Forum of Citizens Advice Services on the exercise of European Citizenship Rights. This conference was organized jointly by Citizens Advice International and ECAS.

The objective of this forum was to enable the exchange of information and good practice, informal learning and networking of Citizens Advice professionals to benefit service users – citizens across Europe.

It also served to explore communication with citizens, in particular making the voice of citizens heard through citizens advice social policy feedback based on client case evidence.

Different People Make our World – Conference Gibraltar, 2009

This conference reflected the experience of EU citizens seeking advice on Equality and Discrimination issues brought to us by CAI network directly from heart of their communities. The objective was to create greater awareness of discrimination issues promoting equality. This conference focused on people's rights to equal treatment in law and in practice, challenging injustice and discrimination.

Ten Years of life changing Advice

Gibraltar 2013

On the tenth anniversary of the service in Gibraltar, CAI members were guest speakers at this conference. The theme of the conference was based on social policy and speakers were invited to talk about how they had given their respective clients a voice and influenced policy makers to make changes in their countries.

DUBLIN 2014

Pilot projects and partners in the Triple A Project <http://triplecitizens.eu/> from the Western Balkans and Turkey attended a 2 day study visit to Dublin in 2014 to learn about the Citizens Advice model. The visit was hosted by the National Association of Citizens Information Services (Ireland) a partner in this project which is led by the European Citizens Action Service in Brussels. This EU funded project aims to support Access to information, Advice and Active help services to citizens in the region, in addition to giving citizens a voice and influencing government policy on key reforms and their implementation. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux Romania is also a partner in this project and some members of CAI attended the study visit.



PRAGUE 2014

Members of CAI also participated in a conference in Prague that dealt with "employment opportunities in Europe for graduates of socially oriented fields". The project was funded by the European Social Fund and the state budget.



BRUSSELS / BELGUIM 2015

During April 2015 – Citizens Advice International organized a visit to the European Commission and held meetings with European Citizens Action Services (ECAS) and met the Director of ECAS Assya Kavrakova. The meetings were productive and informative and encouraged closer collaboration between both organizations, making the visit a positive one for the future of CAI.

Advice organizations emulated on the Citizens Advice model are being set up in West Balkans, Turkey, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Croatia. This project has involved CAI members and is being funded by the European Commission.

