

Draft programme

For a conference

‘Building the EU citizen pillar’

Brussels, Monday 5 November 2012

European Economic and Social Committee [VM3]

Please note, this is only a draft programme.

This event on the eve of the European year of citizens in 2013 is an opportunity to shape the future of European citizenship and a citizens Europe. The European Year in 2013 should be about tools for networking, structured dialogue and enabling participatory democracy. But it should also be about the concept of the first modern transnational citizenship. No one really knows what European citizenship is. 20 years after the adoption of a Maastricht Treaty, certainly it is more a citizenship in the making than having reached maturity. This conference will take a holistic view focusing on the broad building blocks of citizenship around rights, access and belongings.

The event will begin with a presentation on building the citizens’ pillar: ECAS and partners’ project for a European citizens’ house. Where does this stand? What progress has been made in setting up the virtual and physical house in Brussels, and creating a network of resource centres and national contact points?

After the opening session, three panels will put forward ideas for the year of citizens in 2013 around three aspects of citizenship:

- I. Rights. At a previous event in 2010, ECAS presented a report “Mind the gap – towards better enforcement of European citizens’ rights to free movement”. The Commission has been carrying out a wide spread consultation on barriers to the exercise of existing European rights. New proposals will be presented by ECAS with support from Freshfields, Bruckhaus Deringer to speed up enforcement and allow the EU to take emergency action to stop violations of EU law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- II. Access. Apart from existing rights and the different ways to access the EU to enforce them, there is the new collective right of initiative whereby over 1 million people can demand a new European law. This new agenda setting instrument should enhance access to EU decision – making. The main example presented at the conference will be “let me vote” – an ECI which proposes adding to the existing rights of EU citizens to vote in municipal and European elections in a state other than their own, the right to vote in national elections. Can this succeed to push back the boundaries of Union citizenship? What has happened after the first 7 months of registering ECIs?

The report of the ECI link project which features events in Barcelona, Paris and Vienna will shed light on the experience.

- III. Belonging. For people to relate to citizenship of the Union, ECAS suggests that a declaration should be developed. No one knows what this citizenship is and views about the year differ. It should certainly be about existing rights and the new right of citizens' initiatives but also about more European participatory democracy and the creation of a public sphere.

It is expected that this conference will attract over 200 participants: people in citizens and legal advice offices and representatives of EU Institutions who are in direct contact with citizens. The audience will also include participants of the ECI link project, civil society organisations in and others interested and wishing to make a contribution to the year in 2013.

There will be interpretation in English, French and German.

We acknowledge and are grateful for the support of Euronews Development, the Europe for citizens' programme, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for the organisation of this event.

8.30 – 9.00	Registration of participants
9.00	<p>Welcome and presentation of the aims of the events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meglena Kuneva, Honorary President of European Citizens Action Service (ECAS). <p>Building the EU citizen pillar: What is the state of play with the creation of the European citizens’ house?</p> <p>Panel: Vasilis Koulias (Gov2U), Assya Kavrakova (ECAS)</p> <p>How has the house developed as an advice, problem solving service and resource centre? What are the next steps? Is there a possibility of creating a European network of non-profit resource centres round the house?</p> <p>Questions and discussion</p> <p>Chair: Assya Kavrakova (ECAS)</p>
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00	<p><u>3 Routes to European citizenship</u></p> <p>Chair: Meglena Kuneva, Honorary President of ECAS</p> <p><u>1. Rights</u></p> <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Sir David Edward, former judge at the Court of Justice of the European Union, • Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman • Prof. Alfonso Mattera Ricigliano, Scientific director of the foundation College European of the Parma, Special advisor to the European Commission <p>What progress has been made by the Commission with implementing its citizens’ agenda to dismantle obstacles to the exercise of European citizens’ rights? How to diminish a gap between the legal rules and reality confronting citizens in their daily lives? What has been shown by recent consultations in the run-up to the Year in 2013? How to step up enforcement in a crisis where European rights are under pressure? Presentation and discussion of a new ECAS report following up “Mind the gap”.</p>
13.00	Lunch at the EESC

14.30

Chair: Prof. Jo Shaw, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

2. Access

Panel:

- Catriona Seth, Professor at the Université de Lorraine,
- Christophe Leclercq, publisher Euractiv
- Prof. Justin Greenwood, Professor of European Public Policy, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen
- Prof. Paolo Ponzano, European University Institute, Florence.

Questions for debate

Does the European citizens' initiative (ECI) on voting rights stand a chance? What is the balance sheet so far of the new ECI agenda-setting right more generally? What lessons can be learned from evaluation of hands-on support by ECH and more academic studies? Presentation of a working paper "ECI's 7 months on".

16.00

Chair: Maria Laura Franciosi, Journalist

3. Belonging

Panel:

- Catherine Colonna, Diplomat, former Minister Delegate for European Affairs in the French Government and former spokesperson for the President of France,
- Prof. Ettore Recchi, Professor of Political Sociology, Università 'G. d'Annunzio' of Chieti-Pescara, Italy
- Gregory PAULGER, Director General, DG Communication, European Commission,
- Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Austrian diplomat and politician, ex EU Commissioner

Presentation of an information file on the Year of European Citizens
2013

17.00

Keynote speech: Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman

Concluding remarks:

- Bernd Biervert, Deputy Head of Cabinet responsible for Inter-institutional relations and Administration,
- Catherine Colona, Diplomat, former Minister Delegate for European Affairs in the French Government and former spokesperson for the President of France,
- Luca Jahier, President of Group III 'Various Interests' of the European Economic and Social Committee,
- Philippe Cayla, Chairman of Euronews Development, président d'Européens sans frontières, Chairman for the 'Let me vote' ECI