

European Year of Citizens (2013)

2011/0217(COD) - 21/09/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the legislative report by Antigoni PAPADOPOULOU (S&D, CY) on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013).

The Committee recommends that Parliament's position adopted at first reading in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission's proposal. The proposed amendments are the result of the collaboration of the committee responsible and the representatives of the Member States. They relate, in particular, to the following points:

Scope: the committee recommends that the European Parliament's position in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure should **stress the need to raise Union citizens' awareness of their rights and strengthen participatory democracy**. The Commission proposal should be amended as follows:

Subject matter: 2013 shall be designated as the '**European Year of Citizens**'.

Objectives: the general objective of the European Year of Citizens shall be to enhance awareness and knowledge of the rights and responsibilities attached to Union citizenship. The **specific objectives** of the European Year shall be:

- to raise Union citizens' awareness of their right to move and reside freely within the European Union and in this context of all other rights guaranteed to Union citizens, without discrimination, including their **right to vote in local and European elections in any Member State in which they reside**;
- to raise awareness among Union citizens, including young people, about how they can tangibly benefit from Union rights, as well as about policies and programmes that exist to support the exercise of those rights;
- to stimulate debate about the impact and potential of the right of freedom of movement and residence, as an inalienable aspect of Union citizenship, with a view to stimulating and strengthening active civic and democratic participation of Union citizens, in particular in civic fora on Union policies and European Parliament elections, thereby reinforcing societal cohesion, cultural diversity, solidarity, equality between women and men, mutual respect and a sense of a common European identity among Union citizens.

Initiatives involved: Members want these to include: (i) providing Union citizens with information about the **European Parliament's Committee on Petitions and the European Ombudsman** in order to allow them to make better use of, and defend their rights under, Union law; and (ii) **promoting the EU Citizenship Report**, which will be based on a thorough debate and active contributions by citizens and stakeholders, and which will identify further obstacles preventing Union citizens from fully exercising Union citizenship rights, and promote appropriate strategies to remove them.

In the context of initiatives organised in the framework of the European Year, consideration shall be given to **identifying obstacles to Union citizens' exercise of their rights and to promoting appropriate ways and strategies to remove those obstacles**, as well as to promoting cross-cultural understanding of and fighting against discrimination. Synergies shall therefore be sought between those initiatives and existing

tools and programmes in the field of fundamental rights, citizens' rights, employment and social affairs, education and culture.

Co-financing: Union programmes, such as the 2007 to 2013 Europe for Citizens could be used to co-finance activities under the European Year. Other programmes, such as the 2007-2013 specific programme "Fundamental Rights and Citizenship" as part of the general programme "Fundamental Rights and Justice", will provide information on EU rights as a priority criteria for projects.

Coordination and implementation at Union level: the committee emphasised the need for close cooperation with Member States and also with the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, as well as with local and regional authorities.

It specified that the Commission shall endeavour to exploit **possible synergies between different thematic European years**, by evaluating achievements, monitoring persistent gaps and providing statistical data, where appropriate, thus ensuring effective implementation of the aims of European Year.

Monitoring and evaluation: the report to be submitted by 31 December 2014, will serve as a basis for future Union policies, measures and actions in this field. Pursuant to the experience of the European Year, that report shall also present ideas and best practices on how better to inform citizens of their rights, even after the end of the European Year.