

European Year of Citizens (2013)

2011/0217(COD) - 23/10/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 518 votes to 63 with 19 abstentions a legislative resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013).

Parliament adopted its position in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure. The amendments adopted in plenary are the result of a compromise negotiated between the European Parliament and Council. They amend the proposal as follows:

Scope: generally, Parliament's amendments seek to **stress the need to raise citizens' awareness of their rights as citizens of the Union**, in the framework of the European Year, and to promote the exercise of Citizens' rights in the context of active participation in the democratic life of the Union.

Title: the year 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, in order to enable citizens to make full use of their rights. to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. It provides a timely opportunity to raise the awareness citizens about their rights arising from Union citizenship when they exercise their right to move and reside freely in another Member State.

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, based on the core values of the Union, as enshrined in the EU Treaty and the TFEU and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Initiatives involved: the main amendments to the proposal aim to: (i) stimulating the active involvement of civil society organisations and of citizens in the European Year of Citizens, including such direct democracy tools as the citizens' initiative and public consultations; (ii) **strengthening existing tools for informing citizens** 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 (iii) promoting the EU Citizenship Report, which will be based on a thorough debate and active

contributions by citizens and stakeholders, and which will promote appropriate strategies for **removing obstacles preventing Union citizens from fully exercising Union citizenship rights.**

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. Synergies shall therefore be sought between initiatives and existing tools and programmes whilst exploiting 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 years.

Co-financing: the text provides that 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", part of the general programme "Fundamental Rights and Justice", will provide information on EU rights as priority criteria for projects.

Coordination and implementation at Union level: Parliament stressed the need for the Commission to cooperate closely 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.

International cooperation: for the purpose of the European Year of Citizens, the Commission may cooperate with appropriate international organisations, in particular with **the Council of Europe.**

Monitoring and evaluation: lastly, in the context of evaluating the Year, the Commission 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.