Active European citizenship: Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013

2005/0041(COD) - 06/04/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to present a programme to promote for the period 2007-2013 active European citizenship.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTEXT: In its strategic guidelines for the 2007-2013 financial perspectives (INI/2004/2209), the Commission stressed the importance of better information of citizens about European institutions and on European issues in general, of greater awareness of their fundamental rights and duties as citizens of the European Union and of them becoming actively involved in the process of European integration, developing a sense of belonging and a European identity. It proposed, in particular, to ensure that the development of active European citizenship would become one of the Union’s priorities for action.

To achieve this, the Commission is proposing a programme to encourage cooperation between citizens and their organisations from different countries in order to meet, to act together and to develop their own ideas in a European environment that goes beyond a national vision and which respects their diversity. Mutual understanding, solidarity and a sense of belonging to Europe are the building blocks for the involvement of citizens.

CONTENT: With a budget of EUR 235 million from 2007 to 2013, the proposed programme both ensures the continuity of the current civic participation programme (2004-2006) (CNS/2003/0116) and opens the way to new activities, providing a degree of flexibility in order to be able to adapt to future developments.

Its main objectives are as follows:

- giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity;

- forging a European identity, based on recognised common values, history and culture;

- enhancing mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and celebrating cultural diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

Taking into account the current situation and the identified needs, the most appropriate specific objectives, which are to be implemented on a transnational basis, are to:

- bring together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future: in particular, the programme will foster the direct participation of citizens across Europe, both in the activities of the programme and in the development of the notion of a European identity.

- foster action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship through cooperation between civil society organisations at European level.

- make the idea of Europe more tangible for its citizens by promoting and celebrating Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past.

- encourage the balanced integration of citizens and civil society organisations from all Member States, contributing to intercultural dialogue and bringing to the fore both Europe's diversity and unity, with particular attention to the activities with Member States that have recently joined the European Union.

-Eligible actions: the programme will fund three types of action:

Action 1: Active citizens for Europe: this first objective would comprise 2 activities:

- **Town twinning - t**his measure will actively contribute to strengthening mutual knowledge and understanding between the citizens.

- **Citizens' projects and support measures -** a variety of projects of transnational and cross-sectoral dimension, directly involving citizens, will be supported. The scale and scope of such projects will depend on the developments within society and will explore, through innovative approaches, possible responses to the identified needs. Those projects will gather citizens from different horizons, who will act together or debate on common European issues, thereby developing mutual understanding as well as raising awareness of the process of European integration. Measures to exchange best practices, to pool experiences between stakeholders at local and regional levels and to develop new skills will also be supported.

Action 2: Active civil society in Europe: this objective would comprise 3 activities:

- Structural support for European public policy research organisations (think-tanks): This measure is aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of those organisations, which are representative, provide real European added value, can bring about important multiplier effects and, finally, are able to cooperate with other beneficiaries of this programme. The strengthening of trans-European networks is an important element in this area;

- **Structural support for organisations of civil society at European level:** Civil society organisations need to exist and to be able to operate and cooperate at European level in a large number of fields of general interest (e.g. common values and heritage, voluntarism, social issues). This measure will provide them with the capacity and stability to act as transnational catalysts for their members and for civil society at European level. The strengthening of trans-European networks is an important element of this area;

- Support for projects initiated by civil society organisations: Direct cooperation among civil society organisations from different Member States will contribute to mutual understanding for the different cultures and point of views and to the identification of shared concerns and values.

Action 3: Together for Europe: this objective comprises 2 activities:

- **High-visibility events** organised by or in cooperation with the European Commission which are substantial in scale and scope, strike a significant chord with the peoples of Europe, help to increase their sense of belonging to the same community, make them aware of the history, achievements and values of the European Union, involve them in intercultural dialogue and contribute to the development of their European identity will be supported;

- **Studies surveys and opinion polls** will be carried out by the Commission in order to get a better understanding of active citizenship at European level;

- Information and dissemination tools: this will focus on the development of comprehensive information on the various activities of the programme, on other European actions related to citizenship and on other relevant initiatives to be provided through an Internet portal and other tools.

- ***Eligible bodies***: The programme will be open to all stakeholders promoting active European citizenship, in particular to local communities, European public policy research organisations (think-tanks), citizen's groups and other civil society organisations such as non-governmental organisations, platforms, networks, associations and federations, trade unions. It will also be open to participants from various third countries (candidate countries, Western Balkans, EFTA countries), as well as international organisations.

- ***Implementation***: Most of the actions will be implemented through centralised management as follows:

- The Commission will manage directly strategic activities, in particular those involving the development of partnerships or the organisation of major events: structural support to think tanks and to civil society networks, town-twinning support measures, citizen's initiatives, studies and polls, and most of the special events and dissemination of information.

- The Executive Agency will manage by delegation smaller-scale projects: town-twinning projects (citizen' s meetings, conferences and seminars) and civil society projects.

In specific circumstances, and in specific countries, the Commission could decide to entrust national public-sector bodies/bodies with public service mission with the management of the programme.

The implementation of the programme will be guided by the principles of transparency as well as openness, to a large variety of organisations and projects. As a consequence, projects and activities will be selected, as a general rule, via open calls for proposals. It will develop the principle of multi-annual partnerships based on agreed objectives, building on the analysis of the results, in order to ensure mutual benefits for both civil society and the European Union.

All actions will be implemented on a transnational basis. They will encourage mobility of citizens and ideas within the European Union.

- ***Coherence and complementarity***: The Commission will ensure the coherence and the complementarity between this programme and instruments in other areas of action of the Community, especially education, vocational training, culture, sport, fundamental rights and freedoms, social inclusion, gender equality, combating discrimination, research and the Community external action, in particular in the context of the European Neighbourhood policy.

The Commission will ensure that, when actions financed under the present Decision are implemented, the financial interests of the Community are protected by the application of preventive measures against fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities, by effective checks and by the recovery of the amounts unduly paid and, if irregularities are detected, by effective, proportional and dissuasive penalties. It will ensure regular, external and independent evaluation of the programme. It will submit to the other institutions an interim evaluation report on the results obtained and on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme not later than 31/12/2010; a Communication on the continuation of the programme not later than 31/12/2011 and an ex-post evaluation report not later than 31 /12/2015. It is intended that the programme's activities will start on 1 January 2007.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Budget lines: 15.06 01… and 15.01 04…

Areas of activity: Education and Culture – Dialogue with the citizens

Periode of application: 2007-2013

Financial Resources: from 2007-2013: EUR **235 million** of operational expenditures and administrative expenditures + EUR 14.105 million of expenditures not included in the reference amount (human resources and related costs), giving a total of EUR 249.105 million.

Breakdown of resources: EUR 207.47 million of net operational expenditures: of which:

-Objective 1: Active citizens for Europe: EUR 102.550 million (covering town twinning and Citizens' projects and support measures);

-Objective 2: Active civil society in Europe **:** EUR 80.73 million (covering structural support for European public policy research organisations/think-tanks, organisations of civil society at European level and support for projects initiated by civil society organisations);

- Objective 3: Together for Europe: EUR 24.19 million (covering high visibility events, studies and information and dissemination tools).

Human resources: the programme will need different types of personnel to manage these activities: from 2007 to 2013, it estimated that its needs will range from 36 to 46 persons (officials, temporary agents and other staff).