Active European citizenship: Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013

2005/0041(COD) - 12/12/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish a programme to promote active European citizenship ('Europe for Citizens') covering the period 2007-2013.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision No 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme 'Europe for Citizens' to promote active European citizenship

BACKGROUND: With the adoption of the new financial framework for the period 2007-2013, a series of new programmes in the area of youth, culture and European citizenship were approved, consolidating, updating and improving the access procedures to the programmes, as well as the implementation of these policies.

The current programme which takes over from the European citizenship programme 2004-2006 (CNS /2003/0116) and the Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level in the field of culture (COD/2003/0115) falls within this new structure and consolidates existing actions within a single programme. From a budgetary perspective, 'Europe for Citizens' will also be complementary to the new programmes in the fields of citizenship and culture which are:

- Culture 2007-2013,
- MEDIA 2007 and
- Youth in action.

CONTENT: With a budget of **€ 215 million for the period 2007-2013**, the programme will contribute to the following general objectives: a) giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented; b) developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture; c) fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens; and d) enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

On an operational level, these objectives will be complemented by specific objectives that will be implemented via the following practical actions:

Eligible actions: 4 types of actions are foreseen:

- **Action 1: Active citizens for Europe:** this will include two types of actions, and is likely to receive at least 45% of the budget:

Town-twinning: this measure is aimed at activities that involve or promote direct exchanges between European citizens through their participation in town-twinning activities. For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, structural support may be provided directly to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), a body pursuing an aim of general European interest, active in the field of town twinning.

Citizens' projects and support measures: a variety of projects of a transnational and cross-sectoral dimension, directly involving citizens, will be supported under this measure. Priority is given to projects aimed at encouraging local level participation.

- **Action 2: Active civil society in Europe:** this will cover three areas and approximately 31% pf the total budget allocated to the programme will be devoted to this action.

Structural support for European public policy research organisations: 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 the programme. The strengthening of transeuropean networks is an important element in this area. Grants may be awarded on the basis of a multi-annual work programme bringing together a range of themes or activities. For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, structural support may be provided directly for the association 'Groupement d'études et de recherches Notre Europe' and for the 'Institut für Europäische Politik', as bodies pursuing an aim of general European interest.

Structural support for civil society organisations at European level: this measure will provide them with the capacity and stability to act in a cross-sectoral and horizontal dimension as transnational catalysts for their members and for civil society at European level. For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, structural support may be provided directly for three bodies pursuing an aim of general European interest: the Platform of European Social NGOs, the European Movement and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

Support for projects initiated by civil society organisations in various Member States: to contribute to mutual understanding for the different cultures and points of view and to the identification of shared concerns and values.

- **Action 3: Together for Europe:** this objective includes 3 sub-actions. Approximately 10% of the total budget allocated to the programme will fund projects under this heading.

High-visibility events: this measure will support events organised by the Commission, which are substantial in scale and scope, strike a 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 (such as the commemoration of historical events, the celebration of European achievements, artistic events, awareness-raising around specific issues, European-wide conferences and the awarding of prizes …);

Studies, surveys and opinion polls: in order to get a better understanding of active citizenship at European level;

Information and dissemination tools: this measure will fund, by means of an Internet portal and other tools, comprehensive information on the various activities of the programme, on other European actions related to citizenship and on other relevant initiatives. For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, structural support may be provided directly for the 'Association Jean Monnet', the 'Centre européen Robert Schuman' and the 'Maisons de l'Europe'

- **Action 4: Active European Remembrance:** on the request of the European Parliament, a fourth action is provided for to fund the protection of the main **sites and archives associated with the victims of Nazism, Stalinism and the Holocaust**. Approximately 4 % of the total budget allocated to the programme will be devoted to this action.

For each type of action foreseen, priority will be given to ensuring the balanced involvement of citizens and civil society organisations in all the Member States, respecting the balance between old and new Member States (2004 and 2007 enlargements).

Community measures may take the form of grants or public procurement contracts. Community grants may be provided through specific forms such as operating grants, action grants, scholarships and prizes (as described in the Annex to the Decision).

Eligible entities: the programme shall be open to all stakeholders promoting active European citizenship, in particular local authorities and organisations, European public policy research organisations (think-tanks), citizens' groups and other civil society organisations. It will also be open to a number of third countries (candidate countries, Western Balkans, EFTA countries), as well as international organisations (e.g. the Council of Europe).

Implementation: the implementing measures have been simplified and rationalised: less information required from beneficiaries, simplified application forms; more transparent procedures; the amount of information to be provided by beneficiaries limited in the case of small grants, etc.

Consistency and complementarity: coherence and complementarity will be ensured between the programme and instruments in other areas of Community action, especially education, vocational training, culture, youth, sport, the environment, the audiovisual sector and the media, fundamental rights and freedoms, social inclusion, gender equality, combating all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia, scientific research, information society and Community external action,(in particular at the level of European Neighbourhood policy).

Monitoring and evaluation: specific measures are foreseen regarding the monitoring and evaluation of actions. The usual anti-fraud measures are also foreseen, as well as the regular evaluation of the programme:

- an interim evaluation report on the results obtained and on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme no later than 31 December 2010;
- a communication on the continuation of the programme no later than 31 December 2011;
- an ex-post evaluation report no later than 31 December 2015.

Lastly, this Decision provides for a series of transitional measures for the follow-up of actions started before 31 December 2006, pursuant to Decision 2004/100/EC.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: the Decision will enter into force on 28 December 2006. It is applicable as of 1 January 2007.