



Plenary sitting

A8-0017/2017

1.2.2017

REPORT

on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of
14 April 2014 establishing the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period
2014–2020
(2015/2329(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS

Procedure and sources

On 14 September 2015, the Rapporteur was entrusted with the task of preparing a report on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020.

The present report is intended to research first experiences with the implementation of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme 2014-2020 (hereafter EfC Programme), which has now been running for two years. With this report, the rapporteur would like to provide the Members with an overview of the current state of play in the implementation of the programme and to help them better understand what works well in the present iteration of the EfC programme and which are the main areas of concern for applicants and beneficiaries. The conclusions of this report should feed into the interim evaluation on the Programme's implementation which the European Commission is bound to submit in 2017, as well as in the communication on the continuation of the Programme that should be published by the Commission in 2018.

In order to be able to reach conclusions and to issue draft recommendations, the rapporteur has organised several meetings with the European Commission (EC) and with the Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency (EACEA). She has also received valuable feedback from an analysis based on interviews with the national contact points (NCPs) responsible for the implementation of the programme at national level, which was carried out by Coffey from March to May 2016 and commissioned by the Policy Department of Directorate B. The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) has drafted a 'European implementation assessment' which also contains an in-depth analysis of the EfC Programme.

Finally, the rapporteur has taken part in a Stakeholders meeting which was organised by the EP office of Barcelona on 30 May 2016. In this context, the rapporteur has had the opportunity to meet many Spanish beneficiaries of the programme, as well as the national contact point for Spain. Also, the Rapporteur was present at the civil dialogue group meeting organised by the Commission in Barcelona on 31 May and 1 June 2016.

Since her appointment, the Rapporteur has also collected information through meetings with different associations, among others:

- LDA European Association for Local Democracy
- Friends of Europe
- Fundació Solidaritat UB - Universitat de Barcelona ECAS
- European Policy Center
- Café Babel
- The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
- Social Platform

All the insights gained through these different studies, meetings and debates with beneficiaries, stakeholders and institutions have fed into the present report.

Origin, structure and purpose of the programme¹

Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens has for long been a key objective of European policy makers and the European Parliament, but it has never been as important as it is in the present situation.

Based on the experience of a prior programme for Active Citizenship from 2004 to 2006, the EfC Programme was initially established for the period 2007-2013² with the purpose of enhancing citizen support to European integration.

Over the 2007 to 2013 period, the EfC Programme reached approximately 7 million direct participants and almost 25 000 towns and cities in Europe. It created 350 networks of towns around common issues and managed to mobilise around 4 250 civil society organisations to meet citizens' concerns³. After the success of the first programming period, a revised version of the EfC Programme was adopted in April 2014.

While the essence of the EfC remains the same, the revision of the EfC Programme sought to simplify its structure and make it more accessible for applicants. The Programme objectives were redrafted with a simpler vocabulary and were refocused towards the overall aim of strengthening the links between the Union and its citizens. The Regulation establishing this Programme underlines that the Programme's objectives seek to '*contribute to citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity, and to foster European citizenship and improve the conditions for civic and democratic participation.*'⁴

The Programme structure was revised in the new programming period and is implemented through two Strands and a horizontal Action:

- Strand 1: *European remembrance*: Raise awareness of remembrance, common history and values and the Union's aim.
- Strand 2: *Democratic engagement and civic participation*: Encourage democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level. The measures in Strand 2 are:
 - *Town Twinning*
 - *Networks of Towns*
 - *Civil Society Projects*
- Horizontal Action: *Valorisation*: Analysis, dissemination and use of project results

The respective measures were streamlined, in an attempt to make the logic of the programme easier to understand. Besides, until now, the EfC Programme stipulated specific annual

¹ Much of the factual information contained in this part of the report is based on the 'European Implementation Assessment' of the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) published in July 2016 (PE581.418).

² Decision No 1904/2006/EC establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme Europe for Citizens to promote active European Citizenship (OJ L 378/32, 27.12.2006).

³ European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 'Europe for Citizens' Programme 2007-2013, COM(2015) 652, 16.12.2015.

⁴ Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020 (OJ L 115/3, 17.4.2014).

priorities for the two strands. From 2015 onwards, priorities were set for the remainder of the programme 2016-2020. This way, applicants can better plan and prepare their projects. The Commission reserves, however, the right to review, adopt and/or modify the list of priorities. These priorities for the period 2016-2020¹ are:

- for ‘European Remembrance’ (Strand 1):
 1. Commemorations of major historical turning points in recent European history;
 2. Civil society and civic participation under totalitarian regimes;
 3. Ostracism and loss of citizenship under totalitarian regimes: drawing the lessons for today;
 4. Democratic transition and accession to the European Union.

- for ‘Democratic engagement and civic participation’ (Strand 2):
 1. Understanding and Debating Euroscepticism;
 2. Solidarity in times of crisis;
 3. Combatting stigmatisation of ‘immigrants’ and building counter narratives to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding;
 4. Debate on the future of Europe.

The budget for the EfC Programme 2014-2020 was set at 185 468 000 EUR for the seven years. The budget of the current EFC Programme was thus considerably reduced taking into account that the financial envelope of the previous programme was set at 215 000 000 EUR. Regarding the allocation of the budget, the Annex to Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 establishing the EfC Programme 2014-2020 specifies that approximately 20% of the total budget of the Programme will be devoted to Strand 1; approximately 60% of the total budget of the Programme will be devoted to Strand 2; approximately 10% of the total budget of the Programme will be devoted to horizontal action (valorisation); and approximately 10% of the total budget of the Programme will be allocated to Programme management.

Finally, a lump sum funding system replaced the budget-based financing system used in the past. The lump sums cover all the eligible costs of the actions and the same parameters are valid for all participating countries.

It should be noted that both Action Grants and Operating Grants can be awarded within the programme. The Action Grants are granted for projects (actions with a limited duration during which proposed specific activities are implemented) within both strands. The Operating Grants differ from Action Grants in that they provide financial support for costs required for the proper conduct of the usual and permanent activities of an organisation, such as rental costs for premises or staff remuneration.²

The EfC Programme is open to all stakeholders promoting European citizenship and integration, in particular local and regional authorities and organisations, twinning committees, European public policy research organisations (think tanks), civil society organisations (including Holocaust survivors’ organisations), as well as cultural, youth, educational and research organisations. It provides EU financial support for a wide variety of

¹ See website of the EfC Programme website of EACEA: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens_en.

² See EfC Programme Guide (Version valid as of 2014); <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/documents/comm2013003670000en.pdf>.

projects and activities. Associations, local authorities and institutions located in all 28 EU Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can apply for grants offered by EfC Programme.

The EfC Programme has proven to play a valuable part in different policy areas, including justice, freedom and security, migration, employment and social policy, as well as education, training and youth. Especially in times where Euroscepticism is dangerously on the rise, encouraging civic participation is of vital importance. Against this background, the EfC Programme has been described as providing a unique European platform for promoting civic engagement among European citizens, either directly or through organisations targeting them. In its final Report on the Ex-post evaluation of the EfC Programme 2013-2007, the European Commission confirmed that the EfC Programme's objectives and activities were relevant, complementary with other initiatives and presented a clear EU added value since the Programme allowed to implement activities that could not have been financed elsewhere¹.

The programme is jointly managed by the DG for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission, the Education, Audio-visual and Cultural Executive Agency (EACEA) and the Programme Committee, composed of representatives appointed by the Member States. The EfC National Contact Points (NCPs) act as a 'bridge' between the programme implementers (European Commission and EACEA) on the one hand and potential programme beneficiaries, multipliers and the general public on the other hand.

In accordance with Article 11(2) TEU and Article 10 of the Regulation establishing the EFC Programme 2014-2020, a 'civil dialogue group' was established (formerly called 'structured dialogue group'). The group's tasks are:

- to hold a regular dialogue on all matters relating to the EfC Programme, including 'Remembrance' and 'Democratic and civic engagement', and to its implementation;
- to exchange experiences and good practices in those fields;
- to contribute to the dissemination of the programme's results;
- to contribute to the preparation and implementation of any events or activities organised under the Europe for Citizens Programme;
- to monitor and discuss policy developments in related fields.

Two meetings per year of the group are supposed to take place, depending notably on the EfC Programme agenda, and on the European political agenda, including the annual priorities of the EU. The group is composed of the following organisations:

- Organisations which have been selected to receive an operating grant under the EfC Programme 2014-20, under strand 1 'Remembrance' and under strand 2 'Democratic engagement and civic participation';
- Organisations which have received an operating grant under the former EfC Programme 2007-13 and have expressed their continued interest to take part to the dialogue.
- Some organisations/ think tanks which have expressed an interest in the EfC Programme and/or work in this policy area – without being necessarily supported by the Programme.

¹ Coffey International and Deloitte, Ex-post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2013-2007 - Final Report prepared for the European Commission, September 2015.

As mentioned above, the Rapporteur had the opportunity to attend the meeting of this civil dialogue group which took place in Barcelona on 31 May–1 June 2016 as a speaker.

Improvements brought about by the new programme¹

The change in structure from a rather broad set-up that included four general actions (Active Citizens in Europe; Active Civil Society in Europe; Together for Europe; and Active European Remembrance) to a more streamlined two-strand EfC Programme focusing on European Remembrance and Democratic engagement and civic participation is one of the main differences between the 2007-2013 Programme and the 2014–2020 Programme. This streamlining appears reasonable as it allows for a narrower, but more focused scope. It is important to note that the selected projects mainly deal with topics relating to migration, social inclusion and intercultural issues and are therefore capable of bridging local and European dimensions. Also, the European remembrance projects strand has now been designed in a more forward-looking way with the objective of linking past and present. Another key feature of the new programme is that the large majority of projects selected are ‘small projects’ (with funding under 60 000EUR).

The application process has considerably been improved with a digitalised eForm that applicants have to fill in in one of the 24 EU official languages. The paperless application is easier and faster to handle for applicants as well as for the EC and EACEA. In addition, this new application process has significantly reduced the number of ineligible applications. Moreover, the selection process of projects has been expedited. This concerns the award decision but also the time period until the contract is prepared (which took previously about five months and now less than three month and a half). Likewise the pre-financing payments and the regular payments are transferred much faster to the beneficiaries.

The geographical balance of projects has been improved with all Member States but one (Estonia) being project beneficiaries in 2015. Hungary had the greatest number of applications selected (17%) followed by Slovakia (13%), Italy and Germany (11%). Projects have an average of 8 partners with almost 30% of the partners being Eastern European. It is to be welcomed that Balkan countries, which signed an international agreement with DG HOME, were able to participate in a restricted call in 2015. Two organisations, a Serbian and a Macedonian one, were selected for operating grants for the period 2015–2017.

The structural reorganization within the Commission regarding the EfC Programme has been smooth with DG HOME taking over from DG COMM.

Main areas of concern

The main area of concern is undoubtedly the programme budget for 2014-2020, which was reduced by 14% compared to the previous generation of programme. The financial envelope for EfC Programme 2014-2020 is €185.47 million (from EUR 215m for 2007-2013), which amounts to 0.0171% of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework, far from the symbolic ‘one Euro per citizen’ which had been requested among others by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in 2011. In concrete terms, this means that only one of

¹ See European Implementation Assessment of the EPRS.

4281 Euros planned to be spent at EU level is budgeted for the only Programme which puts European citizens at its very heart. This is a major concern for the rapporteur.

This reduction of the financial envelope has undoubtedly entailed serious consequences for the functioning of the EfC Programme as a whole. The reduced budget has to be allocated to the same number of projects. The number of staff working on the EFC Programme was reduced at EACEA and at the Commission, which has resulted in a higher workload and pressure for the remaining staff. How to generate an impact with a modest budget remains the biggest challenge for projects supported under the EfC Programme. Indeed, there appears to be a mismatch between the high ambitions of programme goals and the amount of funding available to meet these. This is exemplified by the low number of selected projects: in 2015, only 33 applications could be selected out of 538 for the remembrance projects, which amounts to 6%. The same rate applies to civil society projects (27 out of 440 projects selected in 2015). In the sector of town twinning, the rate is 18%. Out of 2791 applications submitted in the year 2015, the total number of projects selected for funding was 408, which corresponds to an average success rate of about 15%. Globally, it should be noted that the low rate of success of applications is linked more to the lack of financing than to the quality of the projects, which creates a feeling of frustration among the unsuccessful applicants.

As mentioned above, it seems that the lump sum approach is a significant improvement from the previous programming period. The system works well and is easily understood by applicants. However, according to the NCPs, financing in the new programming period also has shortcomings. This is especially the case for smaller organisations that often do not have the necessary financial means to cover the expenses until the receipt of the final payment. The reduced rate of pre-financing (i.e. currently maximum 50%) creates a significant burden on these smaller organisations. An increase of the rate of pre-financing could result in more project partnerships developed under the EfC Programme, as it could support the participation of an increased number of smaller organisations. As a principle, pre-financing is not applicable to Town Twinning projects.

In addition, several NCPs explained that the calculation of the grant also presents issues for potential applicants from some Member States. The grant is calculated on the basis of a lump sum financing system fixed per 'tranches', where a maximum amount can be applied to the different costs of projects.

For Town Twinning, the lump sum is based only on the number of participants invited and for the other strands/measures, the lump sum is based on three parameters which constitute the essential elements of all the citizenship actions: the number of participants, the number of countries involved and the number of events developed. This means that currently the financing under the EfC Programme does not take into account the geographical differences and cost of living in the participating countries. According to the NCPs, this is an issue for countries with higher costs of living (Sweden, Ireland) and also for geographically isolated countries (Ireland, Portugal, Finland).

In general NCPs felt that their potential as actors in the EfC Programme is not fully exploited. This was particularly the opinion of NCPs that are either NGOs or have extensive experience of the EfC Programme. Indeed, one in every three NCPs interviewed considers that the EC and EACEA do not realise that NCPs have good contacts with applicants and the potential to act as programme multipliers, especially among grass-roots level civil society organisations.

These NCPs consider that they are viewed more as a ‘help desk’ which is limited to providing technical and administrative support. According to NCPs, this constitutes a missed opportunity to build capacity at national level.

The interviews with NCPs also revealed that there is a demand for developing a formal procedure for linking beneficiaries and NCPs after successful applications. Some NCPs also thought that there should be a formal procedure to share information on the assessment of applications, as this would immensely facilitate knowledge building and best practices going forward.

Recommendations by the rapporteur

In the opinion of the Rapporteur, due to the great interest raised by the programme and the low rate of success of the projects, an **increase of the budget** seems to be of the utmost importance. Attempts on the side of the European Parliament to prevent the cut in funding in the present programme, which are reflected in the Parliament resolution of 23 October 2012 on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020¹ as well as the Report of 12 December 2012 on the proposal for a Council regulation regarding the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020 (Rapporteur: Mr Takkula)² adopted by the CULT Committee, remained fruitless. The rapporteur recommends nevertheless at a minimum to come back to the previous level of funding of the former programme during the negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework/double the budget.

The reasons for the rise in interest in the programme were among others the increased target group awareness resulting from promotion during the last programming period (2007-2013). In order to continue this trend, the rapporteur recommends that the **NCPs** who have been particularly successful in promoting the programme in their countries **share best practice on communication**, such as useful tools and techniques, with the NCPs who have found it more difficult to promote the programme. In order to achieve this aim, the rapporteur recommends that a more efficient networking be put in place between the NCPs.

To mitigate the adverse effects of the current financing system described above, the rapporteur suggests considering the inclusion of an **additional parameter in the calculation of the lump sum** for travel costs to take into account the geographical differences and cost of living in the participating countries. This option could support cooperation projects from a wider geographic area, as currently projects are often regional and applicants tend to partner with neighbouring countries to save resources. This could enhance the participation of organisations with a limited financial capacity or hard-to-reach groups.

As in many Member States, potential applicants struggle to put together coherent project proposals because of their inadequate capabilities in international partnerships or the insufficient presentation of a European dimension of the project. In this regard, solutions could be considered to raise the capability of stakeholders who find it difficult to establish international partnerships, potentially through the carrying out of **trainings and workshops**

¹ See European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2012 in the interests of achieving a positive outcome of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 approval procedure, P7_TA(2012)0360.

² European Parliament Report of 12 December 2012 on the proposal for a Council regulation establishing for the period 2014-2020 the programme ‘Europe for Citizens’ (Rapporteur: Mr Takkula), A7-0424/2012.

on this topic by NCPs which could be allocated additional funding to this end.

It appears from the research carried out that the method of providing feedback to rejected applicants in the current programme could be improved. A potential solution could be offered by a **more active involvement of the NCPs in the feedback process**. The feedback stream could be formalised if the EACEA communicated the results to the NCPs prior to making them public and granted them access to the files of unsuccessful applicants, as this would enable them to explain what could be improved and enhance the quality of feedback which is currently considered too limited.

A few NCPs mentioned attending briefings with the National Representations in Brussels, which enabled them to better coordinate with the Member State representative on the Programme Committee. The rapporteur thinks that this is certainly a helpful initiative that provides further cohesion between programme actors.

According to the rapporteur, there is still room to improve the centralised communication channels and tools provided by the EC and EACEA. Although the EACEA project Portal is a significant step in the right direction further developments are required. Channels and tools need to be more attractive, engaging and interactive (e.g. there could be more examples/story-telling, images and detailed project descriptions). The content needs to be updated more regularly.

The question of the legal base

The EfC Programme 2014-2020 is established from 1 January 2014, but Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 on the EfC Programme 2014-2020 was only adopted on 14 April 2014. The late adoption of this Regulation was caused by prolonged negotiations on the legislative proposal due to a disagreement between the European Parliament on one side, and the Council and the Commission on the other side, concerning the legal base. The Commission proposal for the EfC Programme 2014-2020 was exclusively based on Article 352 TFEU, which was vehemently contested by CULT, the lead committee for the file. Indeed, this article of the Treaty, which entails the consent procedure, endowed the Council with the main law-making role, whereas Parliament could merely consent to or reject the proposal, which stood in strong contradiction with the democratic nature of the programme.

The legal service of the EP as well as the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) were consulted regarding this question, and both came to the same conclusion that Article 352 TFEU, in combination with Article 167 TFEU should form the legal basis of the proposal for the EfC Programme 2014-2020, as they had formed the legal basis for the previous EfC Programme.

The Commission and the Council did not agree with Parliament's view regarding the legal basis, arguing that the two strands of objective were not of equal importance and that besides article 352 TFEU could not be combined with article 167 TFEU as both articles entailed different procedures. In the end Parliament had to accept Article 352 TFEU as sole legal basis.

Due to the choice of the legal basis of the Regulation on the EfC Programme 2014-2020, the European Parliament's official role and involvement in the legislative process of the current Programme is limited.

Parliament accepted a restricted role to avoid a procedural deadlock, but it made it clear in its resolution that a solution should be found for the next programme which takes properly into account the democratic dimension of the programme¹ and the role of the EP as co-legislator. In the Annex to its legislative resolution the European Parliament stated that it

'reaffirms its conviction that this Regulation [on the Efc Programme 2014-2020] pursues also the objectives linked to culture and history as enshrined in Article 167 TFEU. Therefore a dual legal basis entailing the ordinary legislative procedure should have been applied to this dossier. The only reason why the European Parliament gave up its position on the dual legal basis and hence its claim on codecision and accepted the consent procedure – in accordance with the Commission's proposal based on Article 352 TFEU – was its desire to avoid a complete procedural deadlock and a consequent delay in the entry into force of the Programme. The European Parliament draws attention to its determination not to allow such a situation to arise again'

The Rapporteur would like to stress that as the only directly elected EU institution currently representing about 508 million inhabitants, the European Parliament has to play its role as EU co-legislator when it comes to the adoption of a programme specifically created with the objective of encouraging the involvement of citizens and enhancing their understanding of, hence their interest for the EU, its history and diversity. She strongly believes that an EU which genuinely aims to reach out to its citizens with such a unique funding programme, while not fully involving Parliament in the law-making process might appear less credible to the general public². Therefore, she urges the EC to find a suitable legal base for the next generation programme that enables a fully-fledged participation of the EP in the adoption and the implementation process.

¹ European Parliament Report of 12 December 2012 on the proposal for a Council regulation establishing for the period 2014-2020 the programme 'Europe for Citizens' (Rapporteur: Mr Takkula), A7-0424/2012.

² European Implementation Assessment, EPRS.

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period 2014–2020 (2015/2329(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 10 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which state that ‘every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union’, that ‘the institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action’, and that ‘the institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society’,
 - having regard to the Protocol (No 1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) on the role of National Parliaments in the European Union,
 - having regard to Protocol (No 2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period 2014-2020¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values²,
 - having regard to the report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme 2007-2013 (COM(2015)0652),
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure, and to Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, Annex XVII to the Rules,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A8-0017/2017),
- A. whereas the Europe for Citizens programme is a unique and highly symbolic programme, insofar as it is a listening exercise on civil society’s debate, as it stimulates critical thinking on the European project, its history and that of the movements and ideas that have promoted it and as it contributes to a better knowledge of the European decision-making process, improving the conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level;
- B. whereas the Europe for Citizens programme aims to strengthen a sense of European citizenship and belonging, enhance solidarity, mutual tolerance and respect, to promote

¹ OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p. 3.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0005.

a better understanding of the EU, its origin and development, its values, its institutions and competences and to foster an active dialogue between EU citizens; whereas the activities under the programme can be seen as part of informal lifelong education in citizenship;

- C. whereas the ‘one euro per citizen’ campaign for the Europe for Citizens programme is aimed at sending a strong symbolic message about listening to citizens' voices in Europe;
- D. whereas the current rise of ‘Euroscepticism’ – which is reflected by anti-European forces calling into question the very existence of the European project and culminated recently in the vote in favour of Brexit – highlights the importance of such programmes and reinforces the need to foster the development of a shared sense of European identity, to reflect on the causes of the European Union’s loss of credibility, to encourage civic participation and to launch an in-depth debate on European values, which should involve the whole of civil society and the institutions themselves – and a training campaign on the functioning of EU institutions – while highlighting the opportunities brought about by belonging to the EU;
- E. whereas, before the accession of a country to the European Union takes place, profound, holistic preparation involving issues of remembrance, coming to terms with the past and ensuring the active participation of citizens in the civic life of the country concerned is required;
- F. whereas, in line with Article 11 of the TEU, the EU institutions are under an obligation to give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to exchange their views in all areas of Union action publicly; whereas this provision also entails the EU institutions’ obligation to engage in an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society and the Commission’s duty to carry out broad consultations with all stakeholders;
- G. whereas Article 20 of the TFEU establishes the fundamental status of Union citizenship and details the rights attached to it, and whereas a better understanding of the EU and its values is an important precondition to empower citizens to fully enjoy these rights;
- H. whereas active citizenship, education for citizenship and intercultural dialogue are key to building open, inclusive and resilient societies;
- I. whereas the current programme is founded on Article 352 of the TFEU, which only granted Parliament the right to express its position under the consent procedure and was vigorously contested by Parliament at the time that the proposal was submitted by the Commission as it strongly contradicts the democratic nature of the programme;
- J. whereas the ex-post evaluation conducted by the Commission confirmed the relevance of the programme’s objectives and the fact that, as it is distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups, it has enabled initiatives that could not have been funded elsewhere;
- K. whereas, following the budgetary cuts resulting from the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020, the financial envelope for the

Europe for Citizens programme was reduced by around EUR 29.5 million, and whereas the limited financial envelope of EUR 185.47 million for the programme only represents 0.0171 % of the MFF;

- L. whereas it has been noted that Member States tend to disengage from the co-financing of these projects and that local authorities find themselves in difficulties when it comes to European projects with high co-financing rates;
- M. whereas, as a consequence of the reduction in the financial envelope, the number of projects that could be financed in 2014 fell by almost 25 % compared to the previous programme;
- N. whereas non-formal and informal learning, as well as volunteering, sport, the arts and culture, provide many opportunities for citizenship education and active citizenship;
- O. whereas further synergies with other programmes and better communication with other DGs are needed in order to reduce overlap and reinforce the impact of the programme;
- P. whereas there is a proven value of the existing international twinning of cities and municipalities (Town twinning — Networks of Towns), which enhances mutual understanding between citizens and fosters friendship and cooperation;

Main conclusions

1. Underlines that the overall funding available (EUR 185.47 million) to the only programme dedicated entirely to European citizenship, i.e. the Europe for Citizens programme, is negligible in comparison with other education and culture programmes, such as Creative Europe (EUR 1.46 billion) and Erasmus+ (EUR 14.7 billion), with the result that applicants' expectations will be disappointed;
2. Welcomes the fact that in the first two years of the new funding cycle, the Europe for Citizens programme, which is set to bridge the gap between the EU institutions and European citizens, seems to be running well, with a rising number of applicants, high project quality and sound project implementation;
3. Recognises that the main obstacle to the successful implementation of the programme is insufficient financial allocation and deeply regrets that it was cut by 13.7 % under the MFF 2014-2020, which has dramatically reduced the number of financeable projects and means that the high demand cannot be met, causing frustration among candidates with valuable projects;
4. Notes that, owing to budgetary constraints, the total number of funded projects is too small to achieve the programme's ambitious goals and that only around 6 % of the European remembrance and civil society projects could be financed in 2015, which is very low in comparison to the Creative Europe programme results for the same year (19.64 % for Culture and 45.6 % for MEDIA); indicates that the funding for these two strands of the Europe for Citizens programme should be substantially increased in line with the ambitions of the programme;

5. Recognises the success of the city twinning projects all over the EU, and calls on the Member States to promote the scheme among municipalities and to facilitate cooperation;
6. Welcomes the Europe for Citizens newsletter and the database on funded projects, launched by the Commission;
7. Highlights the fact that the Europe for Citizens' national contact points (NCPs) play an important role in raising awareness and providing support and guidance to potential applicants (in particular first-time applicants in target countries), as well as European and national associations of local and regional government and civil society organisations;
8. Welcomes the multidisciplinary approach of the programme, its clear and simple application form and reporting requirements and its focus on specific activities;
9. Welcomes the fact that the priorities defined for both strands of the programme, 'European remembrance' and 'Democratic engagement and civic participation', which were previously modified annually, have henceforth become multiannual and will apply throughout the remaining period of the programme (2016-2020);
10. Acknowledges the fact that the impact of the programme remains proportionally high, as is shown by the fact that in 2015 an estimated 1 100 000 participants were involved in the 408 projects selected; considers also that the high number of applications – 2 087 in 2014 and 2 791 in 2015 – and the quality of projects indicate a high level of interest in the programme and the need to dedicate more human and financial resources to the programme in order to increase the number of projects supported;

Recommendations

Legal aspects of implementation

11. Recommends that the next generation of the Europe for Citizens programme should be adopted with a legal base enabling Parliament to be involved in the adoption of the programme as a co-legislator under the ordinary legislative procedure, on an equal footing with the Council; encourages the Commission to think of possible solutions to achieve this objective;

Financial aspect of implementation

12. Considers that high quality projects, such as European remembrance and civil society projects (6 % success rate, as opposed to 19.64 % for Culture and 45.6 % for MEDIA in the Creative Europe Programme), have been rejected because of the lack of sufficient funding in the Europe for Citizens programme; regarding the decisive role played by this programme as a prerequisite for citizens' participation in the democratic life of the Union, considers that a substantial increase in the current budget would be necessary in order to achieve a higher target rate; calls, therefore, on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to consider a total financial envelope of approximately EUR 500 million for the Europe for Citizens programme under the next MFF, which only represent EUR 1 per citizen;

13. Recognizes the common goal of and the potential synergies between the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and the Europe for Citizens Programme (EfC) in enabling citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies; calls nevertheless on the Commission to ensure that ECI is not financed under the EfC programme's limited budget, as it is currently the case, and urges the Member States to be more involved in financial support to both actions;
14. Notes that the lump sum or flat rate system should take into consideration price differences across the EU, depending on the cost of living in the Member States; recommends rethinking this scheme and the reduction in pre-financing in order to ensure the sustainability of the funded projects and to provide better support to cooperation among local administrations or organisations at a wider distance, and in particular to facilitate the involvement of smaller organisations with a limited financial capacity and participants with special needs;
15. Requests that the Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) regularly assess the impact that a number of budgetary arrangements have had on applicants and potential eligible applicants; requests in particular an assessment of whether the reduced rate of pre-financing (from 50 % to 40 % for projects and from 80 % to 50 % for operating grants and national contact points (NCPs)) applied in 2015, owing to an acute shortage of payment appropriations, the need for co-financing and the application of the same parameters irrespective of the actual cost of living and geographical remoteness, may have put – and may continue to put – some types of organisations and specific Member States at a disadvantage; requests, moreover, that they develop further strategies to bring European institutions closer to citizens and to better inform citizens on various EU policies;
16. Notes that a further parameter should be incorporated into the lump sum or flat rate system, so that persons with special needs can be accommodated more effectively, since many more staff and, often, additional measures, which in turn generate higher costs, are needed in order to enable persons with a disability to participate;
17. Underlines that operating grants guarantee independence to beneficiaries (i.e. think tanks) and offer the possibility of long-term planning to realise vision-oriented activities and to develop expertise; recommends the use of specific criteria, indicators and annual reporting to monitor progress towards their goals and to make sure that these funding schemes do not lead to the beneficiary's dependency on the Commission;
18. Calls for the Commission and the EACEA to account publicly for the expenses incurred through strand 3 on Horizontal Action – Valorisation – Analysis, dissemination and use of project results;
19. Invites the Commission and the EACEA to include in the interim evaluation report, due by 31 December 2017, a thorough assessment of the financial and budgetary implementation of the programme and to draw lessons from this assessment with a view to redefining the future goals and adjusting the budgetary requirements of the programme in the next multiannual financial framework;

Coordination and communication aspects

20. Calls on the Commission to gather together all useful information regarding the Europe for Citizens programme (programme guide, priorities, calls for proposals, ongoing and past projects, outcomes and lessons learned, newsletter), along with all the programmes, actions, grants and structural funds that come under the umbrella of European citizenship (such as the European Citizens' Initiative and the European Voluntary Service), in a unique, user-friendly communication portal (one-stop-shop online platform) also accessible to persons with disabilities; recommends that this platform should be used as a public register of the beneficiaries' contact details and as a tool to access the projects' descriptions and to find partners in other countries;
21. Emphasises that rejected applications should be responded to satisfactorily, indicating the reasons for the rejection, especially when the entity that lodged an application asks for an explanation; suggests considering, where possible, the identification of priority issues from similar rejected applications;
22. Points out that certain objectives of the Europe for Citizens programme are similar or complementary to those of the European Citizens' Initiative, in particular the aspiration to involve citizens in the EU; believes, for that reason, that efforts should be made to follow a common approach in designing EU policies on citizens' participation and participatory democracy, supported by a consistent communication strategy, in order to include under one umbrella all the Commission's programmes related to European citizenship, possibly by promoting and enhancing direct experiences and grassroots involvement;
23. Underlines the need to create an open list of potential partners in each Member State in order to facilitate partnerships between those who would like to access the Europe for Citizens programme;
24. Recommends as well the creation of an online platform for the main organisations working in the field of citizenship and benefiting from the programme in order to pool good practices, reinforce capacities and enhance visibility once projects have finished;
25. Calls on the Commission to raise the programme's profile and make the public more aware of its objectives, by implementing an engaging communication strategy for European citizenship – using social networks, radio, TV advertisement and billboards – by reinforcing local engagement with the active involvement of NCPs and by constantly updating content and reaching new audiences in the participating countries, with a particular focus on those in which the level of participation is lower, and on young people, persons with disabilities and vulnerable people;
26. Takes the view that the programme should also serve to publicise existing channels of direct participation in the European Union, such as the European Citizens' Initiative, citizens' forums and public consultations, so as to raise public awareness of the opportunities for direct participation within the EU's institutional framework;
27. Urges the participating countries which have not yet done so to designate a national contact point; recommends reinforcing the coordination and synergy among these countries, the Member States and the Commission;
28. Acknowledges that the biggest challenge is to achieve the current ambitious goals with

the limited funding available; emphasises the importance of the Member States, regions and local governments in increasing the effectiveness and popularity of the programme, including by maximising the potential of the national contact points (NCPs) through an exchange of experience with entities responsible for similar projects, such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe; encourages the EACEA to facilitate and boost, wherever possible, synergies across EU programmes such as Creative Europe, Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund, so as to improve impact;

29. Calls on the Commission to increase to an even greater extent its efforts on administrative simplification, considering that formal requirements are sometimes difficult to overcome for particularly small organisations that should not be discriminated against for bureaucratic reasons;
30. Recommends that the funds allocated to communication should not be used to cover institutional communication of the priorities of the Union, as is currently set out in Article 12 of the present programme, but should be used to publicise the programme itself in the participating countries, especially those in which the level of participation is lower;

Focus and objectives of the programme

31. Recommends, in the next generation programme, formalising the multiannual approach in the definition of the priorities and enhancing synergies among the strands and the components of the programme; stresses that any changes to the structure of the programme should be made in such a way as to prevent the possibility of confusion amongst its end users, thereby reducing its impact;
32. Welcomes the strong focus on citizens and societal aspects of the EU, allowing EU institutions to engage directly with civil society on the ground; highlights within the priorities of the programme the importance of projects focused on current challenges for Europe, on issues such as diversity, migration, refugees, preventing radicalisation, fostering social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, addressing financing problems and identifying the common European cultural legacy; invites the Commission and Member States to strengthen the links between the programme's priorities and the policies linked to European citizenship as well as the daily life of European citizens;
33. Argues that the programme should reach out to a wider range of participants, guarantee the participation of people with special needs, promote the participation of marginalised and disenfranchised people, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
34. Is of the opinion that, where relevant, the programme should build on existing successful grassroots initiatives such as town twinning;
35. Stresses the need to develop – within the ‘European Remembrance’ strand – a European identity that should be oriented towards the future and not only the past, plural, transcultural and open to migration flows and influences from the rest of the world, with a view to achieving a common integration founded on European values and European secular and spiritual heritage; stresses the need to ensure that history is not used as a divisive tool, but as an opportunity to address contemporary challenges through sensitive interpretation and skilful, targeted education programmes; emphasises the

importance of fostering inter-generational projects that allow exchanges of experience between older and younger generations;

36. Stresses the need to encourage projects presenting new formats of discussion with citizens, in an attractive format and style, and with a multidimensional approach;
37. Proposes the yearly publication by the Commission of a synthetic report containing the main proposals to improve the European project voiced by the participants in the projects financed by the 'Europe for Citizens' programme;
38. Stresses the need to enrich the programme with proposals on citizens' participation in the democratic process and in EU decision-making, in a way that contributes to empowering citizens to make use of their rights, for instance through the implementation of e-democracy; calls on the Union and its Member States, in order to achieve this, to develop actions and policies to strengthen transferable, critical and creative thinking skills as well as digital and media literacy, the inclusion of their citizens and stimulate curiosity, especially amongst children and young people, so that they will be able to take informed decisions and make a positive contribution to democratic processes;
39. Points out that participation in the programme by countries seeking EU membership leads to better mutual understanding and closer cooperation; recommends greater internationalisation of the programme, notably by inviting all European Free Trade Association (EFTA), European Economic Area (EEA), accession and candidate countries to join forces with EU Member States in applying for projects, and calls for more cooperation between NGOs from the EU, Eastern and Southern Partnership countries and potential candidates in order to bring the EU closer to citizens; proposes promoting cooperation between organisations in the EU and in neighbouring countries on European values;
40. Stresses the need to develop town twinning, focusing on ways of making greater use of the scheme, its promotion and results, including the adequate allocation of financial resources;
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41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

9.12.2016

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period 2014–2020 (2015/2329(INI))

Rapporteur: Lefteris Christoforou

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Budgets calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the fact that in the first two years of the new funding cycle the Europe for Citizens programme, which is set to bridge the gap between the EU institutions and European citizens, seems to be running well, with a rising number of applicants, high project quality and sound project implementation;
2. Highlights the importance of such programmes in times of permanent crises, when anti-European forces are calling constantly into question the very existence of the European project;
3. Welcomes the simplification of the programme structure, for example through multiannual priority-setting which, overall, has made it simpler for interested citizens and organisations to apply, as well as a number of new financial arrangements, such as a system of lump-sum payments, that have reduced the administrative burden on beneficiaries;
4. Requests the Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) to assess regularly the impact that a number of budgetary arrangements have had on applicants and potential eligible applicants; in particular, requests an assessment of whether the reduced rate of pre-financing (from 50 % to 40 % for projects and from 80 % to 50 % for operating grants and National Contact Points (NCPs)) applied in 2015, owing to an acute shortage of payment appropriations, the need for co-financing and the application of the same parameters irrespective of the actual cost of living and geographical remoteness, may have put – and may continue to put – some types of

organisations and specific Member States at a disadvantage; requests, moreover, that they develop further strategies to bring European institutions closer to European citizens and to better inform citizens on various EU policies;

5. Acknowledges that the biggest challenge is to achieve the current ambitious goals with the limited funding available; therefore encourages NCPs, together with the local and regional authorities associated with them, and the EACEA to facilitate and boost, wherever possible, synergies across EU programmes such as Creative Europe, Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund, so as to generate economies of scale and maximise impact;
6. Invites the Commission and the EACEA to include in the interim evaluation report, due by 31 December 2017, a thorough assessment of the financial and budgetary implementation of the programme and to draw lessons from this assessment with a view to redefining the future goals and adjusting the budgetary requirements of the programme in the next multiannual financial framework;
7. Underlines the importance of keeping operating grants as a way of maintaining structural support to organisations and beneficiaries and allowing them to plan for the long term;
8. Calls on the Commission, the EACEA, NCPs and their local and regional partner authorities, and programme beneficiaries to make additional efforts to enhance visibility and communication by employing the available financial resources in the most efficient way, in order to increase awareness of the programme and reach out even more effectively to citizens in the participating countries, including by improving communication, enhancing the use of social media and covering topics that are currently at the forefront of many citizens' minds, such as jobs, growth and migration.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	8.12.2016
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 5 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Nedzhmi Ali, Richard Ashworth, Jean-Paul Denanot, Gérard Deprez, José Manuel Fernandes, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Jens Geier, Ingeborg Gräßle, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Vladimír Maňka, Clare Moody, Paul Rübig, Petri Sarvamaa, Patricija Šulin, Eleftherios Synadinos, Indrek Tarand, Monika Vana, Marco Zanni
Substitutes present for the final vote	Bill Etheridge, Ivana Maletić, Andrey Novakov, Nils Torvalds, Derek Vaughan
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Xabier Benito Ziluaga, José Blanco López, Edouard Ferrand, Valentinas Mazuronis

9.11.2016

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020 (2015/2329(INI))

Rapporteur: Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Warmly welcomes the applications submitted under the Europe for Citizens programme in 2015, and the quality of the projects; notes, however, that only about 6 % of the European Remembrance and Civil Society projects could be financed in 2015, which indicates that the funding for these two strands should be substantially increased; suggests, in accordance with Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union, which introduces an important dimension of participatory democracy, that participation be increased in the coming years by running promotional campaigns and adopting a substantial, user-friendly communication portal for both European and domestic media that sets out clear information on the priorities and accessibility of the programme and informs European citizens of the existence of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme, encouraging them to consider the benefits thereof and to feel more involved; proposes that applicants be allowed to use e-participation tools;
2. Repeats its call for a stronger role in setting the priorities and objectives of the programme; recommends that the next generation of the Europe for Citizens Programme should have a legal base which enables the European Parliament to take a full part in the legislative process under the ordinary legislative procedure and to be involved in the definition of the priorities of the programme as a co-legislator under the ordinary legislative procedure, on an equal footing with the Council; recommends that the language of the programme be further simplified to make it widely accessible;
3. Stresses that this programme should contribute to citizens' understanding of the Union and its history and diversity, as well as fostering European citizenship and improving the conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level; the programme should,

moreover, raise awareness of remembrance, common history and values and the Union's aim of promoting peace and ensuring in general a broader understanding of the history of the European Union and its origins, including in the aftermath of two world wars; emphasises that it should also encourage democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level by developing citizens' understanding of the Union's policy-making process and promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at Union level; this could be achieved, for example, by organising promotional awareness campaigns, in order to stimulate debate, reflection and the development of networks;

4. Emphasises the importance of the Member States, regions and local governments in increasing the effectiveness and popularity of the programme, including by taking on a greater role in defining the priorities of the programme and maximising the potential of the national contact points (NCP) by making it possible for them to work and exchange experience with entities responsible for similar projects – Erasmus and Creative Europe, for example; calls in addition for greater involvement of the European Parliament, for example in the form of an annual public assessment of programme monitoring within the Culture Committee;
5. Recognises the success of the city twinning projects all over the EU, and calls on the Member States to promote the scheme among municipalities and to facilitate cooperation;
6. Emphasises that rejected applications should be responded to satisfactorily, indicating the reasons for the rejection, especially when the entity that lodged an application asks for an explanation; suggests considering, when possible, identifying priority issues from rejected similar applications;
7. Points out that certain objectives of the Europe for Citizens programme are similar or complementary to those of the European Citizens' Initiative, in particular the aspiration to get citizens involved in the EU; believes, for that reason, that efforts should be made to have a common approach in designing EU policies on citizens' participation and participatory democracy, supported by a consistent communication strategy, in order to include under one umbrella all the Commission's programmes related to European Citizenship, possibly by valuing and enhancing direct experiences and grassroots involvement;
8. Underlines the need to create an open list of potential partners in each Member State in order to facilitate partnerships between those who would like to access the Europe for Citizens Programme;
9. Calls for the removal of language barriers in the process of applying for the programme, and underlines the fact that in spite of the EU's efforts to provide information in all the EU official languages, most of the information is provided in English, French and German;
10. Points out that participation in the programme by countries seeking EU membership leads to better mutual understanding and closer cooperation; recommends more internationalisation of the programme, notably by inviting all EFTA, EEA, accession and candidate countries to join forces with EU Member States in applying for projects, and calls for more cooperation between NGOs from the EU, Eastern Partnership countries and potential candidates in order to bring the EU closer to citizens;

11. Takes the view that the programme should also serve to publicise those channels of direct participation that already exist in the European Union such as: the European Citizens' Initiative, citizens' forums and public consultations, so as to raise public awareness of the possibilities of direct participation within the EU's institutional framework;
12. Underlines the fact that before accession of a country to the European Union takes place, profound, holistic preparation is required concerning issues of remembrance, coming to terms with the past and ensuring the active participation of citizens in civic life in the country concerned;
13. Given the current context of rising Euroscepticism, calls for a simplified procedure for accessing the programme and for increased funding in order to ensure better results;
14. Underlines the great potential of the social networks and social media and calls for their better use as instruments in promoting the values and history of the EU within the Europe for Citizens programme.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	8.11.2016
Result of final vote	+: 18 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Mercedes Bresso, Richard Corbett, Esteban González Pons, Danuta Maria Hübner, Diane James, Ramón Jáuregui Atondo, Constance Le Grip, Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, György Schöpflin, Barbara Spinelli, Claudia Țapardel, Josep-Maria Terricabras, Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski
Substitutes present for the final vote	Max Andersson, Gerolf Annemans, Ashley Fox, Charles Goerens, Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Helmut Scholz
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Pilar Ayuso, Gabriel Mato, Wim van de Camp

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	24.1.2017
Result of final vote	+: 24 -: 5 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Mircea Diaconu, Angel Dzhambazki, Jill Evans, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, John Procter, Michaela Šojdrová, Yana Toom, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Łybacka
Substitutes present for the final vote	Therese Comodini Cachia, Sylvie Guillaume, Emma McClarkin