

Faced with new Challenges; Innovations to strength citizens' rights

1. After many years, the Treaty of Lisbon has finally established the European Parliament as a truly functioning legislative body within the governance system of the European Union.

2. The Treaty of Lisbon introduces a number of valuable innovations, in particular:

- A new procedure for nominating the Commission President and the Commissioners
- Virtually universal legislative co-decision with qualified majority voting within the Council
- Greater transparency of the Council's legislative processes
- Improvement in the transparency procedures and access to public documents
- Stability of the European Council Presidency
- A more democratic budgetary procedure
- Reinforced right of petition

3. Having regard to these treaty innovations and to ever-growing global challenges, the role and place of civil society equally has to evolve in the context of European citizenship.

4. Enhancing citizenship rights

4.1 Consultative referenda

a. A large number of participants are in favour of granting competence to the European Parliament to organise EU-wide consultative referenda on European matters. Such referenda would function on the basis of an absolute majority of votes cast or a double majority system (such as provided for in the Treaty of Lisbon for voting in Council). Other participants are opposed to the idea of referenda, notably because of the complexity, cost and possibly conflicts of legitimacy.

4.2 Election of the President of the European Commission

Some participants support the idea of directly electing, in a separate vote, the President of the European Commission by universal suffrage at the same time with the European Parliament elections; others prefer that the election of the President of the Commission be based on the principle of parliamentary democracy, as foreseen in the Treaty of Lisbon.

4.3 Participatory democracy

The workshop proposes the creation of several instruments whose objectives would be to reach out to the citizens in a more effective way, and at the same time strengthen the European public space. Amongst these we emphasise the following:

- An interactive website in which citizens could participate in debates related to ongoing legislative processes and activities of the European Union. This website should be administrated by the European Parliament.
- Work on developing civic education and introducing decentralized pluralistic information and involvement.
- Supporting the Citizens' AGORA by making it permanent and with an interinstitutional character
- Strengthening all instruments which guarantee transparency

4.4 The workshop drew attention to the provisions of both the Charter of Fundamental Rights and of the Treaty on the core EU value of *non-discrimination*, in particular in respect of linguistic and cultural diversity.

5. Interdependence of the European citizens:

The workshop proposes the formulation by 2009 of a Declaration on European Citizenship by the European Parliament, with the assistance of the Citizens' AGORA. This could comprise the following elements:

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- Solidarity between the citizens and territories of Europe in their efforts to build a common future;
- Defining the rights and duties of each and every person within the context of European citizenship, whatever their nationality.
- Given the overriding need for sustainable development, an “*organised synergy*”, based on networks, should be established between those who define standards, socially responsible investors and consumers of sustainable products and services
- An worldwide eco-vision for the future of the Union (i.e. a comprehensive sustainable development strategy)

6. Powers of the Parliament

The workshop proposes strengthening of the right of legislative initiative of the European Parliament, building on progress recently made in the Treaty of Lisbon.

The C Workshop (Instruments) makes the following recommendations to the plenary sitting of the Citizens' AGORA:

- ❑ We support the mechanism of the CITIZENS' AGORA, as initiated by the European Parliament, and its continuation with the involvement of other EU institutions.
- ❑ We ask that the European Parliament and the CITIZENS' AGORA should undertake the drafting of a Declaration on European Citizenship by 2009.
- ❑ We urge that enhanced citizenship rights (see above) be formalised in the Treaties.
- ❑ As the European Parliament is becoming a full legislative body of a two chamber system, we invite the Council of the European Union to also adapt its own procedures as regards to accessibility, transparency and accountability.
- ❑ We believe that the European Parliament should obtain two fundamental modifications to its powers:
 - a) The power of formally ratifying, on behalf of European citizens, any European Union treaty or treaty affecting the European Union before it comes into force;
 - b) The power of deciding to hold EU-wide consultative referenda, after having consulted the Commission and the Council..
