



European Year of Citizens: raising awareness of EU citizens' rights

Committees: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

2013 has been designated European Year of Citizens, with the aim of raising awareness of the rights linked to EU citizenship, under an agreement between Parliament and Council endorsed on Monday by the Civil Liberties Committee. Events will be organised during the Year to explain the rights of citizens who decide to go and live in another member state, in particular students, workers, businesspeople and retired persons.

Every citizen in the European Union enjoys a set of rights under the EU treaties, including the right to move and reside freely in another member state, the right to vote and stand as a candidate in European and local elections and the right to petition the European Parliament, but EU citizens are often unaware of these rights. The European Parliament called for 2013 to be designated European Year of Citizens in order to educate the general public, in particular young people, in how they can benefit from them.

"This gives a new momentum to the debate on Union citizenship at times of economic, political and social crisis and puts informed and effective exercise of all rights attached to Union citizenship at the centre of the political agenda", commented EP rapporteur Antigoni Papadopoulou (S&D, CY), after the report was adopted with 45 votes in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

"Participative democracy is a very important element, also in view of the forthcoming European elections in 2014. EU citizens must be fully aware and enjoy without discrimination the broad array of rights granted to them under Union law" she added.

The activities organised for the European Year of Citizens will focus on explaining the rights linked to moving to and living in other EU countries, such as the recognition of academic and professional qualifications, passengers' and consumers' rights, access to cross-border healthcare and social security and opportunities such as the Erasmus programme, enabling young people to study abroad.

Events during the Year will include hearings, conferences and education and awareness-raising campaigns. Platforms will also be set up for authorities at EU, national, regional and local level and other public and civil society organisations to share their experience.

Background

The EU treaties confer a number of rights on every European citizen, including those:

- to move between all the member states and to reside freely in any member state;
- to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in his or her country of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that state;
- to request the Commission to propose legislation (under the Citizens' Initiative);

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- to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of any member state in a non-EU country in which his or her own country is not represented, under the same conditions as nationals of that state;

- to petition the European Parliament, to seek redress from the European Ombudsman and to contact institutions of the Union, as well as a series of rights in fields such as the free movement of goods and services, consumer protection and public health, equal opportunities and equal treatment, and access to employment and to social protection.

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In the chair: Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES)

Procedure: codecision (first-reading agreement)

Plenary vote: October

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