



**2015/2329(INI)**

17.10.2016

## **DRAFT 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 programme<sup>1</sup>**

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 December 2006, the EfC Programme was initially established for the period 2007-2013<sup>2</sup> 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' concerns<sup>3</sup>. 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.*'<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 2016-2020<sup>1</sup> 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 system of lump sum replaced the budget-based financing used during the previous programme period. 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 survivors’ organisations), as well as cultural, youth, educational and research organisations. It provides EU financial support for a wide variety of projects and

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<sup>1</sup> See website of the EfC Programme website of EACEA: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens_en).

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

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 elsewhere<sup>1</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 programme<sup>1</sup>**

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 from 24 to 21 persons at EACEA, 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 2014-2020<sup>1</sup> 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)<sup>2</sup> 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**

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 programme<sup>1</sup> 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 public<sup>2</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period 2014-2020<sup>1</sup>,
  - 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 (A8-0000/2016),
- A. whereas the Europe for Citizens programme is a unique and highly symbolic programme, as it is a listening exercise on civil society’s debate and critical thinking about the European project;
- B. whereas the Europe for Citizens programme aims to strengthen a sense of European citizenship, enhance mutual tolerance and promote a better understanding of the EU;
- C. whereas the current rise of ‘Euroscepticism’ – which culminated recently in the vote in favour of Brexit – reinforces the need to encourage civic participation and to launch an in-depth debate on European values, while highlighting the opportunities brought about by belonging to the EU;
- D. whereas in line with Article 11 TEU, the EU institutions are bound to give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action; whereas this provision also entails the EU institutions’ obligation to have an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society and the Commission’s duty to carry out broad consultations with stakeholders;
- E. whereas Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p. 3.

establishes the fundamental status of Union citizenship and details the rights attached to it, and whereas in order to empower citizens to fully enjoy these rights, a better understanding of the EU is an important precondition;

- F. whereas the current programme is founded on Article 352 TFEU, which only gave Parliament the right to express its position under the consent procedure and was vigorously contested by Parliament at the time the proposal was submitted by the Commission;
- G. 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 enabled initiatives that could not have been funded elsewhere;
- H. 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;
- I. whereas as a consequence of the reduction in the financial envelope, the number of projects that were able to be financed in 2014 fell by almost 25 % compared to the previous programme;
- J. 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;

### ***Main conclusions***

1. Underlines that the overall funding available (EUR 185.47 million) to the only programme entirely dedicated 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);
2. Recognises that the main obstacle to the successful implementation of the programme is the 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;
3. 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 were able to 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;
4. Welcomes the Europe for Citizens newsletter and the database on funded projects, launched by the Commission;

5. Highlights the fact that the Europe for Citizens' National Contact Points (NCPs) have an important role in raising awareness and providing support and guidance to potential applicants (in particular first-time applicants in target countries);
6. Welcomes the multidisciplinary approach of the programme, its clear and simple application form and reporting requirements and its focus on specific activities;
7. 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);
8. 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;

## ***Recommendations***

### *Financial aspects of implementation*

9. Considers that, given the low rate of success of the European Remembrance and Civil Society projects in the Europe for Citizens programme (6 %, as against 19.64 % for Culture and 45.6 % for MEDIA in the Creative Europe programme), a 60 % increase in the current budget would be necessary in order to achieve a target rate of 20 % of funded projects; calls, therefore, on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to consider a total financial envelope of approximately EUR 300 million for the Europe for Citizens programme under the next MFF;
10. Recommends that another source of funding be found for the Europe for Citizens Initiative (ECI), which is currently financed under the Europe for Citizens budget;
11. Notes that the lump sum or flat rate system should take into consideration the price differences across the EU, depending on the costs of living in the Member States; recommends rethinking this scheme in order to ensure the sustainability of the funded projects and to better support cooperation among local administrations or organisations at a wider distance, especially smaller organisations with limited financial capacity and participants with special needs;
12. 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;

### *Coordination and communication aspects*

13. 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, outcome 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); 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;

14. Calls on the Commission to implement an engaging communication strategy for European citizenship by using social networks, constantly updating the content and reaching new audiences in the participating countries, especially those in which the level of participation is lower;
15. 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;
16. 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*

17. 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 changing the structure of the programme might lead to confusion and reduce its impact;
18. Welcomes the strong focus on citizens and societal aspects of the EU, allowing EU institutions to directly engage 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 migration, social inclusion and intercultural dialogue;
19. 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, with a view to achieving common secular integration;
20. Stresses the need to enrich the programme with proposals regarding citizens' participation in the democratic process and in EU decision-making, for instance through the implementation of e-democracy;
21. Recommends more internationalisation of the programme and proposes to promote cooperation between organisations in the EU and in neighbouring countries;

#### *Legal aspects of implementation*

22. 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 equal footing with the Council; encourages the Commission to think of possible solutions to achieve this objective;

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23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.