



“I’M GOING EUROPEAN”

AN ECI TO CONNECT YOUR NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

INTRODUCTION

This ECI demands a right for everyone, and not just the few, to have a basic knowledge about the EU and their European Citizenship from an early age. Theory is not enough! This should be put into practice with a right to take advantage of what Europe has to offer. Being an active European citizen should be for everyone living in the EU and not just for those who are fortunate enough and have the skills and opportunities. Only an inclusive approach will make European citizenship a real democratic citizenship. This is consistent with repeated resolutions of the European Parliament and recommendations from the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE).

We ask the Commission to:

- Propose through participatory democracy practice a European law, under Article 25 TFEU, for all Member States to introduce a right for every child to education in European Citizenship and the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;
- Give everyone who desires it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put this knowledge to good use and explore what Europe has to offer;
- Back up this law by measures to:
 - introduce a European civic education requirement in EU legislation on freedom of movement, and the protection of European values.
 - provide a Statute on European Citizenship as a model for civic education;
 - create a centre of excellence for exchange of best practice in quality education and teacher training.

Legal basis:


Article 25 TFEU (Adding new rights to Union Citizenship)

Amendments to existing EU laws

Articles 165-166 TFEU (education) for the incentive measures to support Member States

The introduction of Union citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty with its emphasis on European values and the Lisbon Treaty where it highlights the rights of the child.

BACKGROUND



This European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) aims to ensure that from an early age everyone in the EU is equipped with the necessary competence and given the opportunity to take advantage of what Europe has to offer. It is high time to do so since this year marks the 30th anniversary of the introduction of Union citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty, Civil Society Organisations and teachers have pointed repeatedly to the need to give more priority to civic education and close a gap between the rhetoric of the EU and actual practice, which is rare, scattered and highly variable across the 27 EU Member States. The EU supports fine projects to create active European citizens, but those carrying them out often find that the basic knowledge and competence to participate are lacking alarmingly. The European public sphere doesn't have enough public. Those with the knowledge don't want to remain a privileged minority. If European citizenship has meaning, it should be for all. With the rise of extremist and populist political parties, the urgency of quality European citizenship education in human rights and democracy has never been so apparent.

If successful, this ECI will:

- Support efforts to give more priority to citizenship education;
- Help popularise the first transnational citizenship of the modern era by bringing it into the classroom and civil society;
- Ensure that the next generation has the skills, critical awareness, and the opportunity to bring about a more democratic Europe.

OUR PROPOSAL

The Commission can act on these proposals under the Maastricht Treaty (1993) which added Treaty articles on Union Citizenship and the Lisbon Treaty (2007) which introduced the rights of the child.

We demand:

- A proposal for a European law by which Member States would give every child a right to an age-appropriate education about the EU and European Citizenship. There is a precedent with a European guarantee to protect children against poverty. This ECI is more about promoting their interests and the guarantee would be elevated to the status of a right. The law should be brought in after widespread consultation of parents, teachers, civil society and above all children themselves. There should be extensive online consultation, local meetings and a European citizens' assembly randomly selected to be representative. This process should define the right to access the European rights which make up European citizenship. A commitment to formal education should in no way diminish the role that non-formal EU citizenship education plays, which allows for a hands-on approach, and highly motivated engagement from students and trainers. Rather this proposal suggests expanding outreach.

The European law should be based on the following principles:


- Union citizenship is additional to and in no way replaces national citizenship, so the European dimension should be added to the existing civic education courses and efforts in and out of school. Responsibility as to how to do this should be left to each country given their different approaches. What matters is the result.
- The latitude given to each country should be balanced by a requirement to provide the Commission and other Member States with information about their programmes and an assessment of the results. This should be carried out in terms of Article 25 TFEU every three years with the EU Citizenship Report.
- European citizenship education remains theoretical unless every EU citizen and resident in Europe is offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put it into practice. Every person in Europe, if desired, should be able to spend up to 6 months in another European country for the purpose of study, training or work, benefitting from the same grant given to Erasmus students. This is consistent with EU policies both to enlarge Erasmus and introduce life-long learning. Going European means so much more to all those who would not normally have the opportunity.

There should be further action by the EU to back up this law:

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- A European citizenship education clause should be added where relevant to existing EU legislation. The starting point should be laws on free movement of EU citizens and their family members, long-standing migrant workers from outside the EU, and also refugees and displaced persons. The millions of children and adults who have fled the war in Ukraine is an immediate concern. There is already an EU directive on language teaching of children of mobile workers which can serve as a precedent. There are no legal obstacles to adding such a clause to legislation for defending European values. In this way, the EU would implement the CoFoE demands.
 - The Commission should provide a common framework to be adapted by each country. Across the EU, the history and approaches to our respective citizenships are diverse, whilst at the European level a citizenship of rights, participation and belonging appears distant and scattered, meaning different things to different people. There should be no single model, but there should be at least a common framework and consensus. To support educational efforts, the Commission should produce a Statute on European Citizenship – a long-standing demand of the ECIT foundation already supported by the CoFoE and the European Parliament most recently in its report on “Parliamentarianism, European Citizenship and Democracy”.
 - These steps should be backed by incentives from the EU for teacher training in the European dimension of civic education, which is currently lacking on any sufficient scale. A Centre of Excellence is needed to act as a focal point to scale up examples of best practice and complement the work of the Council of Europe.

Finally, if our proposal calls for European citizenship education as a new right for all to be backed by strengthening existing EU laws and incentives, other reforms can also support this objective. The most important of these would be to generalise the possibility to vote in European elections and sign an ECI such as this from the age of 16.

By signing this ECI, you will be claiming a right to a European citizenship which will bring you and future generations a tangible benefit and the hope of a better Europe.



CITIZENS' COMMITTEE: Tony Venables(Belgium), Kalypso Nicolaidis(Italy) Julian Culp(France), Gosia Wochowska,(Germany) Carla Donohue(Ireland), Alicja Pacewicz (Poland), Gatis Pavils (Latvia), Miklos Barabas, (Hungary)