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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council
Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the EU Citizenship Report 2017 - adoption

1. On 31 January 2017, the Commission submitted to the Council its report entitled 'Strengthening Citizens' Rights in a Union of Democratic Change - EU Citizenship Report 2017' ('EU Citizenship Report 2017')¹.
2. On 7 February 2017, the Commission presented the report to the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens Rights and Free Movement of Persons ('FREMP').

¹ 5549/17 REV1.

3. In line with the practice followed for the EU Citizenship Report 2013, the Presidency decided to draw up draft Council conclusions.
4. At its meeting on 31 March 2017, FREMP examined the abovementioned draft conclusions (WK 2680/2017). A revised version of the conclusions (WK 2680/2017 REV1) was discussed by FREMP at the meeting on 12 April 2017, and an agreement in principle was reached.
5. Following the Commission Report, the draft Council conclusions deal with a variety of different issues. They highlight the fact that all European institutions and Member States must build on previous commitments², and join forces to promote, protect and strengthen EU citizenship and EU common values, increase and improve citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU, simplify EU citizens' daily lives and strengthen security, promote equality and protect everybody in the EU from general and specific forms of discrimination.
6. In the light of the above, COREPER is requested to invite the Council to adopt the conclusions as set out in the Annex to this note.

² EUCO 79/14, 5860/17 (European Solidarity Corps), 9543/2014 (violence against women), 15406/16 (Roma), 10417/17 (LGBTI).

Draft Council conclusions on the EU Citizenship Report 2017***1. Introduction***

Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law; and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, tolerance and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity reinforce the European way of life and are crucial in shaping a European identity.

EU citizenship is an essential part of the European identity. Against this background the Council reiterates its 2013¹ conclusions. Promoting, protecting and strengthening EU citizenship rights remain key priorities for the EU, which should be reinforced.

The Council welcomes the progress made in implementing the priorities set out in the 2013 Citizenship Report and acknowledges the efforts made by the Commission and the Member States to promote EU rights common values and solidarity between Europeans, fostering the trust of Europe's citizens in the common European project.

The Council welcomes the Commission's 2017 EU Citizenship Report² as a roadmap for the period 2017-2019 highlighting the following priorities in particular:

- a) promoting, protecting and strengthening EU citizenship rights and EU common values, including through a wide-reaching awareness raising campaign;
- b) increasing and improving citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU;

¹ Doc. 16187/13.

² Doc. 5549/17 REV1.

- c) simplifying EU citizens' daily lives, in particular by removing legal, procedural and technological barriers; and
 - d) strengthening security and promoting equality, and protecting everybody in the EU from discrimination.
2. The Council highlights the fact that all European institutions and Member States must join forces to achieve these objectives, since ensuring Europeans' rights in practice is a common goal and a joint responsibility

The Council

2.1 invites the Commission to:

further pursue the priorities set forth in the 2017 EU Citizenship report and to continue its efforts in promoting EU citizenship and removing obstacles to citizens' enjoyment of their EU rights, and in particular to:

- a) continue to support, develop and ensure the best possible impact of programmes³ funding actions that promote and raise awareness and knowledge of the rights deriving from EU citizenship and its underlying values;
- b) conduct in 2017-2018 an EU-wide information and awareness-raising campaign on EU citizenship rights, including on consular protection and electoral rights ahead of the 2019 European elections;
- c) continue to monitor and assess whether any action at EU level is needed to further protect and promote rights deriving from EU citizenship and its underlying values;
- d) intensify Citizens' Dialogues and encourage public debates, involving as far as possible national, regional and local communicators, to facilitate and improve public understanding of the impact of the EU on citizens' daily lives;

³ Including the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and Europe for Citizens Programme.

- e) promote and enhance citizens' participation in the democratic life, including by:
 - i) promoting best practices implemented in the Member States to help citizens vote or stand in EU elections and consider developing a multilingual standard form to facilitate the swift exchange of information between Member States' designated contact points about the right of citizens to stand as a candidate when residing in another Member State, as referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 6 of Directive 93/109/EC (as amended by Directive 2013/1/EU);
 - ii) cross-border access to political news,
 - iii) specific measures fostering turn-out, including of under-represented groups of voters such as for example first-time voters and women;
- f) swiftly draw final conclusions from the broad review process for the European citizen's initiative that followed the first implementation Report and present proposals with the aim to improve the ECI and to enhance the ECI's user-friendliness, both by practical and legal measures, especially concerning technical provisions, e.g. timelines, taking into account contributions made by institutions, Member States and civil society. The status of and the progress on ECI should be reflected in the next citizenship report;
- g) follow the good example set with the EU Citizenship Report 2017 and publish its documents in all official languages so that the citizens can read these documents in their native language across the EU;
- h) continue its efforts in ensuring better functioning of existing civil law rules concerning in particular:
 - i) international successions by continuing to raise awareness on the correct efficient application of the Union rules on successions,

- ii) encouraging third states to accede to and implement effectively the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;
- i) foster social inclusion and mobility of young people across Europe by developing, promoting and strengthening programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Voluntary Service;
- j) foster the professional development of teachers, including through providing online platforms for sharing good practices and developing joint cross-border projects among peers ('School Education' Gateway, 'Teacher Academy', 'Open Education' Europe, e-Twinning);
- k) further facilitate interoperability and promote EU-wide multimodal travel in order to make mobility of EU citizens, including for persons with reduced mobility, more efficient and user-friendly, through improvements to the interoperability and compatibility of systems and services, and by promoting third party access to ticketing;
- l) strengthen the security of citizens through continuing to support implementation of the European Agenda on Security and to improve where necessary the security of identity, residence and travel documents;
- m) continue to monitor the situation to ensure that EU rules, in particular the 2012 Victims' Rights Directive and the 2011 Anti-Trafficking Directive, are implemented correctly so that victims can fully rely on their rights in practice;
- n) present the initiative to address the challenges of work-life balance for working families included in the European Pillar of Social Rights, as announced in the Commission Work Programme and promote equality between women and men;

- o) promote and encourage EU citizens to use existing tools to access EU institutions' documents, (in particular the public registers created pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001⁴);

2.2 invites the Member States to:

- a) promote EU citizenship and the values and rights attached to it, involving as far as possible civil society, and support EU citizens in their enjoyment of these rights;
- b) support and take part in the EU-wide information and awareness-raising campaign on EU citizenship rights, including on consular protection and electoral rights ahead of the 2019 European elections;
- c) enhance citizens' participation in the EU democratic process, for example by better informing them of their rights to vote in local and European elections and by removing barriers to their participation;
- d) act in accordance with the principle of sincere cooperation and respect the limits set out by the Court of Justice when granting or removing nationality (thus granting or removing EU citizenship);

⁴ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, pp. 43–48.

- e) ensure correct and timely transposition of the Directive on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the Union in third countries⁵;
- f) better assist EU citizens on the move by ensuring that local administrations take into account the simplified requirements for presenting certain public documents⁶, such as for example through online submission, and cutting red tape in family law by putting in place necessary measures in the best interest of the child;
- g) support the Commission on its proposal setting up a single digital gateway that will give access to information on single market rights and obligations and ensure that the most important procedures for citizens and business can be completed online, also by cross-border users;
- h) enhance mutual recognition of decisions and judgments in civil and criminal matters;
- i) support the Commission in making tools available to citizens and legal practitioners, aiming at raising awareness and facilitating the application of Union law in the area of civil justice, in particular through the European Judicial Network in civil and commercial matters;
- j) examine the reinforcement of the rights of persons, notably children, in proceedings to facilitate enforcement of judgements in family law and in civil and commercial matters with cross-border implications⁷;

⁵ Directive (EU) 2015/637 on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the Union in third countries and repealing Decision 95/553/EC, OJ L 106, 24.4.2015, pp. 1–13.

⁶ Regulation (EU) No 2016/1191 of 6 July 2016 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the European Union, OJ L 200, 26.7.2016, pp. 1–136.

⁷ According to the European Council conclusions from 17-18 March 2016 (EUCO 79/14).

- k) implement the EU Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018 in close cooperation with the Commission, in particular activities aimed at fostering active citizenship and enhancing stronger participation of all young people in the European democratic and civic life⁸;
- l) promote development of skills, cross-border education, training and volunteering experiences⁹ and contribute to removing obstacles for students, trainees, teachers and other workers, and across the EU, through better understanding and transparency of skills and qualifications;
- m) in full respect of fundamental rights and personal data protection, effectively implement the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020¹⁰;
- n) send a stronger message of zero tolerance for all forms of violence against women¹¹, and follow the Commission's initiative to dedicate 2017 to combating violence against women;
- o) honour their obligations and commitment to combat discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age and sexual orientation;
- p) to take further steps in order to improve, in close cooperation with the Commission the economic and social inclusion and integration of Roma in the EU¹².

⁸ In line with the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018, OJ 2015/C 417/01.

⁹ In accordance with the Council Conclusions on investing in Europe's youth with particular regard to the European Solidarity Corps (Doc. 5860/17).

¹⁰ Doc. 9798/15.

¹¹ In line with the Council Conclusions adopted in 2010 (on the eradication of violence against women in the European Union and on improving prevention to tackle violence against women and care to its victims within the scope of law enforcement) and 2014 (Doc. 9543/2014).

¹² Working within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (OJ C 258, 2.9.2011, p. 6) and in line with the commitments made at the EU level, including, most recently, the Council Recommendation adopted in 2013 (OJ C 378, 24.12.2013, p. 1) and the Council Conclusions adopted in 2016 (Doc. 15406/16).