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**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 2013 European Year of  
Citizens**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Decision establishing the European Year of Citizens 2013,<sup>1</sup> this report offers an overview of its implementation, results and overall achievements. It also builds on insights from the *ex post* evaluation of the Year carried out for the Commission by an external contractor.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1. Context

The concept of ‘citizenship of the Union’ was first introduced in 1993 by the Treaty of Maastricht. The subsequent Treaties of Amsterdam (1999) and Lisbon (2009) further strengthened the rights associated with Union citizenship. However, although the rights of freedom of movement and of residence are now well established in both primary and secondary Union law, there are still gaps between the applicable legal rules and the reality citizens face when they seek to exercise those rights in daily life. In particular, Union citizens are still confronted by too many practical obstacles when they choose to live and work in another Member State.

In its *EU Citizenship Report 2010*,<sup>3</sup> the Commission addressed these obstacles, in particular as regards cross-border situations, and outlined 25 concrete measures to remove them. Among other things, it concluded that insufficient information prevented Union citizens from enjoying their rights, in particular the right of freedom of movement.

In its Resolution of 15 December 2010,<sup>4</sup> the European Parliament called on the Commission to make 2013 the European Year of Citizens ‘*in order to give momentum to the debate on European citizenship and inform EU citizens of their rights, in particular the new rights resulting from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon*’.

It was therefore appropriate, 20 years on from the Maastricht Treaty, to designate 2013 as the European Year of Citizens, ‘*to enhance awareness of the rights attached to Union citizenship, in order to help citizens make full use of their right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States*’.<sup>5</sup> This objective was all the more relevant given the upcoming (2014) European elections, in which all Union citizens were entitled to vote and stand.

In line with *Communicating Europe in Partnership*<sup>6</sup>, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission identified the 2013

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<sup>1</sup> Decision No 1093/2012/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on the European Year of Citizens (2013), OJ L 325, 23.11.2012, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Evaluation of the European Year of Citizens 2013*, PPMI, Euréval and Occurrence, June 2014.

<sup>3</sup> *Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens’ rights*, European Commission, COM(2010) 603 final, 27 October 2010.

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2010 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (2009) — effective implementation after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009/2161(INI)), OJ C 169 E, 15.6.2012, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Article 2 – Objectives of the above mentioned Decision.

<sup>6</sup> Political declaration signed by the three institutions on 22.10.2008 - OJ C 13 of 20.01.2009.

European Year of Citizens as one of their 2013/2014 inter-institutional communication priorities.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Year**

The following specific objectives were set for the European Year of Citizens 2013 (hereinafter 'EYC2013'):

- to raise Union citizens' awareness of their right to move and reside freely within the European Union and more generally their rights in cross-border situations, including the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union;
- to raise Union citizens' awareness of how they can tangibly benefit from Union rights and policies while living in another Member State, and to stimulate their active participation in civic fora on Union policies and issues; and
- to stimulate debate about the impact and potential of the right to free movement as an inalienable aspect of Union citizenship, in particular in terms of strengthening societal cohesion and mutual understanding between Union citizens and the bond between citizens and the Union.

EYC2013 was meant to show that Union citizenship is not an empty concept, but a fundamental status of nationals of the Member States involving tangible rights and benefits for them (as individuals, consumers, workers, students, volunteers, political actors, etc.).

By extension, EYC2013 would also emphasise that Union citizens themselves have a critical role to play in strengthening those rights through their participation in civil society and democratic life.

## **1.3. EYC2013 resources**

The Commission Decision<sup>7</sup> adopting the 2013 annual work programme for EYC2013 allocated a budget of EUR 1 million to fund activities addressing its specific objectives.

Following the adoption of the European Union's general budget for the financial year 2013, an amendment of the work programme<sup>8</sup> provided an additional EUR 1 million so that the scope of the activities could be widened

In anticipation of EYC2013, a budget of EUR 750 000 had been made available in 2012 as an EYC preparatory action. DG COMM was able to mobilise an additional EUR 1.2 million from the budget of the Europe for Citizens programme.

Of the EUR 3 842 849.92 of funds committed, 79 % was used for activities relating to the EU-wide information and communication campaign, while the other 21 % was divided between action grants to support the European Year of Citizens Alliance (EYCA) of civil society organisations, the EYC2013 launching and the closing

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<sup>7</sup> C(2012) 8607 of 29 November 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Commission Decision C(2013) 1409 final of 5 March 2013.

conferences under the Irish and Lithuanian Presidencies of the EU, respectively, and a contract for the external evaluation of EYC2013 activities.

#### **1.4. The main stakeholders and partners in the EYC2013 campaign**

##### *1.4.1. National contact points*

As in previous European Years, Member States were asked to appoint national contact points to help coordinate EYC2013-related activities with interested parties at the national, regional and local levels. However, the limited budgetary resources did not allow for financial support to be given to national authorities to help run the campaign at national level.

All but two of the Member States<sup>9</sup> appointed a national contact point. In many countries, the contact points became active participants and in most cases they worked closely with the Commission Representation and the European Parliament's Information Office, as well as the national partner agencies of the Commission's main communications service provider.<sup>10</sup>

In some cases (e.g. in Austria and Italy), the national contact points produced special information leaflets or booklets to inform citizens about their EU rights, while in others (e.g. in Ireland and Portugal) they organised national series of Citizens' Dialogues, inspired by the Commission's Union-wide Citizens' Dialogues.

##### *1.4.2. Civil society organisations*

Many civil society organisations are active in the areas of civic engagement and European integration at both EU and national levels. The setting-up of EYCA, the largest-ever grouping of such organisations, was a key feature of EYC2013. EYCA brought together 62 EU-level member organisations and national and EU-level networks<sup>11</sup> representing more than 4 500 organisations in 50 countries across Europe.

In acting on the two axes of its work programme ('*enhancing participation by informing citizens through civil society*' and '*developing a policy agenda for citizens in Europe by citizens and making their voice heard*') with all its members at EU and national level, EYCA was a valuable strategic partner for the Commission in implementing EYC2013, providing vital insights from the points of view of civil society.

##### *1.4.3. Commission services and Representations*

The Commission brought together many of its internal departments in a series of meetings to prepare for and help run EYC2013 activities, and to identify opportunities for cooperation around EYC2013-related themes.

<sup>9</sup> Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> An external contractor, the Berlin-based company Media Consulta, supported the Commission in the overall communication strategy for the Year and in the coordination and follow-up of some national communication campaigns, civil society activities and high-visibility events.

<sup>11</sup> A full list of EYCA members at EU and national level can be found at: <http://ey2013-alliance.eu/>.

The Commission Representations played a key strategic role in ensuring EYC2013-related outreach at national, regional and local level, and smooth coordination with national actors in terms of content, logistics, media (including social media) outreach, monitoring and reporting.

They also played a pivotal role in the organisation of the Citizens' Dialogues, a new communication tool which they promoted with 'flanking events' to prepare interested citizens to take an active part in the debates.

In a number of Member States, they enjoyed the active support of their national network of Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs).

#### 1.4.4. Other EU institutions

Throughout the year, Members of the European Parliament attended EYC2013-related events, at both EU and national level, in particular the series of Citizens' Dialogues. European Parliament Information Offices (EPIOs) played their part in implementing the EYC2013 campaign.

The Committee of the Regions was the first to kick off formal EYC2013 activities, holding a forum on *Regions and cities ready for the European Year 2013: Citizens' Agenda going local* on 28 November 2012.<sup>12</sup>

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) actively supported the campaign throughout the year, starting with its *Your Europe 2013* Open Space event on 23-24 January 2013.<sup>13</sup> It organised a further high-profile event around its 2013 Civil Society Day (*As European as we can get! Bringing economy, solidarity and democracy together*).<sup>14</sup>

### 1.5. The importance of partnerships, pro bono activities and voluntary effort for the EYC2013 success

The external evaluator concluded that EYC2013 involved many different actors in many varied ways and that this helped mitigate the constraints imposed by what was a modest budget for an awareness-raising campaign for over 507 million people across 28 Member States (with the accession of Croatia on 1 July 2013).

A strategy of alliances based on multiple stakeholders' commitment to cooperating and contributing at European and national to local levels provided key leverage that enabled the campaign to be run with limited resources. Without these partnerships, according to the external evaluators, this could not have been done.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/forums/Pages/citizens-agenda-local.aspx>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-youreurope2013>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-civil-society-day-2013>.

### **Getting local: the importance of partnerships**

Spain's 19 Faces for Europe project was one of the largest-scale partnership activities during the Year. It was initiated by the Commission Representation in Madrid and the Spanish national contact point in close cooperation with the Spanish Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) and supported by the Commission's main communications service provider (through its Spanish partner agency).

The project identified one person per Spanish region (there are 19), each of whom had a story illustrating how they are a citizen of Europe. The stories of these '19 Faces' appeared in a brochure distributed to all Spanish EDICs.

Pictures of the 19 Faces were unveiled on the façade of the EU institutions' shared building on a major arterial road in Madrid on 26 November 2013, in the presence of major media outlets, city officials, passers-by and key representatives from the Commission, the European Parliament, Spanish EYC2013 Ambassadors, Faces of the Year and Spokespersons. Simultaneously, 19 press releases (one for each region) were distributed to local and regional media, and one main media release for the national media.

The activity resulted in over 40 news items, across TV, radio and online press. A video record was made of the installation, along with interviews with some of the officials present, and played at official events.

The evaluator noted that stakeholders made considerable contributions, notably through voluntary work or on their own financial resources. This was particularly true of EYCA national members that adjusted their activities (events, seminars, workshops) in line with EYC2013 priorities.

The Commission's main communications service provider also pursued numerous opportunities for *pro bono* awareness-raising activities through its network of national partner agencies; various enterprises across the Union offered free air-time on radio, free or heavily-discounted billboard space on public thoroughfares, and similar gestures of support.

### **1.6. Complementarities between EYC2013 and other EU programmes and initiatives**

According to the external evaluation, the level of ambition combined with an overall very limited budget<sup>15</sup> called for creativity on the part of all concerned, who systematically looked for complementarities between EU programmes/initiatives and related teams. One of the specificities of EYC2013 was the number and intensity of synergies achieved.

This was particularly the case for the Youth on the Move campaign. A common visual identity was developed and special EYC2013 animations were created and funded by the EYC2013 budget to support 16 events in different Member States,<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> To be compared with the budget of previous European Years: 2007 Equal Opportunities for All (EUR 22.5 million) - 2008 Intercultural Dialogue (EUR 10 million) - 2010 Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EUR 17.25 million) - 2011 Volunteering (EUR 10.75 million) or 2012 Active ageing and Solidarity between Generations (EUR 5 million).

<sup>16</sup> Palma de Mallorca (ES), 26–28 March; Volos (EL), 18–20 April; Paris (FR), 9–10 May; Brussels (BE), 28–30 June; Spa (BE), 17–21 July; Burgas (BG), 25–28 July; Sventoji (LT), 8–11 August; Marseille (FR), 27–29 September; Košice (SK), 3–5 October; Liège (BE), 17–19 October; Burgos

with EYC2013 Ambassadors or Faces of the Year actively contributing to panel debates on the themes of the Year. These events also provided an opportunity to disseminate publications on EU citizenship-related issues.

The European Youth Week 2013 was dedicated to young people's active citizenship and participation in society; prizes were awarded to Youth in Action projects showing exemplary work to promote citizenship among young people. National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme organised hundreds of national and regional activities across the EU, in cooperation with EYC2013 contact points, Commission's Representations and the Eurodesk<sup>17</sup> network.

In 2013-2014, the Commission launched a number of citizen engagement exercises in support of “*Responsible Research and Innovation*”<sup>18</sup> in order to foster a two-way dialogue with citizens throughout Europe, to help the EU set its Horizon2020 research and innovation policy agenda. The VOICES initiative,<sup>19</sup> funded by the EU “Science in Society” programme and launched under the EYC2013 banner, was supported by the upstream commitment by the Commission to take up the citizen outcomes<sup>20</sup> via the establishment of a timely participatory, transparent and traceable process.

#### **Generations@school**

Launched in 2012 in the framework of the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, Generations@school invited teachers to organise a project involving pupils and senior citizens from their communities and then enter a competition with other schools across the EU.

The project was extended for EYC2013 and focused on discussions about Europe, its present situation and about what the old and the young can do together to build the Europe of tomorrow (What does it mean to be a European citizen? What EU rights have been secured by virtue of European integration? How do the European citizens of tomorrow perceive these rights and how do they intend to make use of them? What kind of Europe should be passed on to the next generation?).

Some of the costs of the competition (translations, organisation of the jury) were covered by the EYC2013 budget and EYC2013 team members helped to select the winning schools.

## **2. THE TWO SIDES TO THE YEAR**

In his 2012 State of the Union speech, Commission President José Manuel Barroso emphasised that ‘... *the times of European integration by implicit consent are over ...*’. EYC2013 was an excellent opportunity to address the political imperative of securing the

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(ES), 20–21 November; Nicosia (CY), 22–23 November; Valetta (MT), 6–7 December; and, in 2014, Riga (LV) 28 February–2 March; Prague (CZ) 29–30 April; and Lisbon (PT) 9–11 May.

<sup>17</sup> The main provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them: <http://www.eurodesk.org>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/public-engagement-responsible-research-and-innovation>.

<sup>19</sup> “Views, Opinions and Ideas of Citizens in Europe on Science”: <http://www.voicesforinnovation.eu/>.

<sup>20</sup> It resulted in the drafting of calls for research proposals for the Horizon2020 priority area “Waste: A Resource to Recycle, Reuse and Recover Raw Materials”, expected to benefit from EU funding of approximately EUR 116 million during the period 2014–2015.



general public's participation in EU integration, while also raising awareness about the rights of Union citizens.

EYC2013 activities were therefore two-fold in character, entailing awareness-raising and dialogue, and providing a wide range of stakeholders with different kinds of opportunities to get involved.

## **2.1. Awareness-raising: the EU-wide information and communication campaign**

A tagline was developed to encapsulate these two features of the campaign: *'It's about Europe, it's about You. Join the debate'*. This was translated into all 24 EU languages and was a core element of the visual identity of EYC2013.

From the outset, the EYC2013 visual identity was inter-institutional and the Union institutions were encouraged to use it in their EYC2013-related communication activities. The European Parliament added it (via an inserted label) to its own concept and colours, while the EESC and the Committee of the Regions embraced and used it consistently.



The EYC2013 central communication campaign run by the Commission's main contractor aimed to provide the general public with information on EU rights and opportunities. It also raised awareness and promoted the use of the multilingual information and participatory tools that exist to help citizens make the most of their EU rights and opportunities for involvement in Union policy-making (these include the Europe Direct network, YourEurope, SOLVIT, Interactive Policy-Making online (IPM), European Citizens' Initiatives (ECI), petitions to the European Parliament, and complaints to the European Ombudsman).

The campaign sought to exploit the full potential of the EU institutions' existing tools and materials (websites, portals, videos, brochures, events, etc.) for informing citizens and enabling their participation in the EU. This required close cooperation with all EYC2013 actors, including many Commission services (especially the Representations), the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs), the European Parliament Information Offices (EPIOs) and other EU institutions, Member States (at national, regional and local level) and (national and EU-level) civil society organisations. The Commission also used its existing audiovisual and printed materials on citizens' rights and cross-border activities, and the Single Market.

The Commission Representations and their respective EDIC networks were key players and drivers for action at national, regional and local levels, organising hundreds of seminars, debates and conferences throughout the Year. 50% of the

‘flanking events’ specifically designed to prepare for, accompany and follow up the Citizens’ Dialogues initiative (see below) focused on topics relevant to the Year and could therefore be considered an integral part of the EYC2013 campaign.

The main features<sup>21</sup> of the central communication campaign included:

- a central, inter-institutional website set up for EYC2013 ([www.europa.eu/citizens-2013](http://www.europa.eu/citizens-2013), later [www.europa.eu/citizens-2014](http://www.europa.eu/citizens-2014)), with top-level pages available in all 24 official EU languages, including Croatian and Gaelic. The site was designed to address the needs of different target reader profiles, such as academics, young people, jobseekers and voters. Contributions were actively solicited from all stakeholders, who were encouraged to share news of events to be put in the website’s central EU-wide events calendar. The site included profiles of the EYC2013 Ambassadors, Faces of the Year and Spokespersons (see below), who were also encouraged to submit reports of their activities for publication on the site. Generic information on EU rights, some media extracts, reports and photos of EYC2013 events were also published on the site;
- audiovisual and radio materials: EU-wide distribution of an EYC2013 video news release, stock shots, an EYC2013 viral video and the production and EU-wide placement, much of which was *pro bono*, of a 30-second radio spot about EU rights and the European Year;
- media activities, including EU- and national-level press briefings, press mailings and proactive media relations;
- advertising: organisation of partnerships with public-facing organisations such as public transport providers, community centres or libraries, to seek *pro bono* placements of EYC2013 promotional materials;

***Pro bono* placement of EYC2013 campaign materials: an example from Slovakia**

In a direct-to-citizens approach, using public transport to reach the wider public with the campaign messages, discounts of up to 90% were secured to display the EYC2013 visuals and viral spot in buses across Bratislava, with *Dopravný podnik*, the main public transportation provider in the Slovak capital. The result was that, in December 2013, EYC2013 posters were displayed on the full fleet of 500 buses, reaching 650 000 passengers daily for two weeks. During one of those weeks, the 30-second EYC2013 viral spot was aired on screens in the buses too, with the EYC2013 slogan and visuals ensuring maximum impact.

- EYC2013 Ambassadors, Faces and Spokespersons: well-known personalities in the Member States were asked to volunteer their time and effort to be ‘Ambassadors’ for the Year. Similarly, citizens who had made positive use of their EU rights were identified to personalise the campaign with interesting real-life stories and act as ‘Faces of the Year’. These were joined by experts in EYC2013-related fields (particularly citizenship, EU affairs and politics) acting as media-savvy campaign ‘Spokespersons’. In some cases, the national contact point or EC Representation took on one of these roles. In the light of national

<sup>21</sup> Some quantitative data about the campaign and activities can be found in the Annex (The 2013 European Year of Citizens at a glance).

specificities, some countries decided not to use an Ambassador, a Face or a Spokesperson, but instead were offered other campaign services (e.g. support for events, promotional materials, etc.);

- social media support, especially via the Commission's central social media accounts: a series of Facebook polls and an accompanying Facebook application, online monitoring, an online EYC2013 photo competition via Facebook, which fed a 12-month calendar for 2014, and other web-tailored content. Some advertising was also carried out on Facebook. The Commission's social media channels were used as vehicles for 'social media thematic weeks', a new practice involving a focus on a theme of interest to the general public for a certain period, typically one week. These thematic weeks encouraged the Commission services concerned to cooperate outside their day-to-day work and to foster a citizen-centred approach. The external evaluators concluded that these mould-breaking exercises in trans-departmental, customer-oriented collaboration were a positive, sustainable effect of EYC2013;
- EYC2013 printed communication materials and promotional items, including campaign toolkits for various target readerships (in 23 official languages), postcards, posters, roll-ups, banners and various giveaways. The Commission made the digital files of the campaign's visual identity available for download, together with a style guide, so that interested parties could easily commission their own promotional items (at their own expense), without the need to design the visuals themselves;
- the Commission also mobilised its corporate communication services and tools to contribute to EYC2013. These included video clips on the Citizens' Dialogues, web-based information on EU policies, civil society projects funded through the Europe for Citizens programme, events organised by the EDICs and Team Europe<sup>22</sup>, the promotion of the 'one-stop shop' for citizens with Your Europe, and groups specially invited by the Commission to prepare for, and follow up on, the Citizens' Dialogues being organised throughout the Year; and
- the Back-to-School initiative<sup>23</sup> encouraged officials to participate fully, equipped with training and relevant EYC2013 background material.

#### **Speaking out for EU rights: EYC2013 Ambassadors**

Judit Polgár, the Olympic Chess Champion from Hungary, is arguably the best female chess player in history. She was also one of the Ambassadors for EYC2013.

*Judit said, 'as an Ambassador for EYC2013, I would like to help more people realise that cooperation should not be achieved only at Member-State level. All people in the European Union should realise that they have the opportunity to get to know people in other countries, and share their views and opinions on questions that concern them. As a chess player, as a Hungarian and a European, I am trying to contribute to the development of the European Union in the field of sport, education and culture.'*

<sup>22</sup> EU expert speakers who can lead presentations, workshops or debates by invitation (schools, NGOs, businesses, etc.).

<sup>23</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/news/eu\\_explained/110117\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/news/eu_explained/110117_en.htm).

## 2.2. Fostering a dialogue

### 2.2.1. Reaching out to the wider public: the Citizens' Dialogues

Between September 2012 and March 2014, the Commission held a series of 51 Citizens' Dialogues in all Member States, with an overall budget (separate from the EYC2013 budget) of EUR 3.56 million. The President and most members of the College were involved.

The Commission developed and tested the Citizens' Dialogues as a new instrument for direct political communication with the general public. They were based on the 'town-hall meeting' model, where a Commissioner, together with a Member of the European Parliament or a national or regional politician, listens to and debates with citizens about EU issues. The Dialogues aimed to rebuild European citizens' trust in their policymakers and in European governance. They helped give Europe a face and offered citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions and obtain concrete information.

The Citizens' Dialogues brought together an average of over 300 citizens per event; by the end of March 2014, around 17 000 citizens had attended events in person and another 105 000 had followed them live via webstreaming or social media. Press supplements in regional newspapers in the week in which the Citizens' Dialogue took place reached up to 43 million Europeans through print copies and a further 51 million online. On average, 39 media items (live TV coverage and TV features, radio features, and articles in the print and online press) were published on each event. All the Dialogues were broadcast via live webstream and documented on the central information website (<http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/>).

At the end of the series, the College adopted a report<sup>24</sup> on the key lessons to be drawn from the exercise.

#### **Breaking the ice: the Citizens' Dialogues**

On 27 March 2014, the Commission closed the first series of 50 Citizens' Dialogue with a pan-European debate in Brussels. This event brought together 150 citizens from all over Europe to talk about their real experiences as Europeans and share their concerns and aspirations for the future of Europe and their future as European citizens.

One of them, a young Polish woman named Kamila, echoing her numerous discussions with schoolmates on Europe, spoke with passion during the dialogue with Commission President Barroso: *'It is important for young people to know that they are EU citizens and to know about the possibilities that opens up. The EU should be part of the school curriculum in all 28 Member States.'*

<sup>24</sup> Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - *Citizens' Dialogues as a Contribution to Developing a European Public Space*, COM(2014) 173final, 24 March 2014.

### 2.2.2. *Mobilising organised civil society*

The Citizens' Dialogues focused on reaching out to individual citizens, but in parallel EYCA member organisations, EU-level networks and their National Alliances/Initiatives in 23 Member States<sup>25</sup> were instrumental in involving organised civil society groups across the EU in EYC2013 activities.

EYCA's National Alliances were actively involved from the beginning, working with national contact points, EU institutions' offices and partner agencies of the main communication service provider to draft common action plans to implement EYC2013.

#### **Mobilising at the national, regional and local levels: examples from some of the EYCA's National Alliances**

EYCA's distinguishing feature was the extent to which it involved and mobilised its National Alliances in most Member States, and how creative they were. The National Alliance in the United Kingdom, one of the two Member States that had no contact point, instead worked closely with the Commission Representations and European Parliament Information Offices in London, Glasgow and Cardiff. Together, they ran a series of seminars to examine such themes as social inclusion, volunteering and the tools for citizens' active participation.

The Bulgarian National Alliance worked with the EU institutions' offices to organise a contest that led to the *We are citizens of Europe* camp,<sup>26</sup> where students from all over the country had the chance to present their projects on how better to engage in EU political life and discover available funding opportunities.

EYCA and the European Civic Forum published a 12-page document in English and French, with a special focus on EYC2013 and the need for a strong communication effort. Similar publications or columns were produced by other EYCA members to raise awareness of EYC2013, to engage with people and encourage their participation in concrete discussions about Union citizenship policy.

Croatia's accession to the European Union provided an opportunity for EYCA to organise an EU-level conference, '*EU Citizenship: crossing perspectives*', in Zagreb on 8 July, which gave civil society organisations from the Western Balkans an insight into the reflection on citizenship currently taking place in Europe. The event brought together more than 150 participants, with a good balance of representatives from the Balkans and other European countries. The many journalists present followed all the discussions closely. The event addressed key EYC2013 issues and came up with recommendations which were later added to the general EYCA policy recommendations (see below).

In the course of the Year, EYCA and its members at EU and national level took part in an EU-level debate on citizenship policy (the rights associated with EU citizenship, obstacles to enjoying them and how to overcome them, etc.) in line with the EYC2013 objectives.

<sup>25</sup> There was no EYCA National Alliance/Initiative in Austria, Estonia, Greece, Ireland or Sweden.

<sup>26</sup> <http://ey2013-alliance.eu/events/youth-camp-we-are-citizens-of-europe-koprivshitsa-bulgaria/>.

Three working groups, involving 100 representatives of 80 national and EU-level civil society organisations from most of the Member States, were set up to focus on:

1. participatory citizenship and civil dialogue;
2. economic, social, political citizenship: a coherent whole; and
3. an inclusive citizenship for all EU residents.

The result of this demanding and inclusive work was *It's about US, it's about Europe! Towards Democratic European Citizenship*,<sup>27</sup> a set of 98 policy recommendations addressed to EU institutions, national authorities and civil society organisations themselves.

#### **EYCA's policy recommendations: the view from organised civil society**

One of the main aims of the wide cross-sector and transnational EYCA network in producing its policy recommendations was to ensure that active citizenship is understood as a lasting cross-cutting theme in European public policy.

In its recommendations, EYCA takes a broad view that EU citizenship should not be confined to an individual rights-based approach, but should have a strong value-based dimension so as to foster Europeans' sense of belonging to a common European project.

The recommendations supplement and reinforce those set out in the European Commission's *Citizenship Report 2013* and, more specifically, are based on two complementary axes aimed at strengthening:

- (1) citizens' ownership of the European project; and
- (2) the framework for participation in the European decision-making process.

### **3. BUILDING TOWARDS A LASTING POLICY-DEVELOPMENT LEGACY**

#### **3.1. The EYC2013 conferences at EU level**

As in previous European Years, the opening and closing events were held by the two Member States holding the EU Presidency during the year – in this case, Ireland and Lithuania.

President Barroso, the Irish *Taoiseach*, Enda Kenny, and the *Tánaiste*, Eamon Gilmore officially launched the Year in Dublin's City Hall on 10 January 2013. The first Citizens' Dialogue of the Year followed immediately at the same venue, with Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding and the Irish Minister of State for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton, taking part.

The closing event took place in the Lithuanian Parliament (*Seimas*) in Vilnius on 12-13 December 2013. At the initial ceremony, Vice-President Reding, the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Algirdas Butkevičius, the Speaker of the *Seimas*, Loreta Graužinienė, and the European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly gave keynote speeches. The event saw EYCA's policy recommendations (see above) being

<sup>27</sup> <http://ey2013-alliance.eu/itsabouteupeitsaboutus/>.

formally handed over to Ms Reding, who again took part in a Citizens' Dialogue, the last of the year, at Vilnius' City Hall.

### 3.2. Key documents of EYC2013

European Years generally aim to be:

- (1) an EU-wide awareness-raising campaign about a chosen topic; and
- (2) a catalyst for policy development in that area.

EYC2013 was no exception; in terms of policy development, its key outputs were:

- *Europeans have their say* - Analysis report of the public consultation *EU citizens – your rights, your future*<sup>28</sup>, held by the Commission from 9 May to 27 September 2012, on European citizenship, to which nearly 12 000 people and organisations replied, making it the largest public consultation of the Commission ever;
- the EU Citizenship Report 2013 - *EU citizens: your rights, your future*:<sup>29</sup> a key deliverable adopted by the Commission on 8 May 2013, in which twelve actions are put forward to eliminate hurdles standing in the way of citizens' enjoyment of their EU rights, ranging from removing obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU to cutting red tape in the Member States and promoting EU citizens' participation in the democratic life of the Union;
- the Commission's report on the Citizens' Dialogues - *Citizens' Dialogues as a Contribution to Developing a European Public Space*:<sup>30</sup> insights and lessons learned from the series of town-hall-style debates held across the EU between September 2012 and the end of March 2014; and
- in December 2013 (during the Lithuanian Presidency), a set of Council conclusions<sup>31</sup> supporting the EU Citizenship Report 2013 and calling for its recommendations to be implemented.

## 4. FOLLOW-UP TO EYC2013

### 4.1. Extension of activities into 2014

Given that it was a year of European elections and institutional transition, the Commission considered it appropriate to extend EYC2013-related action into 2014. Much of the action continued to be relevant to participation in democracy and to inclusive participation in the shaping of EU policies. No specific resources were earmarked for the activities to be carried out in 2014.

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<sup>28</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/files/report\\_eucitizenship\\_consultation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/files/report_eucitizenship_consultation_en.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – EU Citizenship Report 2013 - EU citizens: your rights, your future - COM(2013) 269 final, 8.5.2013  
[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/files/2013eucitizenshipreport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/files/2013eucitizenshipreport_en.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Citizens' Dialogues as a Contribution to Developing a European Public Space - COM(2014) 173 final, 24.3.2014.

[http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/citizens-dialogues/belgium/brussels3/dialogue\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/citizens-dialogues/belgium/brussels3/dialogue_en.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/139959.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/139959.pdf).

Two EU-level events were thus organised in close cooperation between EYCA, the EESC and the Commission:

- *Regaining the European project together* – a roundtable held on 20 February 2014; and
- *Beyond agendas and manifestos: What Europe is for us?* – a civil society day on 18 March 2014.

At both events, at EESC premises in Brussels, the EYCA policy recommendations were used as inputs to various debates involving representatives of the Commission, the European Parliament and the EESC.

## **4.2. Creating a genuine European public space**

As a tool designed for citizens to speak for themselves (rather than via representatives of special interest groups) and express their concerns, fears, hopes and expectations directly to top-level policymakers, the Citizens' Dialogues were a tangible contribution to the creation of a European public space in which European politics can be debated. They were more than mere question-and-answer sessions, and the experience, in particular of the pan-European Citizens' Dialogue, which concluded the first series on 27 March 2014, showed that they have great potential for collecting ideas and complementing discussions that are currently either limited to small numbers of stakeholder organisations or take place largely outside the institutional arena.

In parallel, the close involvement of EYCA member organisations and networks at both EU and national level ensured that organised citizens in civil society from across the Union were also able to take up the EYC2013 issues and contribute to the development of EU policy in the field of citizenship and democracy.

EYC2013 and its continuation in 2014 were an excellent opportunity to reflect on how to bring these — hitherto separate — channels of outreach together and further develop a genuine 'European public space'. The results of the European elections have emphasised the need to foster citizens' civic participation and involvement in the Union's integration processes, whether organised in civil society or acting individually. The Commission intends to pursue opportunities to develop a public space for debate, discussion and exchange on European issues from a European perspective, with citizens' organisations and the general public.

## **4.3. Conclusions**

The Commission welcomes the external evaluators' conclusions<sup>32</sup> as to the *relevance* of the portfolio of activities chosen for EYC2013 and their recognition that these fully covered the Year's objectives, without major gaps or overlaps. They also noted that the breadth of the topic meant that a wide range of relevant actors and multipliers got involved and so contributed to spreading the EYC2013 message.

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<sup>32</sup> For detailed conclusions and recommendations, see: [http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/sites/default/files/content/document/EYC2013%20evaluation%20final%20report%202014\\_07\\_25.pdf](http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/sites/default/files/content/document/EYC2013%20evaluation%20final%20report%202014_07_25.pdf).



The communication activities were seen as having addressed the needs of the target groups.

The Commission acknowledges the (interlinked) conclusions regarding *effectiveness* and *efficiency*, i.e. the late adoption of the Decision made it difficult for potential partners to get mobilised in time to contribute to the activities, in particular at national level; and the financial resources made available did not match the ambition of informing all citizens of their EU rights. However, the evaluators consider that participative activities and events proved more effective than information through mass media. Furthermore, they highlight the considerable mobilisation of stakeholders (see above), who contributed human and financial resources and/or participated on a voluntary basis, and underline that the categories of activity varied in terms of efficiency.

The Commission also shares the evaluators' conclusions on the *sustainability* of the EYC2013 activities. On the one hand, the effects of the EU-wide information and communication campaign are indeed not likely to be sustained, due to its low budget, and this detracts from overall sustainability. On the other hand, the participative forms of communication that were promoted, centred as they were on citizens' needs, are likely to have a lasting influence on the stakeholders involved, provided the expectations for follow-up that they created are met; otherwise, some stakeholders may be less inclined to get involved in the future.

As regards its *impact* on European citizens' overall awareness of their rights and their ability to engage in the process of European integration, EYC2013 can only be seen as a specific contribution to the Commission's general efforts through its corporate communication strategy and EU outreach programmes and policies.

EYC2013 was conceived as an EU-wide campaign to raise awareness about EU citizens' rights and as a catalyst for policy development in the area of EU citizenship, especially as regards the creation of a genuine European public space. The latter consideration became much more prominent as the Year progressed, particularly with the extension of EYC2013 activities into 2014 in the run-up to the European elections. The modest budget limited the scope and impact of the communication campaign, but this was effectively mitigated by the creativity, commitment, voluntary efforts and drive of all stakeholders at Union and national levels. These included EYCA and its members from organised civil society, which generated sustainable networks with lasting effects that will help foster the development of a genuine European public space.

All these combined efforts and activities helped to make EYC2013 'a Year *for, by* and *with* citizens', whether organised (via EYCA) or not (via the Citizens' Dialogues).

### **EYC2013 external evaluation: challenges for future European Years**

- ✓ In order to reach a large audience, targeting the 28 Member States equally, an information campaign would require a budgetary ‘entrance ticket’ of at least several million euros, e.g. for media placements alone. It would also need to convey sharp and original messages to catch people’s attention and potentially have an impact;
- ✓ When resources are limited, the priority is to deploy a communication campaign that supports events. In such cases, events are the key pillars of information dissemination and the campaign is a tool that aims mainly to involve participants and attract media attention so as to secure wider dissemination; and
- ✓ Trying to implement a traditional campaign and event-based communication with a limited budget is ineffective. The communication strategy should be decided on at an early design stage.

**Annex:** The 2013 European Year of Citizens at a glance