



TOWARDS A CIVIC AND POPULAR OWNERSHIP OF EUROPE

VERS UNE APPROPRIATION CIVIQUE ET POPULAIRE DE L'EUROPE

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2010

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS NEWS

The European Commission unveils its work programme for 2010



The European Commission unveiled its annual work programme for 2010 drawing on the [political guidelines](#) for the 5-year mandate of the European Commission presented by President Barroso in September 2009. The 2010 work programme aims to lead Europe out of the economic crisis and to deliver policy that brings direct benefits to citizens. It includes 34 strategic priorities that will be implemented before the end of the year as well as a non-exhaustive list of initiatives for the coming years, which provides useful guidance on what can be expected from the Commission during the rest of the mandate (2010-2014).

In 2010, the Commission will take action along four main strands:

1. Building a citizens' agenda which puts people at the heart of European action

- An action plan for the implementation of the **2010-2014 EU programme for freedom, security and justice**, the so-called Stockholm programme, adopted by the Council in December 2009;
- A number of proposals to put citizens at the centre of EU's activities and to make the concept of European citizenship more concrete, including regarding **jurisdiction and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters**, revision of the **working time directive**, reference framework for **contract law**, analysis of obstacles to **free movement of citizens**.

2. Tackling the crisis and sustaining Europe's social market economy

Policy proposals to implement the seven flagship initiatives proposed in the context of the 'EU2020' strategy as follows:

- **"A European Platform to combat poverty"**: to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion building on the current European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion so as to raise awareness and recognise the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, enabling them to live in dignity and take an active part in society;
- **"A digital agenda for Europe"**: to speed up the roll-out of high speed internet and tap the potential of digital technologies for households and firms;
- **"A European plan for research and innovation"**: to improve framework conditions for Europe's research and its capacities for creativity and innovation, including eco-innovation;
- **"Youth on the move"**: to enhance the performance of education systems, reinforce the attractiveness of Europe's higher education system and open more mobility programmes to young people;
- **"Youth employment"**: a policy response to increase job opportunities for young people, to promote apprenticeships and training, and to improve transition from education into work;
- **"An agenda for new skills and jobs"**: to modernise labour markets to boost labour mobility and the development of skills and competences throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match supply and demand;
- **"An industrial policy for a globalised era"**: to improve the business environment, especially for SMEs, and to support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally.

3. *Developing an ambitious and coherent external agenda with global outreach*

- EU action plan on the **EU's contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals**;
- Establishment of the **European External Action Service**;
- Steering the **enlargement process**.

4. *Modernising EU instruments and ways of working*

Adaptation of the **EU financial framework** to serve policy priorities through the budget review. Within the overall context of the preparation for the next multi-annual financial framework, the Commission will be holding in depth consultations with stakeholders during 2010 on the future direction of key EU spending policies, such as the common agricultural policy, cohesion policy and research policy.

Click [here](#) for more information about the European Commission Work Program and roadmap for 2010.

Proposal for a regulation on the European citizens' initiative



Set out in article 11, paragraph 4 of the Lisbon Treaty, the European citizens' initiative is a concrete tool for civic participation meant to enable one million citizens "to take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required".

The European Commission had published a [green paper](#) and organized a [public consultation](#) on this topic in late 2009.

On March 31, 2010 the Commission tabled its [draft regulation](#), with a detailed account on how to put the new instrument, introduced under the Lisbon Treaty, into practice:

- **one million signatures** would be needed ;
- signatures should be collected in at least **one third of the EU Member States** and the amount of signatures required would be proportionate to the size of countries involved ;
- minimal age would be the same as the **minimum legal voting age for European elections** ;
- signatures should be collected over a period of **12 months** ;
- every signer would be required to provide a certain amount of personal data so as to avoid fraud;
- admissibility of the European citizens' initiative would be verified as soon as 300 000 signatures would have been collected.

While the proposal explicitly aims at creating a citizen-friendly and user-friendly tool, it erects new hurdles for accomplishing a more democratic Union. In particular, it establishes high thresholds for the representativeness and admissibility of an ECI as well as complicated procedures for collecting the 1 million required signatures. In the same time, stipulations on the responsiveness of European institutions to an ECI remain weak and underspecified. The European Parliament and the European Council will ultimately decide on the rules of the procedure later this year. The European citizens' initiative should be operational by 2011.

Click [here](#) to read the ECF contribution to the European Commission public consultation on the European citizens' initiative.

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on EU citizens' rights

The European Commission is organising a public consultation entitled « **EU citizens' rights: the way forward. How to strengthen the rights stemming from the European Union citizenship** » from 19 April to 14 June 2010. The Commission is launching this consultation with a view "to identifying concrete actions to take in order to strengthen and complement EU citizens' rights, within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty".

The conclusions of the consultation will inform a conference to be held on 1st and 2 July and a Communication of the European Commission on Union citizenship to be issued in October 2010.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the consultation.

EUROPEAN CIVIC FORUM NEWS

ECF took part in the Spring session of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe held its Spring session in Strasbourg on 26-28 April 2010. It included meetings of its thematic committees and the session culminated with the European Biodiversity Day organised in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on 28 April.

The European Civic Forum was invited to participate in the meeting of the “Civil society and democracy” committee of the Conference of INGOs held on 27 April 2010 and to present the EU-related initiatives on civil dialogue – the initiative “Towards a structured dialogue for a citizen-friendly European Union” and the “European Civic Days 2010”. Discussions with members of the INGO conference looked into the possibilities to join efforts in awareness raising about the importance of developing civil dialogue mechanism across Europe both at national and transnational levels.

Click [here](#) for more information about the agenda of the encounter

The European Civic Forum strongly invites all its members to get ownership of the [Code of good practices for civil participation in decision making process](#) elaborated by the OING conference of the Council of Europe and to promote its implementation at local and national levels. The Code can both be an important awareness raising instrument you can make use of when addressing your national authorities and a capacity building tool as it provides guidelines stemming from concrete practical experience of dialogue and co-operation between NGOs and public authorities.

Click [here](#) for more information about the Code

Interview with ECF President, Jean-Marc Roirant, in EUROPE III, the news magazine of the Group III “Various interests” in the EESC



Following the “Civil Society Day” in Brussels, on 22nd of March 2010 and the successful public presentation of the European networks’ recommendations “Towards a structured framework for European Civil Dialogue”, European Economic and Social Committee’s Group III interviewed Jean-Marc Roirant on the further perspectives in the mobilisation of European civil society organisations for the setting up of a genuine European civil dialogue.

“It is very gratifying to note that our recommendations for a structured framework for European civil dialogue were largely supported both by the 150 or so actors of civil society present at the conference and by the participants. In particular we had some very positive feedback from the MEPs present. The Vice-President of the European Parliament, Isabelle Durant, was particularly receptive to our concerns and to our requests. In addition, her speech at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels on 25 March, during which she pleaded for “the creation of an inter-institutional authority responsible for the regular consultation of civil society” and “a structuring of dialogue with civil society, as is the case today for social dialogue, in order to get away from the subjective and the informal”, is testimony of her support for the implementation of these recommendations.”, pointed out Jean-Marc Roirant, concluding that “The major issue, both at European level and in the Member States, is still the structure of associations, networking and the collective action of civil society organisations in order to exert greater influence over European policies and the building of the Europe that we want.”

Click [here](#) to read the whole interview

OUR MEMBERS NEWS

European citizens' initiative summit 2010



IRI-Europe is organising a summit on the European citizens' initiative in partnership with the Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy on 7-9 May 2010 in Salzburg (Germany).

IRI has been one of the driving forces behind the new European Citizens' Initiative for more than a decade and has published several Handbooks on the issue.

Now that the European Commission presented its proposal on a regulation on the European citizens' initiative, the organizers invite the participants "to assess the regulation, its strengths and weaknesses, and the next steps ahead in what can be called the final countdown towards the entry of the new democratic instrument of the European citizens' initiative into political practice."

Read more in the Initiative for Europe Handbook 2008 – The guide to transnational democracy in Europe.

Click [here](#) to learn more about this event.

Expert seminar on the role of public libraries as centres for civic education on 17-18 May in Warsaw (Poland)



Our Polish member, the Institute of Public Affairs, will hold an expert seminar focusing on "Public libraries as centres for civic education in Europe: recommendations for new practices and perspectives in Polish libraries" on 17-18 May 2010 in Warsaw.

This seminar will gather experts from several European countries and will give the participants the opportunity to see a range of " projects in the field of civic education and discuss which ones are the most promising and how to adapt those in their field".

Click [here](#) to learn more about this event.