



Brussels, 24 July 2012

Reply from the European Women's Lobby European Commission public consultation on 'The 2013 EU Citizenship Report "EU citizens - Your rights, your future"'

I. EU citizenship (Question 24th of the Consultation)

The European Women's Lobby (EWL)¹ welcomes the European Commission's proposal to designate 2013 as the European Year of Citizens (EYC2013) since focusing in citizens could be an important step forward in the building of a European Union that takes into account the concerns of women and men living in Europe going beyond economic preoccupations.

However, the EWL is deeply concerned that the European Year of Citizens can be confined to merely a narrow individual mobility rights-based approach. Furthermore, the EC proposal lacks a gender perspective – the European citizen of which the proposal refers to is male, white and middleclass. The EWL as part of the European Year of Citizens 2013 Alliance (EYCA2013) believes that the European Year of Citizens should be broadened to promote participatory and democratic citizenship from a gender equality perspective which have to respond to the principle of parity democracy. The EWL wants also to stress that a gender equality perspective should be mainstreamed when shaping the policy agenda the EYC2013, guaranteeing the full involvement of civil society organisations, including women's organisations, in the preparation and the implementation of the 2013 European Year and the equal representation of women among the speakers and participants in all the activities related to the year.

a) EYC 2013 Frame of the concept of citizenship

1. Gender equality between women and men as essential to Democratic citizenship

The EWL considers that democratic citizenship should be addressed from a gender equality perspective, conceived as a **lifetime process envisaged from the perspective of ensuring full and facto equality between women and men as enshrined in the EU treaty and different national and international commitments**. Therefore, there is a need to envisage the concept of citizenship for the EYC2013 taking into account the principles of citizens' equality and equality between women and men as enshrined in the Article 9 TEU² (to be read in conjunction with article 2 and 3.3 of the Treaty³, the article 8 of the TFUE⁴ and the article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁵) and the CEDAW Convention. As stated by the European Economic and Social Committee's Opinion on the European Year of Citizens (SOC/428 – CESE 822/2012), 3.9: "Total equality must be ensured between men and women".

Furthermore, the Commission's proposal focuses on informing citizens on their right to free movement, but does not focus sufficiently on the obstacles that prevent them from using this right, and does not acknowledge that women and men face different obstacles. Women and men use their right to free movement differently: as the impact assessment of the EY 2013 acknowledges, women travel, study and work abroad less than men. There are specific obstacles than prevent women from using their right to free movement, as for example:



- Women shoulder the main part of care responsibilities. Therefore, their mobility is limited by issues such as different provisions on maternity leave and other family related forms of leave, different access to childcare services between the member states.
- Different support services for victims of violence.

These gendered obstacles have to be addressed in order to ensure women benefit from their European citizenship as much as men. Improving the minimum European standards of social protection and social security rights is needed in order to ensure women are able to enjoy their rights to free movement. Moving forward with the Maternity leave Directive is obviously a key issue here.

2. Parity Democracy as essential to Democratic citizenship

Parity democracy must be fully implemented as a central aspect of democratic citizenship. **Equal representation** of women and men in European decision-making bodies and the active and equal participation of women and men in European elections as voters and candidates is **a vital requirement for a fully exercise of women's citizenship and for the functioning of a democratic society**. Equal representation of women and men in political decision-making is one of the priorities of the EU's gender equality strategy and the Council enforced this priority in the Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 adopted in March 2011. However, Europe is still far from this goal: only approximately one third of the seats in the European Parliament are occupied by women, women account to one third of European Commissioners, and the European Commission has never been headed by a woman. The underrepresentation of women in the EU decision-making bodies undermines any effort to promote inclusive and participatory democracy in Europe. Women are also underrepresented in the forums where civil society organizations and social partners debate their views on the European policies.

3. Democratic citizenship

Twenty years after its creation the European citizenship means, firstly, a legal status that guarantees freedom of movement of EU citizens and several political rights deemed to contribute, along with the deepening of the single market for goods and services, to creating a sense of belonging to a community of people. Europe is part of the daily life of its citizens, but the rights and benefits stemming from this "single market citizenship" are at present essentially limited to mobility. Thus, they become effective only "abroad". What about those who do not travel, study or work abroad and for whom the European citizenship can then be only an abstract and meaningless concept? And what about those who living and working in the European Union do not access to the European citizenship?

These very challenging questions reflect the fact that the concept of citizenship encompasses a two-way relationship between a community and its members. The Lisbon Treaty provides a broader framework for the development of European citizenship rooted in a «community of values», and reinforces its social and political dimensions by giving to the Charter of Fundamental Rights the same legal value as the European Union treaties and by creating the conditions for citizens and civil society organisations to be fully involved in European processes.

For the EWL, as a member of the European Year of Citizens 2013 Alliance whose main objective is to put forward proposals aimed at placing European citizenship at the heart of the EU political agenda, European citizenship means:

- a democratic citizenship which is based on **citizens' legal status and includes all aspects of life in a democratic society** relating to a vast range of topics such as, inter alia, **equality between women and men**



including the equal representation of women and men in decision making, education, culture, sustainable development, non discrimination, inclusion of ethnic minorities, participation in society of people with disabilities, etc;

- a democratic citizenship which guarantees that **citizens and civil society organisations have a say in the EU policy-shaping and decision-making processes by electing their representatives to the European Parliament**. At a time when we are facing an ever growing gap between the European Union and its citizens, as confirmed by the turnout in the last European elections and by surveys which repeatedly show citizens' lack of awareness of European policies, citizenship and identity, the stakes could not be higher; **Regarding the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2014 and renewal of the European Commission and EU "top-jobs", the equal representation of women and men should be guaranteed** to avoid the underrepresentation of half of the population of Europe; - to allow the fully exercise of women's citizenship; - and also for the functioning of a democratic society.
- a democratic citizenship which implies that European institutions enjoy public confidence and can secure active involvement of citizens and organised civil society players in the decision-making processes at all levels, from local and national to European one; therefore, the adoption of an inter-institutional agreement for a structured framework for **European civil dialogue** would give a permanent practical substance to such an active and participatory citizenship alongside with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, besides the European Citizens' Initiative.
- a **democratic citizenship** which perform **must also operate at Member States' level**, so that the structures for citizens' engagement are accessible and form part of every citizen's experience. While benefiting of their rights and taking their responsibilities,
- a democratic citizenship that guarantees that **all citizens can participate in the life of their communities and the shaping of public policies, including the most disadvantaged groups** which are more than often the most remote from the European building process. One cannot exercise her/his civic and political citizenship rights unless in capacity to enjoy the social and economic citizenship rights and the European Union should not miss out the contribution of the most disadvantaged.

3

We believe that the EU Citizenship report 2013, which is to be delivered in the frame of the European Year of Citizens, should reflect this rich approach, and the rights enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights must be implemented effectively and proper control mechanisms put in place.

Also, European citizenship should be founded on the principle of residence and in the name of universality of rights all residents of the European Union should enjoy equality of treatment and the same right to participate in public life as EU citizens.

To give active European citizenship its full meaning and scope, and to help downsize the gap between citizens and the EU institutions, it is necessary to take account of the new prospects opened up by Article 11 of the Treaty on the European Union for citizens' participation in the democratic life of the European Union, endowing European institutions with the responsibility to "give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action" and to "maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society."

B) EYC 2013 Policy Shaping

Active, participatory European citizenship and sense of community cannot be created through top-down communication. It requires that women and men living in Europe are able to provide their visions of the Europe. In this regard, EU citizens -following the principle of residence-, as well as all residents from acceding, candidate



countries and beyond, should be fully involved in the activities of the EY2013 that should foster their involvement in local governance issue, through enhancing cooperation also with local authorities as one of the main stakeholders of the EY2013. Therefore, the Commission must involve civil society organisations, including women's organisations, in the preparation and the implementation of the 2013 European Year. They have a key role to play in carrying forward the European project so that it fully meets the expectations of its citizens.

The current budget proposal of one million euro would only allow for top-down communication measures and not for tangible actions. Furthermore, it does not foresee co-financing for citizens' and civil society organisations' initiatives.

It must be ensured that in the context of the Year, the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme and the Europe for Citizens programmes fund activities of the civil society, including gender equality activities related to the year.

Specific attention must be paid to projects that involve the representative organizations of those EU citizens who are discriminated against and who therefore are not fully able to enjoy their rights as the European Citizens.

¹ The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU Member States and three of the candidate countries, as well as to 21 European-wide organisations, representing a total of more than 2000 associations.

² Article 9 TEU: "In all its activities, the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention from its institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. Every national of a member state shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship and shall not replace it".

³ Article 2: "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail".

Article 3.3: "(...) It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child".

⁴ Article 8 TFEU: "In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women".

⁵ Article 23: "Equality between men and women: Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex".

II. Our vision of European Union in near future (Question 25th of the Consultation)

The EWL works towards a vision of a peaceful, social and democratic European Union built on a culture of respect for human rights, equality, peace and solidarity, in Europe and globally, where women and men have equal rights, full enjoyment of their personal integrity and choice, an equal share of social, cultural and economic resources, caring and family roles, and are equally represented in decision making.



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The EWL work bases on the following values as to have a Europe of Equality between women and men in the near future. **Equality** between women and men in all areas of public and private life is the precondition for a fair and democratic European Union. **Solidarity** with all women and men experiencing exclusion, discrimination, oppression and violence is one pillar to live in a Europe free of discrimination. **Respect** for difference and diversity is the basis of the EU that is unified in its diversity. To live in a democratic Europe in the near future **Parity** at all levels of political, economic and social decision-making has to become reality. The European Union giving **Freedom** for all women to decide for themselves on all matters of personal/physical integrity and choice is the vision of the EWL. In addition, an EU that promotes a culture of **Peace** and **Justice** for all. The **Empowerment** of women in the EU means for us to fulfil its own obligations set in the EU treaties.

Therefore, to connect the meaning of being an EU citizens only to individual mobility rights is too short-term framed and does not take into consideration the treaties set by the EU itself where the European citizenship is defined as a *community of values*.

To achieve our vision of Europe as described above we urge the EC to create the conditions for citizens and civil society organisations to be fully involved in the European processes and policies.