

Priorities of the Europe for Citizens Programme for 2018-2020

All projects have to be in line with the general and specific objectives of the Europe for Citizens programme and taking into consideration the multiannual priorities laid down below which were defined by the European Commission in 2015 after consultation of the programme stakeholders represented in the civil dialogue group and of the Europe for Citizens programme committee.

The European Commission reserves itself the right to review, adapt and/or modify the list of priorities should the need arise, at any moment, after consulting the programme stakeholders represented in the civil dialogue group and the programme committee.

For the 2018-2020 period, priorities have been designed to stimulate debates on dates of European significance and topics having a strong importance also in present times (for the European Remembrance strand) or anchored in the social, economic and political reality of the European Union (for the Democratic engagement and civic participation strand). Citizens are invited to take part in these reflections and debates through projects respecting the general features of the Programme (equal access, cross-border and local dimension, intercultural dialogue and promotion of volunteering) or through their active engagement in organisations participating in the Europe for Citizens programme. The use of social media is recommended for projects and organisations receiving funding under Europe for Citizens with the aim of reaching out to large numbers of citizens, especially younger generations. In addition, organisations and projects receiving funding under the Europe for Citizens programme are encouraged to make use of the newly created European Solidarity Corps.

A distinction has to be made between:

- specific priorities for "European remembrance" (strand 1);
- specific priorities for "Democratic engagement and civic participation" (strand 2).

1. Specific priorities for European Remembrance (Strand 1)

1.1. Commemorations of major historical turning points in recent European history

One of the Europe for Citizens programme's goals is to create opportunities for a debate on European history beyond national perspectives¹.

Through its Strand 1 (European Remembrance), the Programme aims to foster a common culture of remembrance and mutual understanding between citizens from different EU Member States, notably by supporting projects that reflect on historical turning points and changes in regimes in Europe's 20th century and on their continuous importance for the Europe of today.

During the 2018-2020 period, the following commemorations will be eligible for projects, depending on the year of application:

¹ COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020 (OJ L 115 of 17.4.2014, page 3).

Year of application	Eligible commemorations
2018	<p>1918 The end of the WWI – the rise of nation states and the failure to create a European cooperation and peaceful coexistence</p> <p>1938/1939 Beginning of WWII</p> <p>1948 Beginning of the Cold War</p> <p>1948 The Hague Congress and the integration of Europe</p> <p>1968 Protest and civil rights movements, invasion to Czechoslovakia, student protests and anti-Semitic campaign in Poland</p>
2019	<p>1979 European Parliament elections – also 40 years since the first directly elected EP in 1979</p> <p>1989 Democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin wall</p> <p>2004 15 years of EU enlargement into central and Eastern Europe</p>
2020	<p>1950 Robert Schuman Declaration</p> <p>1990 German reunification</p> <p>2000 Proclamation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights</p>

1.2. Civil society and civic participation under totalitarian regimes

Under totalitarian regimes, democratic concepts such as "civil society", "freedom" and "democracy" and "democratic procedures" completely lost their meaning.

Free speech and open public debate, political demonstrations of different political actors, and public gatherings were not allowed. One of the most essential acts of democratic engagement, which is membership in a political party, was also diverted from its natural purpose to prove loyalty toward a leading party and conformity with the ruling political regime.

By contrast, free social movements emanating from the civil society were often ostracised, threatened and repressed. Civil society and democratic movements were absorbed and exploited by the one-party system. Public information was also monopolised and distorted by official institutions. Any diverging view was treated as "dissidence". Free speech was forbidden and independent voices were silenced. Political decisions were applied without democratic deliberation.

Applicants should reflect on the exploitation and manipulations of democratic practices notably by means of "propaganda" and official media in the past and the current upsurge of populism. The objective is to show that civil society, free media and open debate are an indispensable element of democracy.

Through their projects, applicants should also reflect on the significance of contemporary democratic achievements such as rule of law, civil liberties, civic rights, and underline the fragility of civic rights (freedom of speech, right to vote...) without strong checks and balances. The aim is also to debate on the concrete ways and mechanisms by which civil

liberties and civic rights can be preserved and civil dialogue ensured at EU and national levels, as well as the impact of the social media in this context.

1.3. Antisemitism, Anti-Gypsyism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance: drawing the lessons for today

20th century's totalitarianisms deprived some of their citizens from their basic rights to the point of total exclusion and genocide. This was the case for the Jewish and Roma communities as well as other racial, cultural or ethnic minorities under Nazi regime, including LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual/transgender and intersexual) people. Justified by misleading ideologies and supported by deceptive propaganda, exclusionary legislation as well as a repressive apparatus, these enabled those regimes to commit mass murders.

Past manifestations of Antisemitism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance should be analysed and debated so as to inform the present. Through their projects, applicants should address the following themes and questions: How to recognise a "scapegoat" and to deconstruct the discourse leading to exclusion and marginalisation? What are the educational tools at EU and national levels to prevent these forms of intolerance?

1.4. Democratic transition and accession to the European Union

For Member States that experienced in their recent history a transition to democracy, accession to the European Union played an important role in supporting and consolidating democratisation. For example, through the system of "democratic conditionality", the pre-membership encouraged political changes and structural reforms, strengthened administrative capacity and improved minority protections.

Projects under this specific priority should analyse how the EU accession perspective influenced democratic standards and practices of the new democracies. While taking stock of the enlargements accomplished in the last two decades, the projects shall open the discussion on the desirability of future enlargements or on other kinds of partnerships with countries of the EU neighbourhood.

2. Specific priorities for "Democratic engagement and civic participation" (Strand 2)

2.1. Debating the future of Europe and challenging Euroscepticism

Under this multi-annual priority of the Europe for Citizens programme, citizens will be given an opportunity to express what kind of Europe they want and to outline their long term vision for the future of European integration. In this context the White Paper on the Future of Europe represents a point of departure.

This debate should be based on the concrete achievements of the European Union and on lessons learnt from history. But it should as well reflect on current trends, and enable participants to challenge Euroscepticism and to suggest possible actions that the European Union could undertake to foster a sense of belonging to Europe, to understand the benefits of the European Union and to reinforce the EU's social and political cohesion.

The debate on the future of Europe should not be limited to those already supporting the idea of the European Union, but also reach out to citizens who reject or put in question the European Union and its achievements, or remain indifferent. The ambitious aim is to try to channel criticism of the EU into a useful, constructive and positive driver for European integration in the long run and to help the EU to come closer to its citizens.

Citizens are invited to take part in this debate through projects or through their active engagement in organisations participating in the Europe for Citizens programme. The Commission expects projects granted under this multi-annual priority to reflect on a new narrative for Europe, citizen-oriented, forward-looking and constructive, that would be more engaging for the younger generation in particular. Projects may lead to debates about concrete ways to create a more democratic Union, so as to enable citizens to reengage with the EU and develop a stronger sense of ownership of the European project.

Another aim of projects under this multi-annual priority may be to identify ways of further enhancing the European dimension and the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process. In the light of the low turnout rates in European elections of the past years and the rise of populism in many Member States, projects may address the question how to motivate EU citizens to go to the polls and how to build a momentum for their active democratic participation in the EU at all levels. The European Parliament elections in 2019 provide an opportunity and a challenge to which the projects financed by the programme can contribute.

Applicants are also invited to organise debates or activities on the rise of Euro-scepticism and its implications for the future of the European Union. Such debates or activities are expected to enable participants to deepen their knowledge of the EU institutions and policies, and better understand the EU's achievements and benefits, as well as to understand the cost of not being part of the European Union.

2.2. Promoting solidarity in times of crisis

The European Union is built on solidarity: solidarity between its citizens, solidarity across borders between its Member States, and solidarity through support actions inside and outside the Union. Solidarity is a shared value which creates cohesion and responds to societal challenges.

The notion of solidarity usually refers to a mutual support within a group unified by a community of interest or by shared values. It is intrinsically linked to the concept of generosity, but also to those of reciprocity and responsibility. But what does solidarity mean within the European Union, especially in times of crisis? What are the legal, political, economic and even ethical limits of European solidarity?

Under this multi-annual priority of the Europe for Citizens programme, citizens will be given the opportunity to discuss the topic of solidarity and to assess existing solidary mechanisms inside the EU. They shall reflect on policy areas where such common mechanisms could be useful and developed while considering other possible channels of European solidarity like volunteering, donations, foundations, civil society organisations, charities, crowdfunding, etc.

One aspect of the discussion will be to highlight the added value of the EU's intervention in times of crisis when national responses seem insufficient, while underlining the limits of such solidarity mechanisms in terms of responsibility and financial cost. Projects developed under this multi-annual priority will contribute to overcoming national perceptions of crisis situations of the past years (such as the financial crisis of 2009 or the refugee crisis) by fostering a mutual understanding of the situation, and by creating fora where common solutions can be discussed in a constructive way. Their aim should be to raise awareness of the importance of reinforcing the European integration process based on solidarity and common values.

A new instrument set up in this context is the European Solidarity Corps.

In his State of the Union speech of September 2016, the President of the European Commission announced the setting up of a European Solidarity Corps with the aim to give young people across the EU the opportunity to volunteer where help is needed and to respond to crisis situations. In a first phase of its implementation, the European Solidarity Corps will build on existing EU programmes including the Europe for Citizens programme.²

Projects financed by the Europe for Citizens programme have the possibility to use the European Solidarity Corps to recruit young people to volunteer, provided the organisations meet the criteria for becoming a host organisation and subscribe to the Charter of the European Solidarity Corps (See: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/mission_en).

The European Solidarity Corps offers opportunities for volunteering, traineeships or jobs that will provide young people between the ages of 18-30 with a chance to gain experience, develop their skills and make a contribution to society. By joining the Corps, participants will express their willingness to practice solidarity and to devote a period of their lives to helping others. By supporting others, the volunteers will not only put the core EU value of solidarity into practice, but also contribute to reinforcing cohesion within European society.

Projects are invited to raise awareness about this new European instrument and to make use of the European Solidarity Corps.

2.3. Fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding and combatting the stigmatisation of migrants and minority groups

Intercultural dialogue is essentially the exchange of views and opinion between cultures. It seeks to establish linkages and common ground between different cultures, communities and people by promoting understanding and interaction.

With 28 Member States and many more cultural groupings and identities within the European Union, intercultural dialogue is essential for avoiding conflict and the marginalisation of citizens on the basis of their cultural identity. The Europe for Citizens Programme can contribute to promoting intercultural dialogue by bringing European citizens of different nationalities and different languages together and by giving them the opportunity to participate in common activities.

Projects granted under this multi-annual priority will raise awareness on the richness of the cultural and linguistic environment in Europe and promote mutual understanding and tolerance, thereby contributing to the development of a respectful, dynamic and multifaceted European identity.

Under this multi-annual priority a specific focus will be put on the situation of migrants in our society. Today, in the European Union, extremist or populist movements regularly stigmatise "others", "migrants" or "minorities" in their political discourse amalgamating distinct concepts (crisis and migration; terrorism and migration) in order to polarise public opinion and to claim moral monopoly.

² See also the Communication "A European Solidarity Corps", COM(2016)942, 7.12.2016

Against this background, the Europe for Citizens programme through this multi-annual priority will fund projects promoting diversity, tolerance and the respect of common values. Projects will in particular encourage intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between EU citizens and migrants. These projects will help overcome stereotypes about migrants by deconstructing past and present processes of stigmatisation.

2.4. European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018

The year 2018 will also be designated as the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The ideals, principles and values embedded in the European cultural heritage represent a shared source of identity, dialogue, cohesion and creativity of shared sense of belonging and citizenship of the European Union. Projects will be funded on promoting the role of European cultural heritage as a pivotal element of cultural diversity, and intercultural dialogue and local heritage linked to European memory.