



# ECAS' activities in 2019 were supported by:















**GROWTH** 

Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

#### WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WARMLY THANK:

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer for their pro bono support, and Mr. Daniel Cornelius Schily for his personal support to ECAS

# **Table of Contents**

About the European Citizen Action Service	4
EU RIGHTS Focus Area	5
Services to Citizens	7
Your Europe Advice	7
EU Rights Clinic	13
Projects	15
MORE for EU citizens	15
CORE	15
FAIR EU	16
IMPEU	20
Events	21
State of the Union Citizens' Rights Conference	21
EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY Focus Area	24
Services to Citizens	26
European Citizens' Initiative Forum	26
Projects	27
You Vote EU	27
We Are Europe	28
SMART eD	29
REP2019	29
NEXUS	30
DEMOS	31
Events	32
Digital Democracy Day 2019	32
ECI DAY 2019: Digital Voices	
EESC Civil Society Days	
'Online Disinformation: Finding the silver bullet in the digital world'	35
Publications	36
Study "Societies outside Metropolises: the role of civil society organisations in facing populism"	36
European Court of Auditors – Assessment of the Commission's public consultations	
Policy Paper Carnegie Europe - Six Ideas for Rejuvenating European Democracy	
Recommendations for the Set Up of the Conference on the Future of Europe	37
ECAS Membership and Outreach	38
ECAS Membership	38
ECAS' Outreach	39
Annexes	42

# About the European Citizen Action Service

The European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) is an international, Brussels-based non-profit organisation with a pan-European membership and nearly 30 years of experience in empowering citizens in order to create a more inclusive and stronger European Union by:

- · Promoting and defending citizens' rights, and
- Developing and supporting mechanisms to increase citizens and citizen organisations' democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU.

ECAS believes in an inclusive, transparent, citizen-centric and democratic European Union in which citizens' rights are at the heart of decision-making at all levels and in which citizens are informed, consulted and active participants.

ECAS delivers its mission by implementing projects, services to citizens, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, research and high-level events in two focus areas: **EU RIGHTS** and **EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY**.





# **EU RIGHTS Focus Area**

**European citizenship** lies at the core of the European project, and <u>freedom of movement</u> is one of the most cherished rights of European citizens.

Some 17.5 million Europeans currently live and work in another EU country. However, many of them face serious challenges and administrative hurdles, which preclude them from exercising their rights "under objective conditions of freedom and dignity" and in practice undermine the fundamental nature of these rights.

ECAS activities under its **EU Rights Focus area** aim at ensuring that the practical implementation of the freedom of movement and other EU citizenship rights measure up to the spirit of the European legislative framework and the values of solidarity and non-discrimination it promotes.

In 2019, in the framework of the 'Your Europe Advice' (YEA) service of the EU, ECAS legal experts provided advice to **28,034** European citizens, **an increase of 46%** on the previous year. The quality of the service maintained a high level - more than 91% of the controlled cases fulfilled all quality assurance criteria and 95% of all replies were provided within the deadline. There was also an increase in questions relating to business, specifically enquiries linked to taxes and free movement of goods and services. For the first time, YEA received fewer enquiries relating to the UK and more relating to Germany.

The service is greatly appreciated by citizens as illustrated by the testimonials in Annex 1.

The ECAS-led project FAIR EU project (Fostering Awareness, Inclusion and Recognition of EU mobile citizens' Political Rights) officially concluded in June 2019. This aimed to foster the successful inclusion of EU mobile citizens in their host EU country's civic and political life, through providing a holistic approach to tackling the obstacles they face when exercising their rights. According to the European Commission, "The project received excellent results and can be regarded as an example of good practice, in terms of producing relevant activities,

which achieve something of genuine value to the citizens targeted". This ECAS-led digital campaign on the project's recommendations at the eve of the European Elections 2019 reached out to 156,047 citizens, 1,526 civil society organisations, 448 EU decision makers and officials, 534 local decision makers, 53 local civil servants, 1,901 members of academia and 29 media outlets.

In December 2018, ECAS initiated the project 'Improving Inclusion of EU Mobile Citizens' (IMPEU), which aims to foster political participation of EU mobile citizens and enhance the capacity and knowledge of civil servants and relevant national, regional and local experts on EU citizenship and related political rights. The first phase of the project, in 2019, focused on research into best practices of political inclusion policies throughout the European Union, identification of the obstacles faced by EU mobile citizens when exercising their EU citizenship rights and an analysis of civil servants' training needs relating to the political participation of EU mobile citizens.

In 2019, ECAS, together with FEANTSA and Médecins du Monde (MdM) launched the Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens (CORE). This join initiative will monitor and take stock, on an annual basis, of the legal and political developments in the field of EU citizenship. This will allow the organisations involved in the Observatory to run and implement joint cross-sectoral initiatives and advocacy actions in order to complement and increase the impact of their individual activities. The Observatory will publish its annual policy report, outlining the most important developments, and present it during the annual conferences and other relevant events of the three partner organisations.

# **Services to Citizens**

# Your Europe Advice

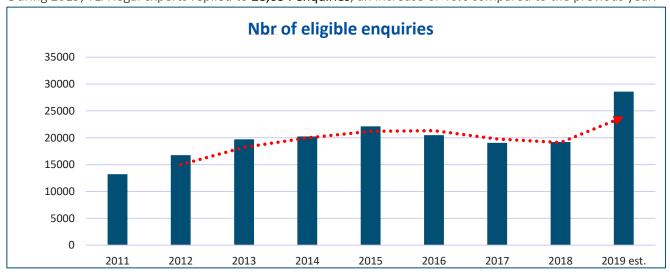
'Your Europe Advice' (YEA) is an EU advice service on the personal EU rights of citizens and businesses that ECAS manages under contract with, and on behalf of, the European Commission.



The ECAS team of around 60 lawyers, who cover all 24 official EU languages and are experts in both EU law and national law in all EU countries, responds to citizens' questions within one week, free of charge and in the language chosen by the user. Enquiries can be submitted either via an <u>online form</u> or by telephone (00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11).

#### Performance in 2019

During 2019, YEA legal experts replied to 28,034 enquiries, an increase of 46% compared to the previous year.

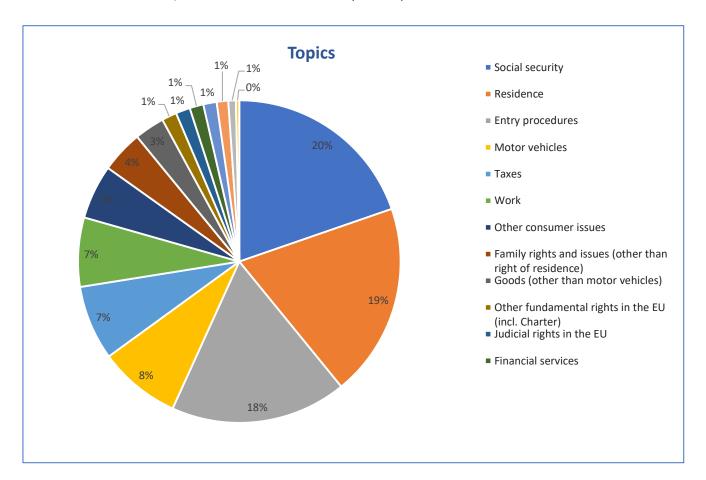


The quality of the service maintained a high level. Under the service contract, the European Commission requires ECAS to ensure a high level of quality assurance and to carry out quality control based on a sample that "should be 10% of all cases" and "not less than 150". This quality assessment allows precise quality control and highly focused management response.

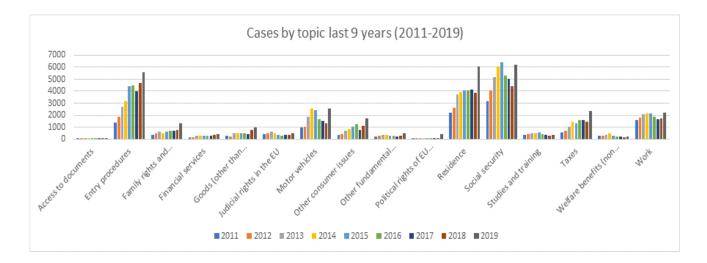
In 2019, more than 91% of the cases controlled fulfilled all quality assurance criteria, and 95% of all replies were provided within the deadline.

#### Nature of the Enquiries

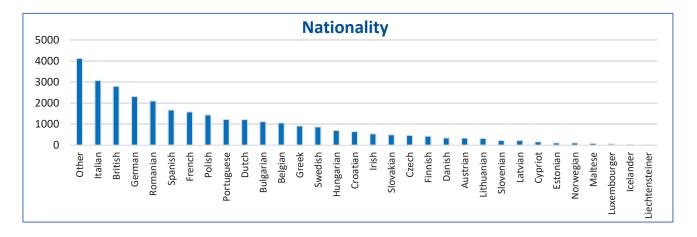
In 2019, YEA once again received more enquiries, reflecting real problems experienced by citizens rather than just requests for information. This was the case for all topics and for all categories of citizens. Citizens faced obstacles imposed not only by national administrations but also by private entities. A significant proportion of citizens are well informed, but are still unable to find any remedy to their situation.



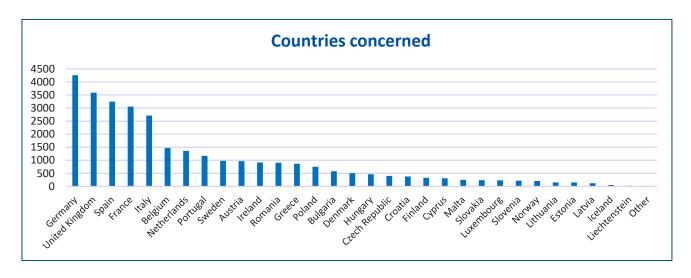
Last year, for the first time in the history of the service, Entry procedures were the most frequent topic. This year, social security (20%) is back as the leading topic followed by Residence (19%) and Entry procedures (18%). There was also an increase in questions relating to business, specifically enquiries linked to taxes and free movement of goods and services.



YEA received enquiries from citizens from all 28 EU countries as well as from Norwegian, Icelandic and third country nationals who are family members of EU citizens. Most enquiries received were from third country nationals. YEA received fewer enquiries from British citizens compared to previous years.



The enquiries concern all 28 Member States, as well as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. For the first time, YEA received fewer enquiries from the UK and more related to Germany.



#### **Outreach Activities**

Six YEA experts participated in 15 outreach activities in Belgium, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The number of participants varied significantly according to the type of event, but, based on the feedback reports, the number of citizens reached may have exceeded 500 (excluding the Facebook chats, which reached over 1.5 million users).

The network meetings were mainly organised by the Commission Representations and gathered many representatives from various service networks such as SOLVIT, Europe Direct, Team Europe, EURES, Enterprise Europe Network and consumer organisations.

Consultation days took place at the Dublin Commission Representation. During these, an expert provided face-to-face advice to EU citizens on their free movement rights. Citizens had the opportunity to present documents to the legal expert in order to clarify their respective cases.

#### Your Europe Web Portal Assistance

The 'Your Europe' portal is an EU website designed to provide comprehensive information and signposting, to assist citizens and businesses in understanding, exercising and enforcing their rights and entitlements throughout the European Union under EU law. The YEA Team contributed to maintaining the high quality and accuracy of the information on the Your Europe Portal, on both EU legislation and national implementation rules. Each time that a legal expert or a Member of the Management Team identifies information gaps or contradictions, these are shared with the Editorial board of the Your Europe portal. In 2019, ECAS provided information on Social Security Deadlines in National Law. ECAS had been also asked to choose some representative enquiries in order to "improve" and simplify them as a model questions to be displayed on the Your Europe website.

#### **EU Legal Updates**

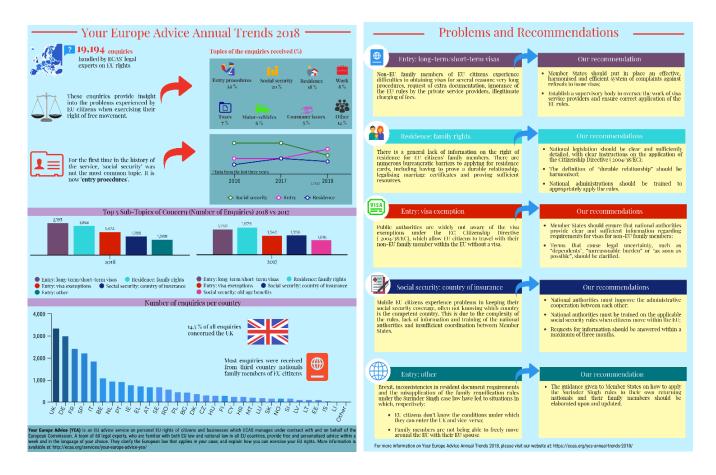
The Management Team ensures that the experts are kept up-to-date with new legislation and case law by providing them with a monthly newsletter entitled 'EU Law Update'. This newsletter is tailored to the continuously evolving informational needs of the experts. It includes the latest news from the EU, information on recent infringement procedures undertaken by the European Commission and an analysis of the latest European Court of Justice judgments that relate to areas dealt with by experts in their enquiries.

# Feedback Reports

At the request of the European Commission, ECAS provides them with four feedback reports per year. These reports include details of the cases handled by the experts in YEA and a policy analysis of the topics covered in the enquiries.

#### YEA annual trends

Based on the enquiries responded to in 2018, ECAS produced a report identifying the key trends in obstacles to free movement. This was published at the end of March 2019. These trends provide useful information on the problems experienced by citizens seeking to exercise their right to free movement.



#### YEA training seminar

In cooperation with the European Commission, ECAS organises an annual training seminar for the YEA legal experts. On 21 and 22 November, the YEA annual training seminar took place in Brussels and was attended by 55 experts. In 2019, the experts were trained on the latest legislative updates and developments in areas such as residence documents under free movement rules, Schengen border rules, European standards, driving licenses, the recognition of professional qualifications, geo-blocking and the posting of workers.



# Your Europe Facebook Chats









In 2019, YEA experts played an active role in two online chats hosted on the Your Europe Facebook page. On 18 March 2019, eight YEA experts provided online replies to **43 questions** on '*Buying and selling online in the EU*'. The chat session reached more than 1,200,000 Facebook users.

On 5 December, nine YEA experts replied to over **65 questions** on 'Live, work and travel in the EU'. This chat had a reach of more than 2 500,000 Facebook users and was the most successful Facebook chat.

# **EU Rights Clinic**



In 2019, the EU Rights Clinic (a joint initiative of ECAS and the University of Kent in Brussels) began reorienting its activities towards strategic litigation and advocacy efforts, targeting systematic breaches of EU free movement rights by national authorities that create visible and invisible barriers to European citizenship rights.

As a result of this change in focus, a request for individual advice will only be taken up where there is a clear opportunity for strategic litigation or to support ongoing advocacy efforts.

#### Strategic Litigation

The objective of strategic litigation is to bring cases before the national courts - wherever possible seeking the intervention of the EU Court of Justice - to challenge systematic breaches of EU free movement rights committed by Member States.

The cases taken on by the EU Rights Clinic tend to represent specific instances that are reflective of a wider pattern of systematic administrative or judicial practices that obstruct or restrict the exercise of free movement rights of EU citizens and their family members.

The Clinic currently has six live appeals pending before the Belgian, French and UK courts. Three of these cases are on final appeal before the Belgian Council of State.

Further opportunities for strategic litigation that have been identified include national practices that impose a narrow definition of the status of a worker (particularly part-time workers) or offer a narrow interpretation of how jobseekers demonstrate a genuine chance of being engaged. There is also the refusal to allow homeless

persons to register and the refusal to accept permanent residence status, regardless of possession of a residence card. It is also anticipated that future strategic litigation efforts will extend to the post-Brexit rights of British citizens residing in the EU and EU citizens in the UK.

#### Advocacy work

The objective of the Clinic's strategic advocacy efforts is to encourage the EU institutions to monitor and prosecute systematic breaches of the EU's rules on the free movement of persons.

The Clinic continued its advocacy efforts in respect of the following cases:

- Petition No 1211/2017 on discrimination by Spain in respect of assets declarations,
- Petition No 1211/2017 on failure to comply by Sweden with EU law in respect of issuing the personal identification number (*personnummer*) to EU citizens and their families,
- Petition No 0627/2018 on the protection of citizens' rights in the context of Brexit (exclusion of certain citizens' rights from Withdrawal Agreement),
- Petition No 0923/2018 on the implementation of Directive 2004/38/EC in Sweden (residence card delays),
- Petition No 0925/2018 on the implementation of Directive 2004/38/EC in France (problems with residence formalities),
- Petition No 0926/2018 on the compatibility of the UK's new EU Settlement Scheme for EU citizens residing in the UK with EU law (post-Brexit rules), and
- Petition No 0927/2018 on the implementation of Directive 2004/38/EC in Belgium (systematic verification of residence rights).

All of the above petitions were also the subject of formal complaints to the European Commission requesting the launch of formal infringement proceedings under Article 258 TFEU against the Member State concerned. All complaints have been closed without further action, except for the complaints against Sweden relating to the *personnummer* (CHAP (2017) 3524) and Spain as regards tax discrimination (CHAP (2013) 01295).

Hearings were held by the European Parliament in October 2019, in which all petitions submitted by the Clinic were discussed. Following debates, the Committee on Petitions resolved to keep each petition open. The Committee also agreed to write to the relevant national governments to enquire as to what is being done to resolve these issues.

# **Projects**

#### MORE for EU citizens

Mobility and Political Rights Enhancement for EU Citizens (MORE for EU Citizens) was launched in April 2019 as a follow-up to the ACT for Free Movement project. It will run until November 2020.

MORE for EU Citizens is supported by the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM), a collaborative initiative of the Network of European Foundations. The aim of the project is to tackle the challenges experienced by EU mobile citizens, in particular those that affect their rights to family reunification and political participation.

The final objective is to improve enforcement of EU citizens' rights by the EU institutions, to increase awareness among EU citizens on what their EU rights are and to involve national decision makers in the discussions on the obstacles that mobile EU citizens face.

While the advocacy activities under MORE for EU citizens are mainly planned for 2020, in 2019, a follow-up action took place in relation to the petitions submitted by EU Rights Clinic as part of the Act for Free Movement project. These were discussed during a hearing of the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions (PETI) on 2-3 October 2019, as explained above (see chapter on the EU Rights Clinic).

#### **CORE**



In 2019, ECAS, together with FEANTSA and Médecins du Monde (MdM), launched the Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens (CORE). This join initiative aims at monitoring and taking stock of legal and political developments in the field of EU citizenship on an annual basis. This will allow the organisations involved in the Observatory to run and implement joint cross-sectoral initiatives and advocacy actions in order to complement and increase the impact of their individual activities.

CORE will publish its annual policy report, outlining the most important developments, and present it during the annual conferences and other relevant events of the three partner organisations.

CORE specific objective is to optimise the impact of the individual work of CORE's members by:

- Creating synergies in terms of expertise to increase capacity,
- Upscaling the promotion of EU mobile citizens' rights,
- Agreeing on CORE's core messages and multiplying them through individual networks,
- Advocating by engaging the Members of the European Parliament, and
- Promoting CORE's messages and activities through individual organisations' events.

#### **FAIR EU**

On 2 February 2018, ECAS launched the 'Fostering Awareness, Inclusion and Recognition of EU Mobile Citizens' Political Rights' (FAIR EU) project. This aimed to develop a holistic approach to identifying and tackling obstacles to free movement rights and political participation.

It was implemented by an ECAS-led consortium, including:

- European University Institute (EUI)
- ❖ Malmö University (MU)
- Migration Policy Group (MPG)
- The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
- Maastricht University (UM).

The project was officially concluded in June 2019. It received the following evaluation from the European Commission: "... the project FAIREU (Fostering Awareness, Inclusion and Recognition of EU mobile citizens' Political Rights) received excellent results and can be regarded as an example of good practice, in terms of producing relevant activities, which achieve something of genuine value to the citizens targeted".

#### Focus groups

The objective of the focus groups was to explore the link between free movement obstacles and their influence on political participation in local and EU elections in selected Member States. The focus groups also identified best practices for political participation.

Based on the outcomes of the focus groups, a <u>synthesis report</u> was developed. This provided an overview of the obstacles to free movement and their effect on the exercise of political rights in the EU28, with a special focus on the six Member States where the focus groups took place. It also generated recommendations for local, national and EU stakeholders.

ECAS chose the countries for the focus groups based on the following criteria:

Member States with the lowest percentage of EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections EU cities, in those Member States with the largest share of EU mobile citizens in their population.

This identified the following cities: Brussels, Dublin, Athens, Luxembourg, Paris and Lisbon. Four of the focus groups took place in 2018 (Brussels, Dublin, Athens, Lisbon), while the remaining two were held in January 2019 (Luxemburg and Paris).

#### Workshop at the European Parliament

On 19 February 2019, ECAS organised a workshop at the European Parliament on Fostering Awareness, Inclusion and Recognition of EU Mobile Citizens' Political Rights. The event was hosted by the Jean Lambert, Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

MEP Lambert opened the discussion by explaining that there many obstacles facing EU mobile citizens when trying to exercise their political rights, including a lack of information on registration procedures or unclear eligibility rules.





Dr Derek Hutcheson, Associate Professor in Political Science at Malmö University, provided the participants with a statistical overview of political participation of EU mobile citizens. He explained that voluntary registration on the electoral roll is very low, and suggested that automatic registration could improve political participation by mobile EU citizens.

Dr Alina Ostling, Researcher at the European University Institute, delved deeper into the obstacles to political participation. She said that there are 15 million mobile EU citizens of voting age, but they have low awareness of their electoral rights. In order to improve their political participation, she recommended an automatic or quasi-automatic registration process and introducing online registration on the electoral roll.

Thomas Huddleston, Research Director at Migration Policy Group, presented the results of VoteBrussels campaign. This targeted EU mobile citizens living in Brussels, encouraging them to vote in the October 2018 local elections. He explained that the campaign contributed to an increase in the voter registration rate, which doubled in just five months, with 25,000 new voters registered. He also gave advice on how to make similar campaigns successful.

Anna Zaremba, EU Rights Coordinator at ECAS, presented the findings of the crowdsourcing exercise. According to the respondents, the main obstacles to political participation are lengthy and cumbersome registration procedures and the lack of correct and clear information on the procedures and eligibility requirements.

Harry Panagopulos, Legal Officer at the European Commission, spoke about the Report on the right of EU citizens to vote and stand as candidates in municipal elections, which the European Commission published in January 2018. He also found the results from the crowdsourcing exercise on mobile EU citizens' involvement in non-electoral activities particularly interesting, saying that it was "a challenge to translate public activity into voting".

According to the conclusions, political participation of mobile EU citizens remains limited due to the obstacles they face and low political awareness. Their involvement could, however, be enhanced if these obstacles were tackled and concrete facilitating measures were introduced.

#### Crowdsourcing

The FAIR EU project included a citizen-orientated outreach component, based on ICT. A crowdsourcing platform was open between September 2018 and May 2019 in order to gather citizens' input on problems related to political participation and freedom of movement, as well as discuss possible solutions.

The crowdsourcing managed to mobilise 384 mobile EU citizens. While the results cannot be considered as representative for the whole population of mobile EU citizens, they provide an important insight into the obstacles and problems EU mobile citizens face in their host Member States. They also complement all the other activities and research undertaken in the framework of the FAIR EU project

ECAS crowdsourcing platform hosts various projects. Please check below those that are the currently active and waiting for your contribution. Please visit a project's page and make an impact by answering just a couple of questions!



The results of the crowdsourcing exercise showed that:

- The level of knowledge of political rights among mobile EU citizens is limited.
- The extent to which EU citizens are provided with information regarding their voting rights and procedures varies from Member State to Member State. Despite specific efforts, the information does not always reach the citizens.
- of Political party campaigns aimed at mobile EU citizens are limited.

- Mobile EU citizens do not always know where and how to find information regarding their political rights.
- Registering for elections (in Member States where this is applicable) causes problems. Mobile EU
  citizens are not always aware of such a procedure and/or they do not know how, when and where
  to register.
- Language barriers complicate political participation of mobile EU citizens when they are only informed about the elections, registration produce, political parties etc., in the national language(s) of the host country.
- Mobile EU citizens seem to engage more in non-electoral political and/ or civic activities than electoral ones. Disillusionment in politics is cited as a potential reason.

Given the above-mentioned findings, the following recommendations should be considered for increasing the political participation of mobile EU citizens:

- Local and national authorities should take the necessary steps required to increase awareness of EU rights among their native and foreign EU citizens. This includes both information campaigns and the introduction of civic education at schools.
- National authorities should envisage the introduction of automatic voter registration in local elections across Europe. If for some reasons this is not feasible, e.g. compulsory voting in Belgium, EU mobile citizens should have the opportunity to register on the electoral roll when they first approach public authorities, e.g. during the residence application process.
- The information regarding political rights of EU mobile citizens should be provided on regular basis and in multiple languages. This should be done using multiple tools: traditional and social media, information material, public campaigns, meetings with mobile EU citizens, etc.
- Introduction of online registration for local and EU elections. This could be particularly true for those Member States where EU mobile citizens experienced problems (delays, excessive requirements) with public authorities. Those who had negative experiences will probably refrain from contacting or visiting public authorises unless really necessary.
- Appropriate measures should be undertaken by the EU institutions and national authorities to overcome the obstacles to freedom of movement faced by mobile EU citizens and their non-EU family members.
- Involvement of mobile EU citizens in local decision making that directly affects their lives should also be promoted in between the elections.

ECAS led a digital campaign on the project's findings, which reached out to 156,047 citizens, 1,526 civil society organisations, 448 EU decision makers and officials, 534 local decision makers, 53 local civil servants, 1,901 members of academia and 29 media outlets.

#### **IMPEU**

In December 2018, ECAS initiated the project 'Improving Inclusion of EU Mobile Citizens' (IMPEU), coordinated by Agenzia per lo Sviluppo dell'Empolese Valdelsa (ASEV). The aim is to foster political participation of EU mobile citizens and enhance the capacity and knowledge of civil servants and relevant national, regional and local experts on EU citizenship and related political rights.

The project is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Commission and is implemented by ECAS in consortium with:

- Agenzia per lo Sviluppo dell'Empolese Valdelsa (ASEV) Italy
- Institut za Podgotovka na Slujiteliv Mejdunarodni Organizacii Zdruzhenie (ITPIO) Bulgaria
- Astiki Mh Kersoskopiki Etareia Helping Hand (HELPING HAND) Greece
- Dimos Vrilission (MUVRI) Greece
- Magenta Consultoria Projects SI (MAGENTA) Spain

The first phase of the project in 2019 focused on research into best practices of political inclusion policies across the European Union, identification of the obstacles faced by EU mobile citizens when exercising their EU citizenship rights and on the analysis of civil servants' training needs as they relate to the political participation of EU mobile citizens.

In 2019, ECAS conducted a <u>comparative analysis</u> of existing best practices in political inclusion policies in the EU28, gathering more than 80 examples. Based on this, 20 of the most exemplary good practices were included in a Good Practice Guide.

ECAS also coordinated the organisation of the following activities in the partner countries: online surveys with mobile EU citizens and with civil servants, citizens' dialogues and IMPEU roundtables for civil servants and local decision makers. Based on the results of these activities and additional desk research, ECAS developed a training needs assessment for civil servants as well as <u>policy recommendations</u> on political inclusion policies for EU mobile citizens.

The project will finish in November 2020.

#### IMPEU Roundtables and Citizens' Dialogues

In February 2019, ECAS organised two events; one for civil society organisations and one targeting local policy makers and civil servants. The aim of these activities was to present the IMPEU project, to get the stakeholders' input on the obstacles to political participation for mobile EU citizens and the reasons behind the low political involvement of this group.

IMPEU roundtables gathered seven participants (four representatives of various municipalities in the Brussels Region and three civil servants from local municipalities). The outcomes of the discussion, together with the results of an online survey, were the basis of the training needs' assessment report that ECAS drafted in 2019.

Citizens' Dialogues gathered seven participants representing various organisations active in the field of EU citizenship and political participation, including JEF Europe, ALDA, Jeune et Citoyen, the European Youth Forum

and Civix. The results of the dialogue, and the discussion around the obstacles to free movement and political participation encountered by mobile EU citizens, fed into ECAS' <u>policy recommendations</u> on political inclusion policies for mobile EU citizens.

#### **Events**

# State of the Union Citizens' Rights Conference

On 14 May 2019, ECAS organised its second 'State of the Union Citizens' Rights' conference. The event brought together a number of experts, civil society organisations (CSOs), representatives of the EU Institutions and citizens, who focused on the obstacles that the more than 17 million EU mobile citizens do or may experience

when residing in a Member State different than their own.

The two conference panels presented the state-of-the-art in the EU citizenship field, including the main legislative developments and obstacles to the exercise of EU rights. They showcased successful case studies, which demonstrated how freedom of movement and political participation of EU citizens can be facilitated and improved.

The tone of the conference was set in an opening speech by **Jean Lambert**, Member of Parliament (MEP), who underlined the importance of the



political rights of EU mobile citizens. She explained that many citizens are either not fully aware of these rights or do not understand how they can exercise them. As a result, their involvement in the political life of their host Member States remains limited, creating a democratic deficit.



Virginia Mercouri, a Media Relations and Communications Management Consultant, presented the results of the World Café discussions, an effective and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue, which took place in the framework of Europe Day on 9 May 2019. The aim of the event was to bring citizens together and collect their ideas on how Europeans can create a more democratic community.

The first conference panel, moderated by **Dr Derek S. Hutcheson**, Associate Professor in Political

Science at Malmö University, elaborated on the obstacles to freedom of movement and political participation that EU mobile citizens face in their host Member States.

Claire Damilano, Senior Legal Manager at ECAS, presented the key obstacles to EU rights, based on the citizens' legal enquiries received through the European Commission's service 'Your Europe Advice'. While political rights are not usually of the greatest concern for this group, Ms Damilano pointed out that there has been a significant increase in the number of questions regarding the procedures and eligibility to participate in the EU elections.

**Dr Jelena Dzankic**, Coordinator of the GLOBALCIT network at European University Institute (EUI), explained that under the FAIR EU project, the EUI has specifically researched the obstacles to political participation in the EU28. Based on this research, Ms Dzankic shared that the main challenges are related to eligibility, voter registration, voting methods, outreach and information and political environment.

**Dr Nando Sigona**, Reader in International Migration and Forced Displacement at the University of Birmingham, presented the results of the Eurochildren study. The aim of the project is to map the presence of EU nationals in Britain and analyse how Brexit will affect EU families. Dr Sigona shared how Brexit has had a highly negative impact on EU mobile citizens, who lost trust in the British government and fear for their future.

Anna Zaremba, EU Rights Coordinator at ECAS, highlighted the results of the crowdsourcing exercise and explained how EU mobile citizens continue to experience obstacles to freedom of movement, particularly regarding their residence rights and access to the local job market. In terms of political participation, EU citizens reported challenges mainly relating to the lack of correct information for registration procedures and lengthy and cumbersome procedures to register on the roll.

Sam van der Staak, Head of Europe Programme at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA International), presented research on the role of national political parties active abroad. He explained that parties may get involved in the activities abroad for various reasons, including voters' mobilisation, funding, creating networks and receiving policy input, leadership recruitment and creating informal structures.



The second conference panel examined case studies on successful political participation and integration of EU mobile citizens in their host countries. The session was moderated by Camille Delbecq, Project Manager at the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA).

**Mauro Striano**, Migration & Participation Policy Officer at FEANTSA, presented serval services which were created in order to provide help and assistance to homeless EU mobile citizens, such as Crossroad in Sweden, Kompasset in Copenhagen, Frostschutzengel and Europa Brücke in Berlin and Public Interest Law Centre in London.

André Duramois, Project Manager at Paris municipality, presented the INCLUDE project, which Paris is implementing in cooperation with European Civic Forum and the Young European Federalists. He explained that the aim of the project is to promote EU citizenship and the rights linked to it among all Parisian EU citizens, to improve civic participation of EU mobile citizens in Paris and to identify best practices in this domain.

Thomas Huddleston, Research Director at Migration Policy Group, presented the Vote Brussels campaign, organised in the framework of the FAIR EU project, which aimed to increase registration rates of EU mobile citizens for the local Belgian elections in 2018. The campaign was highly successful, contributing to a significant increase in the registration rates (25,000 new voters in 6 months) and in the number of mobile citizens running for election (300 EU candidates from all major Brussels parties).

Narcis George Matache, First Deputy in the Regional Council of North Denmark, talked about his experience as a campaigner and the first EU mobile citizen to run for the local council in Aalborg. He explained the steps necessary to create a more inclusive society, one in which people are aware of their political rights and are willing to participate.



The full event report is available here.



# **EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY Focus Area**

Important societal transformations have been taking place throughout Europe in recent years. On one hand, a new deliberative-collaborative e-democracy model is emerging worldwide. This model can contribute to a more open and inclusive form of policy making by involving citizens through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). At the same time, we are being confronted with increasing threats that undermine the foundations and the institutions of our democratic societies. There is an urgent need to develop a more precise understanding of these new trends, mainly populism and online disinformation and how they affect our societies.

For these reasons, ECAS transformed its Digital Democracy Focus Area into a new, expanded European Democracy Focus Area based on three pillars:

- ❖ <u>Digital Democracy</u> to explore the potential of ICT in reducing the gap between political elites and citizens and contributing to the creation of an engaged citizenship through civic tech.
- ❖ <u>Understanding Populism</u> to develop a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of 'populism' in order to take greater account of citizens' voices in our democratic political system.
- Online Disinformation to understand how to counter online disinformation in order to ensure citizens have access to quality and objective information as a central element for a healthy public debate.

In 2019, ECAS placed a special emphasis on its work on the European Elections. In the framework of the 'YouVoteEU' project, the partners created an innovative web platform 'Yourvotematters.eu' to inform voters on EU policies and to connect them with their current representatives, new candidates and fellow voters. The platform included information on MEPs of the past parliamentary term and candidates of the European Elections 2019 and allowed EU citizens to compare their views with those of individual MEPs to find the ones that best represent their views through the 'Match Your Vote' game. With a total of 877,515 EU citizens taking the interactive quiz and more than 1.6 million users recorded in the eight months running up to the European Elections, the Yourvotematters.eu platform proved a valuable tool for EU citizens ahead of the European Elections.

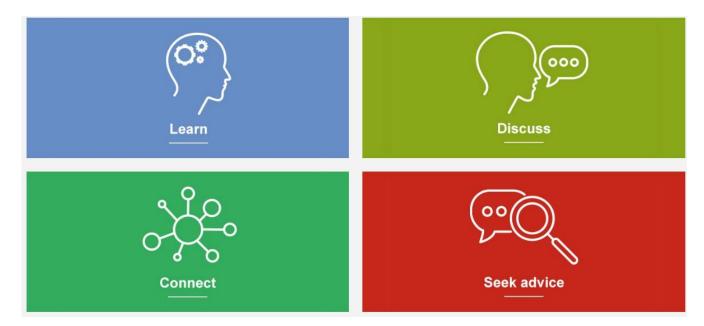
In December 2019, the two-year pilot project on the management of the European Citizens' Initiative Collaborative Platform (the Forum), operated by a consortium including ECAS, the European Service Network and CARSA, came to an end. In its framework, ECAS provided tailored advice to more than 40 current and potential future organisers of initiatives, some of which registered their initiatives based on the legal advice received. As of the end of November 2019, ECAS was operating **the new, revamped official** <u>European Citizens' Initiative Forum</u>, which is now envisaged in the new Regulation in partnership with two subcontractors — Democracy International and ProMedia Productions.

ECAS organised two large high-level events in its European Democracy focus area. One was its fifth annual flagship event, the 'Digital Democracy Day 2019' specifically on 'Harnessing the Potential of Technology in Elections', the other its event on 'Online Disinformation: Finding the silver bullet in the digital world'. The first event discussed the outcomes of the YouVoteEU project and allowed experts and participants to discuss how digital technology can be used for different purposes in elections. The second event explored solutions for countering online disinformation by involving diverse stakeholders working in the field, taking stock of the achievements made in tackling online disinformation in Europe and looking at the way forward for protecting citizens from this threat.

#### Services to Citizens

# European Citizens' Initiative Forum

The European Citizens' Initiative Forum, a pilot project carried out on behalf of, and under contract with, the European Commission by a consortium including ECAS, CARSA and ESN (European Service Network), was implemented during the period December 2017 - December 2019.



The purpose of the online collaborative platform, which was officially launched at the end of May 2018, is to provide advice and information to organisers before, during and after the process of launching and implementing an initiative. The objective is to foster interactions between (potential) organisers, citizens and experts on the topic of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI).

In 2019, ECAS continued to support the European Commission in developing and implementing the European Citizens' Initiative Forum throughout the year. ECAS continued to manage the 'SEEK advice' section of the Forum - handling citizens' enquiries and providing legal, campaigning and fundraising advice (more than 40 potential and current organisers received advice during the life spam of the pilot project). In addition, ECAS held four webinars on different topics related to the European Citizens' Initiative, specifically covering: the new regulation, campaigning and fundraising, giving legal advice when drafting an initiative and the Seek advice. ECAS also contributed to the organisation of four participatory activities to collect feedback and inputs on how to improve the platform and took part in numerous dissemination events.

# **Projects**

#### You Vote EU

The 'You Vote EU' project aimed to stimulate the participation of EU citizens in the 2019 European Parliament elections and increase understanding of current and future EU policies. The project, under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme of the European Union, was implemented in the period February 2018 – July 2019 by a consortium that included ECAS and the following organisations:

- Riparte il Futuro, Italy
- VoteWatch Europe, Belgium
- Vouliwatch, Greece
- Collegium Civitas, Poland

The partners created an innovative web platform, 'Yourvotematters.eu', to inform voters on EU policies and connect them with their current representatives, new candidates and other voters. The objective of the platform was to bring citizens and CSOs to the political discussion and empower them to take part in the European Elections 2019. The platform included information on MEPs of the past parliamentary term and candidates of the European Elections 2019 and allowed EU citizens to compare their views with those of individual MEPs to find the ones who best represent their views through the 'Match Your Vote' game. With a total of 877.515 EU citizens that took the interactive quiz and more than 1.6 million users recorded in the eight months running up to the European Elections, the Yourvotematters.eu platform proved a valuable tool for EU citizens.



ECAS supported the development of the content of the platform and its promotion. The consortium met its ambitious goals set out in the beginning of the project and successfully had an indirect reach of 10,000,000 EU citizens through various multipliers such as media, national organisations, websites, etc. In fact, the consortium developed a widget that was embedded in the websites of 18 different organisations including European, national media and universities that contributed to scaling up the outreach of the platform. Some 92 organisations registered on the platform and 1,283 prospective MEPs shared their positions ahead of the 2019 European Elections showing the cross-edge interests among EU stakeholders for the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

ECAS developed the final evaluation and recommendations report for the project - <u>'Potential and Challenges of Yourvotematter.eu</u> in the 2019 European Elections'.

#### We Are Europe



The 'We Are Europe' project aimed at allowing civil society organisations (CSOs) to become actors in the 'Future of Europe' debate. The project, under the Europe for Citizens programme, was implemented in partnership with 8 different organisations, led by the Union of European Federalists and ran from August 2018 to November 2019.

In 2019, ECAS actively contributed to the formulation of the curricula of the second edition of the European Academy, held 13 - 14 September 2019 in Brussels. The "We are Europe Academy" was a training event for activists from CSOs to develop their practical skills – particularly on Citizens Advocacy and Citizens Engagement. The training focused on preparing citizens to be active participants in the ongoing debate on the future of Europe, particularly in aftermath of the European elections.



ECAS contributed to the roundtable on "A New European Parliament and a New European Commission: Challenges for the Next Five Years" by giving an overview on the policy expectations of citizens and civil society. ECAS also held a workshop on 'How to Bring Europe to Marginalised Urban Areas?', addressing the issue of populism and how to restore public spaces for debate, particularly in rural areas across Europe. Finally, ECAS contributed to the promotion and dissemination of the project's activities and outcomes through its own communication channels.

#### SMART eD



SMARTeD

Smart eDemocracy Against Fake News The 'Smart eDemocracy against Fake News' (SMART eD) ran from September 2018 to December 2019 with the aim of fostering European citizenship and improving conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level by raising citizens' awareness of national and EU level initiatives to counter fake news and online disinformation. The project was implemented in partnership with seven organisations

across Europe and was led by ManaBalss.lv.

In 2019, the project partners developed a methodology for use in two local workshops in each partner's country. ECAS contributed by providing quality assurance of the methodology. In addition, ECAS organised the concluding conference of the project in Brussels, held on 12 November. The conference presented the main results and recommendations of the project, which focused on exploring solutions to countering online disinformation by involving diverse stakeholders working in the field.

ECAS also contributed to the promotion and dissemination of the project's activities and outcomes through its own communication channels. Finally, ECAS contributed to the final recommendations developed by the leading partner of the project.

#### REP2019

The Europe For Citizens project 'Road to European Parliament 2019 — Empowering a new generation of EU citizens' (REP2019) aims to contribute to the growth of a new generation of European young citizens capable of critically assessing the strengths and the weaknesses of the European Union and proposing innovative solutions for enhancing citizens' participation in the European democratic life. This goal will be achieved by designing and delivering a training programme on the role and functioning of the EU institutions, addressed to students in their last year of high school. The training programme will also aim to foster young peoples' participation in the EU's decision-making process.

The project will involve 250 students from rural areas from five different EU countries – Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Spain and Romania. Five transnational events will be organised in the different countries.

The project being is implemented in partnership with the following organisations:

- Dimos Alimou Municipality of Alimos
- Ayuntamiento de La Palma del Condado
- Comuna Victoria
- Associazione Pro Loco "Pro Mercogliano"
- Novi Homines Pilietiškumą skatinanti asociacija

In 2019, ECAS supported the development of the training programmes and was leading the project's communication activities. ECAS's specific tasks in this year included:

• Preparation of a communication and dissemination plan,

- Production of the project website to be managed by ECAS, in cooperation with all partners,
- Creation and updating of project profiles on main social networks (Facebook and Instagram),
- Production of a leaflet illustrating the project's objectives, outputs, description of the partners and their role, and
- Production of one of the 5 electronic newsletters mainly focused on the first event in Spain in November 2019 and promoting the event in Greece in January 2020.

ECAS participated in the first transnational training and simulation event in La Palma del Condado in Seville, Spain on 21 November 2019. ECAS engaged with the young students participating in the event through a series of interviews and other related activities. These aimed at highlighting the skills and the knowledge acquired by the students through their participation in the project.



#### **NEXUS**

On 25 November in Madrid, ECAS began a new three-year project entitled 'Promoting the nexus of migrants through active citizenship (NEXUS)'. The project aims to empower students (with particular attention to newly-arrived migrant students and under-served students) so that they can enjoy their rights, uphold human rights values and contribute positively to their society and the global community.

During the kick-off meeting, ECAS and the partners drafted the calendar of the activities to be implemented in the coming period as well as started to work together to define role and synergies.

#### **DEMOS**



Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe

# How do citizens react to populism?



The three-year-long 'Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe' (DEMOS) project, under the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union, began in December 2018. The project is led by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and is being implemented by a consortium of 15 organisations. It explores the practical value of 'democratic efficacy' as the condition of political engagement needed to address the challenge of populism.

In 2019, ECAS supported DEMOS communication and dissemination activities in numerous ways, using its own online channels (social media, newsletters, etc), its partners (e.g. ECAS members) and EU stakeholders.

ECAS delivered blog posts, press releases, articles and interviews that stressed the need for tailor-made strategies that would be effective in tackling populism at a local level and introducing how the DEMOS project will be working in this direction through comprehensive research. ECAS has also been a multiplier for the DEMOS channels by re-tweeting DEMOS posts, communicating to its members that they should subscribe to the DEMOS channels and promoting the DEMOS website.

Furthermore, ECAS has organised workshops to promote the project (e.g. at the Economic and Social Committee's Civil Society Days 2019), and has acted as guest speakers at external events to discuss DEMOS with participants and a panel of experts working in the field of understanding populism.

ECAS has also started its working package on 'Improving Democratic Efficacy: action research and pilot projects' in order to contribute to identifying the main features of citizens' reactions to populism. It has started preparing for the creation of the Digital Dashboard and the crowdsourcing platform, the organisation of citizens assemblies and the mapping of organisations working to tackle populism in Europe. All these activities will be fully implemented in 2020 and 2021.

#### **Events**

# Digital Democracy Day 2019

On 7 March 2019, ECAS held its fifth annual 'Digital Democracy Day – Harnessing the Potential of Technology in Elections'. The event discussed the role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in engaging citizens in political elections, with a particular focus on the 2019 European Parliament elections. Guest speakers were invited to discuss e-voting practices, online platforms or applications that engage citizens in elections, mainly by enabling them to share their opinion, participate in policy debates, identify their elected representatives and political candidates and to have access to information on the decisions taken.

More than 70 participants from 20 different countries took part in the conference, which was also livestreamed and reached over 2,000 people online. The conference featured two panels:

- 'Connect, share and vote! How digital technology can be used in elections', and
- 'Engaging the disengaged! Reviving citizen engagement in European Elections through e-democracy'.

The Digital Democracy Day 2019 was organised in the framework of the YOU VOTE EU project, under the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Commission. The event not only presented the outcomes of the YOU VOTE EU platform but also allowed experts and participants to discuss how digital technology can be used for different purposes in elections. It gave recommendations on the best practices to stimulate and increase the participation of EU citizens in the 2019 European Parliament elections, as well as their knowledge and understanding of current and future EU policies.

The final report can be found <u>here</u>



# ECI DAY 2019: Digital Voices

The 'ECI Day 2019: Digital Voices' took place at the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels on 2 April 2019. Organised by the EESC in cooperation with several civil society organisations, including ECAS, this represents an important annual meeting to exchange ideas on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) as a tool for participatory democracy in the EU. This year's focus was mainly on the new regulation and its desired impact and practical changes. Guest speaker, First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans, explained what the new ECI regulation would improve, how the ECI would benefit active citizens and where the European Commission itself placed this tool in its own hierarchy of consultation instruments and procedures.



Moreover, the event included experts discussing the ongoing changes in global trends in voting and citizens' active participation, particularly concerning the use of digital tools. In view of the European Elections 2019, the ECI Day was an occasion to analyse various aspects of the new regulation and compare the European Citizens' Initiative and its agenda-setting potential with similar instruments in the Member States.

Two main workshops were organised:

- Expanding the ECI's digital dimension: co-creating the best possible online collection system, and
- Learning from the Member States: what can the ECI and the EU learn from national agenda-setting initiatives?

ECAS organised the workshop on the 'Expanding the ECI's digital dimension: co-creating the best possible online collection system' together with Democracy International. This interactive workshop focused on the launch of the European Commission's new online collection system in 2020, considered as an opportunity to make the system as easy to use and campaigner-friendly as possible. Speakers and participants had the chance to discuss the advantages and challenges of the Commission's online collection system and the individual online collection systems. The aim was to gather feedback to ensure that the Commission adopts the best features of both the central and individual online collection systems to produce the best possible version in 2020. The speakers were representatives of the Commission, responsible for designing the new system, digital experts and civil society campaigners. Discussions were also posted online on the European Citizens' Initiative Forum.

The report and programme of the event can be found <u>here</u>

#### **EESC Civil Society Days**

On 12-13 June 2019, the EESC's Liaison Group organised its annual 'Civil Society Days' (CSDs) event, focusing on 'Sustainable Democracy in Europe'. The CSDs 2019 addressed the challenges to our democratic systems and fundamental values (respect for human rights, individual liberty, equality, the rule of law) and the space for civil society within the European Union. Participants were asked to reflect on the alarming consequence of an erosion of democracy and restricted civic space in several parts of the EU.



In this framework, ECAS co-organised two different workshops, one entitled 'Resilient democracies: the positive impact of civic action and organised civil society' and the other was on 'E-Democracy, the Advocacy Power of Citizens and Alternative Forms of Active Participation'.

The workshop 'Resilient democracies: the positive impact of civic action and organised civil society' presented various successful initiatives originating from Civil Society that mitigated current global trends such as populism. The ECAS Executive Director, Assya Kavrakova, presented the study that she had personally co-authored for the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Populism in Non-Metropolitan Areas in Europe'. The study was conducted in eight non-metropolitan areas of four countries with different socio-economic characteristics, but all with a high populist vote. Ms Kavrakova explained how populism is a result of an interplay of different factors and how these can be different in each case. Presenting the study's recommendations, she highlighted the need to support Civil Society in tackling populism.

The following day, the workshop 'E-Democracy, the Advocacy Power of Citizens and Alternative Forms of Active Participation" began with an overview of the current situation relating to citizen participation at local, national and European levels. The participants then split into three groups to debate citizen participation at different levels, following the World Café format.

ECAS' Senior Manager European Democracy facilitated the discussions on 'Citizen participation at the national level – focus on e-democracy, emerging forces of change and challenges'. The three rounds saw different participants tackling different aspects of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and democracy. Participants highlighted the advantages of technology and discussed the potential benefits that it could bring to democracy. They then identified local and national examples of how ICT has been used effectively to foster democracy (e.g. e-initiatives, e-consultations, crowdsourcing, participatory budgeting) and finally developed recommendations to be presented to the European institutions.

The report and programme of the event can be found <a href="here">here</a>

# 'Online Disinformation: Finding the silver bullet in the digital world'

On 12 November, ECAS held its first conference on the subject of online disinformation. The conference: 'Online Disinformation: Finding the silver bullet in the digital world', organised in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), focused on exploring solutions to countering online disinformation, from potential regulatory approaches to efficient initiatives and actions to empower citizens. By involving diverse stakeholders working in the field, participants took stock of the achievements made in tackling online disinformation in Europe and looked at the way forward to protect citizens from this threat.



Around 70 participants took part in the conference, which was also livestreamed and viewed by over 300 people online. The event featured two interactive panels where decision makers, tech platforms, civil society organisations, civic campaigners and academics 'challenged' and commented each other's positions on the subject of 'online disinformation'. The panels went through different aspects of the problem:

- How far-reaching is regulation?
- Empowering citizens to counter online disinformation through knowledge, digital skills and actions

As the event was held in the framework of the SMARTeD project, under the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union (EU), the project's findings and results were also presented and discussed. Distinguished speakers discussed with an engaged audience on whether there is a silver bullet capable of building the necessary resilience in our society to ensure a prosperous, safe and democratic digital future for European citizens.

The final report can be found here.

# **Publications**

# Study "Societies outside Metropolises: the role of civil society organisations in facing populism"

The Study, commissioned by the Diversity Europe Group of the EESC, implemented by ECAS and co-authored by the ECAS Executive Director, identifies the factors influencing citizens' choices in favour of populism and the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in countering it. It was conducted in eight non-metropolitan areas, one above and one below the EU average per country in terms of socio-economic development: Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd (Austria), Drôme and Aisne (France), Udine and Reggio di Calabria (Italy), Płocki and Nowosądecki (Poland).

Extensive desk research, two statistical analyses, the opinions of 616 citizens from the regions, three focus groups and 54 in-depth interviews with CSOs and experts informed the study's findings.

Socioeconomic and cultural factors of populism vary between different social groups, between countries and between different regions within the same country. No factor alone causes populism, but rather there is an interplay of factors, which feed on and reinforce each other. The crises of representative democracy, diminished trust in traditional parties and online disinformation are strong additional factors.

CSOs do not recognise populism as a distinct type of challenge. There is a lack of encompassing and comprehensive civic initiatives in tackling populism, due to the complexity of the phenomenon, the shrinking civic space in terms of the lack of an enabling environment for CSOs to operate, limited human resources, reduced funding and a lack of expertise.

The publication can be found here.

# European Court of Auditors – Assessment of the Commission's public consultations

In January 2019, the ECAS Senior Manager European Democracy was invited to join the expert panel of the European Court of Auditors, to support the auditors working on the assessment of the European Commission's public consultations. The auditors assessed whether the consultations were effective at reaching out to citizens and stakeholders and making use of their contributions. They examined a selection of recent online consultations and also conducted a perception survey to find out the satisfaction levels of participants in consultations.

The final Special report no 14/2019: 'Have your say!': Commission's public consultations engage citizens, but fall short of outreach activities was published in September 2019 and can be found here.

# Policy Paper Carnegie Europe - Six Ideas for Rejuvenating European Democracy

In 2019, the ECAS Senior Manager European Democracy was invited to co-author a policy paper by Carnegie Europe as a part of the 'Reshaping European Democracy' project. The publication explored six constructive ideas where European leaders can start revitalising European democracy. These ideas aim to help EU institutions connect downward and use reforms to facilitate parallel national and subnational democratic improvements. ECAS contributed to the section on embracing a more positive approach to digital democracy, which not only manages the risks of new technologies but also harnesses their potential. The report was published in November 2019.



The publication can be found here.

# Recommendations for the Set Up of the Conference on the Future of Europe by 12 European Civil Society Organisations

In Autumn 2019, ECAS joined 12 CSOs in developing recommendations for a successful Conference on the Future of Europe. This Conference presents an important opportunity to strengthen the democratic quality of the discussion on the future of Europe and the potential to unlock useful reforms of the EU. However, the success of the Conference will depend on a number of factors, including the clear interinstitutional agreement on the objectives, the composition, the methods used and the final impact of the proposals of the Conference. The ECAS Senior Manager European Democracy worked on more detailed proposals on the methodology, which was included as an Annex

ECAS highlights that the process should follow a divergent-convergent model (implemented in five main phases) in order to include randomly-selected citizens and civil society organisations representing further citizens and their concerns, experts and institutional decision makers in different phases, and combining both online and offline methods. The goal is to ensure inclusiveness and transparency throughout the whole process and have a broad participation in the Conference from all parts of society, but with democratic mandate holders having a final say on how to concretely input the recommendations into policy making.

The full recommendations can be found here.



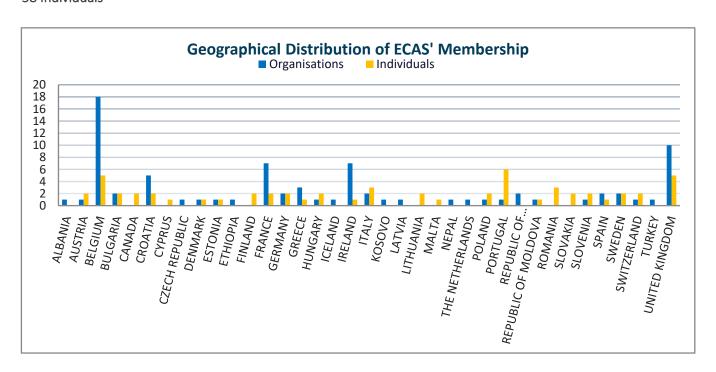
# ECAS Membership and Outreach ECAS Membership

As of 1 January 2018, ECAS is implementing a **mission-driven** and **free-of-charge membership** based on promoting and defending citizens' rights as well as developing and supporting mechanisms to increase citizens' and citizen organisations' democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU.

At the end of 2019, <u>ECAS' Membership</u> consisted of **138 Members** - both organisations and individuals - who subscribed to the <u>ECAS Mission and Vision</u> and are active in our focus areas (EU rights and European Democracy).

In particular, ECAS' Network of Members covered **37 countries** (27 EU Member States and 10 non-EU Member States), and included:

80 Member Organisations (24 of which are network organisations), and 58 Individuals



# ECAS' Outreach

#### Overview

In 2019, ECAS continued to expand its outreach through its website and social media communication channels. The main website, <a href="www.ecas.org">www.ecas.org</a>, had a total of 107,111 page views for the year. It is worth noting that a number of projects (Fair EU, ECI Forum and YouVoteEU) that were initiated in the beginning of 2018 were supported through the creation of their own, separate platforms. The traffic generated on these is not included in the above total.

Day-to-day, ECAS' news and activities were also widely publicised via Facebook and Twitter. There was a noticeable increase in followers on both platforms, as well as in audience engagement with the posts.

#### ECAS' Communications

Internal and external communication is key to ECAS' work. We strive to develop strong dialogue with members, stakeholders and policy makers and to inform them of key developments through various media channels.

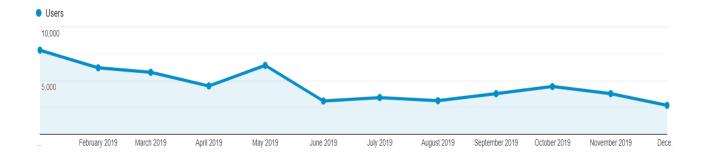
The ECAS website currently provides information on its identity (mission, vision and values), projects and services to citizens, partners and members as well as its advocacy activities at EU level. This is supported by social media activity on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Our bimonthly newsletter highlights the latest news from ECAS, our members and relevant EU policy updates. These aim to present a full picture of the political field at the time of publication.

Detailed statistics of ECAS' communications are as follows:

# Website activity

In 2019, ecas.org continued to generate a steady flow of visitors, with a monthly high of **7,818** (January) and a monthly low of **2,702** (December), for an annual total of **52,703 unique users**.



The number of sessions followed a similar trend, with a high of **9,343** in January and a low of **3,394** in December, for an annual total of **65,305**.



#### Twitter

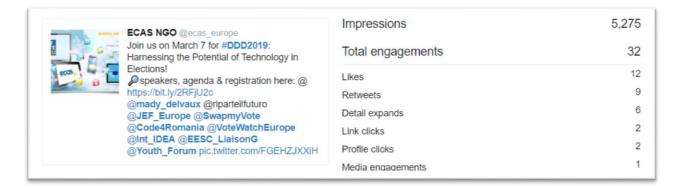
By the end of 2019, ECAS had a total of **4,600 followers** – a net increase of 350 from the previous year. We posted **603 tweets**, producing **1,000,088 impressions** (i.e. the number of times a user sees a Tweet on their timeline or in search results).

The average engagement rate per month was **1.0%**, with a total of **1,048 likes** and **582 retweets** for the year. All of the above figures refer only to original ECAS posts and do not include retweets of posts.

Many of the posts were liked and/or shared by MEPs, organisations and other stakeholders with large followings. It is important to note that, besides two boosted (paid advertisement) posts, all produced traffic and engagement was organically generated.

The top three tweets were:

ith us your opinion on ob	ECAS NGO @ecas_europe	Impressions	29,405
movement and cipation in the EU. Your v	EXPATS have you received your #EUelections2019 postal vote late or had difficulties in registering to vote?	Total engagements	280
		Detail expands	59
	Visit ← https://crowdsourcing.ecas.org/fair-eu & share your experience w/ us	Retweets	55
		Likes	54
		Link clicks	47
		Media engagements	34
		Profile clicks	21





#### Facebook

In 2019, our Facebook page reached **5,174** followers by the end of the year, a net annual gain of **722**. Our **216** Facebook posts **reached 181,210** unique users, with **9,052** users engaging with the posts (sharing and liking). One post was picked up and shared by the European Parliament, and although we use the platform mainly to reach and engage with citizens, many other posts were widely shared by organisations and other important stakeholders working in the field of European politics and democracy.

#### LinkedIn

By the end of 2019 we had **960 followers**, a net gain of 254 on the previous year. We had **1,806 page views** and an average engagement rate of **2 percent per post**.

# ECAS Newsletter (bi-monthly)

Since January 2016, ECAS has published a bimonthly newsletter. By the end of 2019, the number of subscribers had increased to **3,330**.

The newsletter is structured around ECAS' two focus areas of EU Rights and European Democracy. It serves to promote our activities, along with those of our members and partners, and to inform both our stakeholders and citizens in general about the main ongoing initiatives at EU level relevant to our areas of work, while enabling them to participate in the discussions.

# **Annexes**

# Annex I - Thank You Messages received by Your Europe Advice

"This reply was so helpful and clear. We are very grateful for the time and effort that has been put in to responding to our enquiry. Many thanks indeed for this helpful and prompt service. With much appreciation." John (United Kingdom)

"Thank you for your extremely detailed and helpful reply. I really appreciate your help". Sarah (Italy)

"As usual a very clear and informative response, many thanks!". Pete (Ireland)

"Thank you very much for detailed reply to my questions. May I commend you for the time and effort it must have taken to compile such a comprehensive report. The information contained has given me all the answers to my questions. Thank you again for your help". Campbell (Spain)

"Good afternoon. Thank you very much for your prompt respond. It is very helpful your email and a lot of information inside". Gligor (Bulgaria)

"Dear Team, I would just like to say a big 'thank you' for your swift and informative response. Very impressive!

Regards!". David (France)

"Wow, thank you for such detailed and extensive answer, I really appreciate it. I will read it again carefully and take actions accordingly". Kresimir (Croatia)

"Thank you so much for your help you have helped me sleep better". Hilary (United Kingdom)

"I would like to thank you for your advice. You answered very quickly and in a most informative way. Thanks again for your time and your advice! Sincerely". Claudia (Germany)

"Dear Your Europe Advice Team, Thanks so much for your advice. This is most helpful. I really appreciate your swift help!". Jutta (Germany)

"Thank you for the detail answer. This was the assistance that I was aiming for". Dani (Croatia)

"Thank you very much for your advice. This was extremely helpful and comprehensive. I really appreciate your help". Stella (Slovakia)

"Thank you very much for the information and solidly grounded advice. I will indeed wait till I have a valid travel document in my possession again". Rumia (Netherlands)

"Wow professional answer, didn't expect that. Thanks, much appreciated :)". Norbert (Poland)

"Thank you very much for your reply, the information you provided was very informative and useful in respect of registering as a Pensioner with the Health Authority". Robert (Cyprus)

"Hello, I am very very thankful for your thorough advice and the effort made to contact the relevant people. I never expected such useful information and help! Thank you very much and i will make sure to gather as much helpful information as possible". Oliver (Ireland)

"Dear, Thank you very much for the detailed answer. I really appreciated it and I will look for the documents and do the steps as mentioned". Luiz (Portugal)

"Many thanks for your help. You guys are the best!". Lena (Sweden)

"Thank you very much for such information. It's really the answer we are looking for". Carlos (Spain)

"Dear Sir/Madam, Thank you so much for your comprehensive reply to our query, the information contained is of immense help to our case". Paul (United Kingdom)

"Thank you for all the information, I appreciate that you explained very seriously my case. Thank you!". Tim (Bulgaria)

"Hello, you gave me a very detailed answer to my question. Thank you very much for your help". Alexandra (Greece)

"Boa tarde, Muito obrigada pelo vosso telefonema e email, esclareceram todas as dúvidas que tinha colocado em e-mail e mais algumas. Irei ler novamente com toda a atenção, espero que com estas informações e conselhos me seja mais fácil a mudança. Cumprimentos e continuação de um excelente trabalho!". Bárbara (Portugal)

"Nagyon szépen köszönöm a válaszukat, sikerült megtudnom, amit szerettem volna!" (Thank you very much for your reply, I managed to find out what I wanted". Zsuzsanna (Hungary)

"Merci de votre réponse si détaillée! Je vais lire et me renseigner grâce aux liens que vous m'avez fournis". Anne (Luxembourg)

"Va multumesc pentru raspunsul edificator si prompt ! Succes in continuare! Cu stima". Remus (Romania)

"Tack för goda råd och snabbt svar. Krister (Sweden)

"Je vous remercie d'avoir pris le temps de me répondre de manière aussi précise et détaillée !Je prends également note de votre conseil de contacter SOLVIT. Merci pour votre aide, qui m'est très précieuse!". Raphaël (France)

"Grazie mille, ora ho capito tutto bene". Marawan (Italy)

"Buenos días, Muchísimas gracias por la explicación en detalle, me ha aclarado muchas dudas". Pau (Spain)

"Beste heer/mevrouw, heel erg bedankt voor uw antwoord". Felix (Netherlands)"

"Dobry den.Dakujem Vam velmi pekne za poradenie.Velmi ste mi pomohli.S pozdravom Savelova" (Slovakia)

"Acuso a receção do vosso mail e agradeço imenso toda a disponibilidade demonstrada bem como a celeridade na resposta." Sandra (Portugal)

"Buna ziua. Va multumesc din suflet ca ati raspuns. Azi am reusit sa imi rezolv Problema. Va multumesc." Anamaria (Romania)

"Vi ringrazio moltissimo per la risposta veloce, esauriente e chiara.. Procedero' nella richiesta di rimborso+compensazione. Grazie ancora e buon lavoro". Fausta (Italy)

"Hallo Zusammen , Zunächst erst einmal ganz herzlichen Dank für Ihre schnelle Hilfsbereitschaft und Auskunft. Ich werde alles genau lesen und ggfs. zum Generalkonsulat gehen. Viele Grüße Holger". (Germany)

"Bonjour, J'ai bien reçu votre mail. Merci encore pour notre entretien téléphonique très agréable. Je vous remercie pour l'aide et les informations que vous nous fournissez très efficacement ". Antoine (Belgium)

"Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren, Herzlichen Dank für Ihre zeitnahe und konkrete Antwort. Mit freundlichen Grüssen". Wolfgang (Austria)



