

State of the Union Citizens' Rights 2024

ECAS Brussels, March 2024

Welcome

State of the Union Citizens' Rights 2024 Towards a Stronger Democracy that Leaves No One Behind

19 March 2024 | 9.30am – 13.00pm CET

-REPORT-

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the 19th of March 2024, the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) held the sixth edition of its “State of the Union Citizens’ Rights Conference”. Given that 2024 is a particular year due to the European Parliament elections taking place, this edition of the conference focused on how to improve voting rights conditions as well as on how to foster political participation of all EU citizens, including underrepresented groups and young Europeans.

ECAS’ Executive Director, [Assya Kavrakova](#), opened the conference by reminding the audience that, in 2024, a significant proportion of the global population would be eligible to participate in political elections, including those for the European Parliament. Ms. Kavrakova underscored the imperative of achieving a high voter turnout during the latter, emphasising that the strength of European democracy is heavily dependent on the active participation of all segments of society, including non-mainstream groups. Hence, only by ensuring inclusive engagement in the electoral process can European democracy truly “work for all”.

This year, various speakers, both from the European institutions and civil society, were invited to participate in a panel discussion about ways to improve the implementation of political rights and innovate EU Citizenship to make it more inclusive. At the end of every panel discussion, the audience was encouraged to interact with the speakers and ask questions about the topics explored.

The conference was organised in the framework of the EURECA project, under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Commission. It took place both in-person in one of the Conference halls at The Hotel in Brussels and online through the Webex platform. The event gathered 60 participants, who attended offline in the conference hall, while 27 people were present on the Webex platform.



2. KEYNOTE SPEECH: STATE OF DEMOCRACY

The European Commission's Vice President for Democracy and Demography, [Dubravka Šuica](#), set the scene by elaborating on the current state of democracy in the EU. She underlined, first of all, that the European Parliament elections this time will be fought and won on the issue of *trust*. The EU must demonstrate through innovative and impactful measures that European democracy remains capable of delivering *what* is needed *when* it is needed, particularly in response to the concerning surge of populist rhetoric and its “easy and empty promises”.

Ms. Šuica furthermore emphasised that a new push for democracy is needed and highlighted its evolving nature as a dynamic process, an eco-system, which cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, the dynamic space between one election and the next must be nurtured in order to foster an environment in which EU citizens feel empowered to engage in dialogues about their hopes and dreams for the future. This, then, would ultimately rebuild their trust in politicians. Accordingly, the EU's main task for the upcoming elections should be to counteract political alienation with greater political participation and institutional listening to realise a democracy fit for the future and the next generations.

The Vice President expressed her firm conviction that organisations like ECAS along with initiatives like the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), play an essential role in stimulating political engagement in the aforementioned dynamic space between elections, one that goes far beyond voting. She cited the Conference's successful outcomes, where citizens managed to deliver 49 concrete proposals, to which the European Commission has already positively responded. The follow-up to the Conference in the form of a [Guide to European Citizenship](#) has aimed to perpetuate these kind of participating acts.

Ending on a positive note, Ms. Šuica described the evident desire and excitement to be involved that she sees among these citizens, including those from underrepresented backgrounds. To safeguard and uphold such citizen engagements, the European Commission has recently introduced the [Defence of Democracy package](#), containing recommendations aimed at enhancing the participation of citizens and civil society in policymaking across all levels of government and across all generations.



3. ENGAGING CITIZENS THROUGH CROWDSOURCING

ECAS' Programme Director of the European Democracy focus area, [Elisa Lironi](#), and ECAS' European Democracy Coordinator, [Savannah Schuurbiers](#), paved the way for the main panels by elaborating on how to engage citizens in democratic elections through the method of crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing is a problem-solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities that otherwise would not always be reached and engaged with. Specifically, ECAS concentrates on crowdsourcing legislation and has pioneered its own platform¹, launched across all 27 Member States. This platform mainly serves to complement representative democracy through enhanced citizen participation and to empower citizens to connect with policymakers.

In a bold move last year, ECAS introduced an innovative crowdsourcing activity dubbed '[European Elections Dystopia](#)'. This initiative stemmed from a recognition that citizens are often only asked about their hopes and dreams for Europe. ECAS, therefore, opted to pivot the discourse by inviting attendees to, instead, articulate their worst fears scenarios, arising from a premise of 'creative destruction'. These scenarios spanned from the worst conceivable outcomes of the European Elections 2024 – i.e., large-scale conflicts, populism and, consequently, inefficient policy-making – to more introspective ones, where participants were asked to assess whether their own current actions resembled those dystopian visions and, if so, how to counteract this. Ms. Lironi asserted that, as a result of these reflections, many pledged to intensify their engagement in EU politics and to educate their social circles about the significance of democracy and voting, as they wished to reduce the risk of these nightmare scenarios coming true.

Ms. Schuurbiers then stated how the European Elections Dystopia crowdsourcing activity has successfully raised awareness about the European Elections 2024, mentioning that ECAS has received a total of 1435 contributions from respondents, of which 53,7% participated online and 46,3% offline in workshops with partner Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Additionally, it stimulated citizens to reflect on the potential state of Europe in the absence of the EU. Finally, building on the insights gained from the activity, ECAS developed and consolidated concrete recommendations for CSOs and policymakers, such as committing to fact-checking and countering disinformation campaigns.

The full presentation can be found [here](#).



Recommendations to civil society

- ✓ Enhance civic education and digital literacy
- ✓ Commit to fact-checking and countering disinformation campaigns
- ✓ Advocate for transparency in election processes

Recommendations to decision-makers

- ✓ Strengthen citizen-centric democracy
- ✓ Commit to combatting disinformation and promote media literacy
- ✓ Address barriers to participation to ensure fair representation

¹ <https://crowdsourcing.ecas.org/en>

[Claire Morot-Sir](#), ECAS' EU Rights Manager, continued the discussion in the same vein, as she shed light on another crowdsourcing exercise: the ECAS Citizenship Innovation Awards. She discussed how the Awards aim at giving citizens a platform to express their thoughts and provide recommendations on how to foster their rights as citizens of the European Union. Every year, a topic is proposed by ECAS, which is always linked to the rights one possesses as a citizen of the EU. Ms. Morot-Sir identified four main trends collected from citizens' recommendations, namely the need to increase 1) knowledge and awareness about the EU, 2) to stimulate online tools that are easy to use and to potentially implement E-voting with, 3) to engage citizens in the decision-making processes through increased public consultation, and, 4) to communicate to EU citizens through simplified messages.

All trends can be found [here](#).

This year, the topic for the ECAS Awards revolved around fostering political participation. Ms. Morot-Sir informed attendees that the ECAS Awards consists of two different phases. The initial phase involves collecting contributions and recommendations from citizens spanning various age groups and geographic locations, all aimed at how to encourage political engagement. In the second phase, all submissions are published for public voting. The award winner, then, is determined by the highest number of votes received for their presented recommendation.

Following the official panel discussion, online and offline participants were encouraged to engage in a question and answer session. The panellists received inquiries ranging from the dangers of lobbying to thoughts about whether the nightmare scenarios citizens came up with were predominantly nationally influenced.



4. PANEL DISCUSSION: SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE EUROPEAN UNION BY ENGAGING ALL CITIZENS

Moderated by journalist [Florence Ranson](#), the first panel featured civil society representatives of marginalised communities who presented their past and present initiatives, offering insights on how EU institutions could leverage strategies to encourage political engagement among citizens.

Ms. Ranson introduced [Simona Barbu](#), Policy Officer at the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless ([FEANTSA](#)), asking her whether there had been any improvements in inclusivity for this demographic since the previous elections. In answer to this, Ms. Barbu underscored that being homeless should not preclude individuals from exercising their political rights and in particular their right to vote as EU citizens. Thankfully, FEANTSA's members 'on the ground', comprising numerous NGOs, actively monitor and facilitate voters' registration, recognising the importance of removing barriers to political engagement for this population. The lack of comprehensive data on homelessness, however, makes it more complicated for these groups to do their work, particularly concerning political participation – partly due to varying definitions of the term 'homelessness' across Member States.

Finally, with regard to recent developments in this area, FEANTSA is happy to see more visibility for homeless people, apparent in the European Parliament resolution of November 2020 on [stocktaking of European elections](#). This resolution recognises the restrictions imposed by the requirement for an address to register and vote and strongly advocates for the removal of this condition in Directives, such as 94/80/EC² and 93/109/EC³, to facilitate voting for homeless EU citizens. Although Ms. Barbu acknowledged this positive trend in recognising and addressing the needs of homeless individuals in policymaking, she felt it is imperative to point out the ongoing need for harmonisation across the EU and its Member States to ensure the effective implementation of such initiatives at all levels.

Following this, the Executive Director of the European Roma Grassroots Organisation ([ERGO](#)), [Gabriela Hrabanova](#), provided insights into the representation of and attention given to Roma people within the EU institutions. Notably, since 2012, support within the European Commission in the form of a specific strategic framework has indeed been dedicated to Roma communities. Moreover, ERGO has also cultivated fruitful cooperation with the European Parliament, engaging actively with four MEP's within



² Directive 94/80. Directive (EU) 94/80 of the Council laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A31994L0080>.

³ Directive 93/109. Directive (EU) of the Council laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31993L0109>.

the [intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity](#), that also focuses on Roma-related issues and the fostering of Roma people's political engagement.

Further elaborating on the need for Roma people to become more politically involved, Ms. Hrabanova asserted that the biggest problem ERGO faces is a specific institutional form of racism against Roma people, one that has been internalised by Roma communities, causing them to isolate themselves from the public sphere. She mentioned that an effective key strategy to counter this challenge is to continue mobilising individuals with connections to Roma communities to step forward and actively engage their friends.

Lastly, Ms. Hrabanova acknowledged the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement for amplifying awareness of Roma issues, resulting in increased initiatives and funding from the EU institutions. While ERGO welcomes this global anti-racism advocacy trend, it expresses serious concerns about the rise of the far right, which may potentially secure even one third of the seats in the European Parliament elections in June 2024. This surge threatens to undermine all the progress ERGO has achieved over the past decade. Echoing discussions from the first panel, Ms. Hrabanova then pointed out the critical importance of informed voting, and to facilitate this, the implementation of tools and methods to counter disinformation. ERGO will, therefore, keep dedicating its time to campaigning and monitoring upcoming elections to minimise hate speech, thereby safeguarding the electoral process from manipulation by intolerant parties.

[Cristian Leahu](#), Policy Officer at the Directorate General Justice and Consumers of the European Commission ([DG JUST](#)), was likewise asked by Ms. Ranon to elaborate on the efforts of the European Commission to follow the aforementioned 'trend' of inclusivity, in particular with regard to EU citizens with disabilities. Mr. Leahu echoed Ms. Hrabanova's observation, noting that the issue has gathered significant attention in European societies, leading to its prominence on the Council agenda and reception of substantial support in the European Parliament through various resolutions.

Regarding the work of the European Commission, Mr. Leahu highlighted its recent adoption of several electoral directives and regulations containing provisions addressing the needs of disabled individuals. Notably, the regulation on [political advertisements and transparency notice](#) has made numerous references to citizens with disabilities. Additionally, the European Commission proposed a recommendation for inclusive and resilient elections to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities.

Most important, however, remains the ten-year [Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities](#), published in 2021. Namely, as a follow-up to this strategy, the European Commission delivered a [Guide on good electoral practices in Member States](#) as part of the broader [Citizenship Package](#) released in December 2023. This guide outlines essential steps for EU-wide inclusivity efforts, including raising awareness and changing attitudes about citizens with disabilities, training election officials, reaching out to people with disabilities, collaborating with expert organisations, and enhancing voting accessibility through complementary methods like e-voting.

Mr. Leahu underscored that the development of this guide was not isolated but built upon multiple synergies and proposals advocated by NGOs such as ECAS.

His presentation with a guide infographic can be found [here](#).

The floor was lastly given to [Ionel Zamfir](#), researcher at the [European Parliamentary Research Service](#). He dedicates his efforts to examining gender balance within political institutions across Europe. Mr. Zamfir emphasised the importance of gender equality as a core value within the European Union, as enshrined in its Treaties. Despite this commitment, the graphs he presented reveal a persistent

underrepresentation of women across all levels, with only a handful of countries approaching relative gender equality (40%).

While the European Parliament demonstrates comparatively better gender balance, Mr. Zamfir identified room for improvement. He mentioned that the most straightforward tool to do so is the implementation of electoral quotas with ranking order rules. While some parties, predominantly on the left and center-left, have already adopted such measures voluntarily over the past decade, he noted a positive trend among centrum-right parties, such as the German CDU, that are increasingly inclined to voluntarily adopt quotas in the coming years.

Mr. Zamfir went on to highlight the necessity of having a sufficient number of qualified women who are not merely filling a quota. To achieve this, the EU and its Member States should invest in training and campaign resources tailored specifically for women, while fostering women-friendly party cultures – including the provision of childcare and maternity leave – and unequivocally reject violence as a barrier to women's political participation.

Finally, he mentioned the essence of eradicating any gender bias among voters and, therefore, to never cease promotion and support of female politicians. For example, it is widely observed that certain media outlets consistently prioritise reporting on male politicians over their female counterparts. Furthermore, in selecting political leaders such as prime ministers, a greater level of skepticism among men towards women candidates is apparent.

Mr. Zamfir's presentation is available [here](#).

Following this discussion, the moderator, Ms. Ranson, raised the question of whether there is still more work to be done regarding role models to encourage political activism. Following up, Ms. Hrabanova from ERGO highlighted the importance of showcasing fellow Roma individuals as role models on electoral lists to inspire their peers to likewise engage in politics. Building on this, Mr. Zamfir emphasised that female leadership positions inherently serve as role models, and tend to urge other women to exercise their right to vote. Adding the final note to the conversation, Mr. Leahu mentioned a project led by the European Disability Forum that focuses on role models within communities of people with disabilities.

During the Q&A session, questions from the audience centered on the concept of intersectionality and how this comes into play in the daily work of the panel members, as well as the matters of data and the real impact of the work performed by the representatives.



5. PANEL DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A YOUTH-CENTERED EUROPEAN UNION

After a coffee break, Florence Ranson welcomed the members of the third and final panel to open discussion on how to make the European Union more youth-centered.

First off, [Kristof Papp](#), senior Policy Officer at the [European Youth Forum](#) (YFJ), introduced the mission and projects of the YFJ, emphasising its role as a collective network of youth organisations. Through this, the organisation aims to represent the voices of millions of young individuals and enhance their involvement in EU institutions and policy-making. The European Youth Forum has various thematic focus areas including democracy, sustainability, and youth rights.

While mentioning the interesting scene of political youth participation making its way across Europe, Mr. Papp signaled a shift away from conventional institutionalised political participation to more non-traditional ways for young people to express their opinions, such as boycotts and protest. This demonstrates that young people remain politically active and counters common misconceptions to the contrary. Therefore, YFJ has launched initiatives such as the [EU Youth Dialogue](#) and the Youth Manifesto. The former constitutes a huge participatory consultation process where young people co-draft recommendations with decision-makers, while the latter was established to encourage political groups to consider young people during policymaking. Moreover, in collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), YFJ proposed the EU [Youth Check](#) in January 2024, aimed at ensuring that every piece of EU legislation considers its impact on the lives of young people. This Check encompasses diverse policy domains, such as sustainability, housing, and digitalisation.

Mr Papp finished his introduction of YFJ by drawing attention to the fact that all of YFJ's activities are a continuous recognition that young people are not just the *future*; they are also actively shaping the *present* political landscape. Therefore, mere consultation of young voices is not enough, and monitoring the active integration of their input by decision-makers is crucial to address young EU citizens' perceived lack of accountability and transparency in democratic institutions.



Subsequently, [Rita Dias](#), president of the prominent youth organisation, [Erasmus Student Network](#) (ESN), delved into the impact of its core concept of 'learning mobility' on young individuals across Europe. She maintained that ESN supports the promotion of active citizenship beyond the borders of the higher education area, as it actively operates in 45 countries, both within and outside of the EU. Ms. Dias outlined three distinctive ways through which ESN engages with student voices. Firstly, ESN crafts policies, utilising its insights and knowledge gained from having sent students abroad for over thirty years. Secondly, ESN conducts regular surveys to directly give an ear to the perspectives of these students. For example, last year's '[ESN Survey](#)', with twenty-three thousand respondents, yielded promising results regarding democracy and the future of EU elections. Due to most viewing their Erasmus experience as transformative, this has led to a stronger identification with being European citizens. Lastly, ESN aspires to stimulate policy change based on the gathered input from their Erasmus students.

In her last comments, Ms. Dias identified an example of practical policy implementation in the form of the recently launched ['Voting from Abroad'](#) tool. In 2023, ESN conducted a needs assessment on the voting barriers faced by young Erasmus students abroad. The findings revealed an insurmountable amount of voting information for various EU nationalities, necessitating the creation of one digital place that contains everything. This effective measure ensures that Erasmus students abroad can participate in the electoral process and contribute as active EU citizens.

Ms. Dias' presentation can be found [here](#).

[Christelle Savall](#), vice-president of [Young European Federalists](#) (JEF) was then asked by Florence Ranson to elaborate on the EurHope campaign. Ms. Savall stated that the campaign was initiated in response to the [Eurobarometer's investigation](#) into public sentiments regarding Europe's future. Despite expressions of fear, 'hope' emerged as a dominant theme, hence becoming a fitting moniker for the campaign.

The campaign itself unfolded in three distinct phases. The first phase was an extensive consultation process, which successfully received over 5000 proposals and 1.5 million votes of mostly young people. Out of these 15 proposals – agreed upon by most voters – resulted in the [Agenda of Hope](#), addressing pressing issues like climate action, justice, human rights, and migration. Notably, Ms. Savall also acknowledged divisive ideas that were part of certain proposals. These consisted of, among others, different stances on the EU's support for Ukraine and women's reproductive rights.

The second stage of the EurHope Campaign involved the engagement of political parties to convey the desires of young people through the Agenda of Hope and the proposing of solutions by addressing specific obstacles. For instance, with regard to the health policy domain, Ms. Savall noted the obstacle of the EU having significantly less competences than the Member States.

Lastly, the third phase entailed engaging in street-level conversation to facilitate civic education, advancing both the campaign's objectives and the ideas put forward by young people. The campaign's website now features responses from political parties – gathered during the second stage – as well as feedback gathered from civic education communities during the last stage.

Ms. Savall concluded by emphasising that all the aforementioned efforts and stages are aimed at advancing positive federalist ideas for building a future EU together.

Her presentation is available [here](#).

The stage was finally handed over to Mr. [Laurențiu Plosceanu](#), Vice-president of the European Economic and Social Committee ([EESC](#)). Mr. Plosceanu introduced the annual [Your Europe Your Say](#) (YEYS) event in the larger context of the first Civil Society Week. YEYS serves as a youth platform where selected participants convene annually in Brussels to engage in discussions and debates on pressing themes concerning the European Union. Over the years, YEYS has become a well-established forum for raising awareness about EU functionality, particularly in the lead-up to elections.

On March 6th, 2024, the EESC hosted a special edition of YEYS dedicated to reaching out to first-time voters. The event attracted over a hundred participants aged 18 to 25, coming not only from EU Member States but also from candidate countries and the United Kingdom. Mr. Plosceanu confirmed that these participants eagerly voiced their expectations for the elections and put forth impactful recommendations. Notably, the top five proposals include 1) the establishment of a youth quota for Parliamentary Elections, 2) the approval of a directive for due diligence, 3) efforts to mitigate polarisation and disinformation on social media, 4) the development of a standardised common strategy on sexual and reproductive rights, 5) and the implementation of special taxation guidelines for environmentally harmful goods and services.

Mr. Plosceanu underscored that these proposals are being carefully considered by the EESC, potentially leading to their adoption as resolutions in the future. He also highlighted the EESC's role as a channel and mediator, providing participants with a platform to engage in political discourse and express their concerns and aspirations. Through these efforts, it is certain that the participants' connections with the EU have been significantly strengthened, especially in anticipation of the newly elected European Parliament.



His presentation about YEYS can be found [here](#).

The moderator proceeded to inquire about the panel members' perception of the recommendations and their level of inclination toward cooperation with the EESC. Christelle Savall commended the EESC's efforts to engage young European citizens politically. She also expressed appreciation for feeling included as an equal, a sentiment not always experienced within European Institutions. Ms. Savall emphasised her desire as a young individual to not only contribute to discussions on youth advocacy but also to offer insights on other relevant EU issues.

Adding to the ongoing discussion, Ms. Dias then suggested that the topic of education should have been included as a recommendation as well. Mr. Plosceanu wholeheartedly agreed with Ms. Dias on this point, affirming that education will always remain crucial to the EU's mission.

When further asked by Ms. Ranon to elaborate on practical measures to stimulate youth engagement, the Vice President mentioned – besides the aforementioned Youth Check – also the decision to launch a pilot project for the implementation of this Check in the EU decision-making processes. Moreover, the '[Adhoc Group on Youth Engagement](#)', or alternatively, the EESC Youth Group, was established in 2022 as a result of the Youth Check.

During the Q&A, questions revolved around the concept of a 'youth commissioner' and strategies for raising awareness about the importance of voting. Panel members unanimously agreed on the importance of education - civic education must be strengthened, not only in schools but also through non-formal education channels and there is a need to advocate for lowering the voting age in all Member States to 16.

Closing the discussion, Mr. Plosceanu provided a final perspective, referencing a UK researcher's exploration of the causes of people resorting to extreme measures. He highlighted the epidemic of loneliness and the lack of belonging to a project as contributing factors to political disengagement. The Vice President finally stressed the need to defend and enhance the European project, comparing it to a legacy passed down by previous generations to be upheld by future ones.



6. ECAS AWARDS 2023

The panel discussions were followed by the announcement of the winners of the ECAS' Awards 2023 by [Jean Lambert](#), Chairperson of the ECAS Board of Directors. The ECAS Awards are now a tradition and, as mentioned at the start of the conference by Claire Morot-Sir, the topic for the ECAS Awards this year revolved around fostering political participation and awareness.

During her opening remarks, Ms. Lambert underlined the significance of this year's elections at the EU level, and as a UK national, lamented the failure of the United Kingdom to effectively engage its citizens with the essence of the European Union project. She then underlined the necessity of continuously reminding people about the importance of collaborating across borders to address pressing EU-wide issues. In the same vein, Ms. Lambert drew attention to combating disinformation, noting its wilful spread during the Brexit era and the challenges it posed for government officials in tackling it.

Moving on to the eagerly anticipated announcement of the award winner, Jean Lambert affirmed that the winning recommendation resonated rather closely with the topics and themes explored during the conference. The subsequent [video](#) highlighted the ideas presented by the winner of this year's ECAS Awards, Havva Ebrahimi Pour.

Ms. Ebrahimi Pour is a socio-political researcher and member of the Digital Inclusion and Citizen Engagement Unit at Studies in Media, Innovation and Technology (SMIT) at [Vrije Universiteit Brussel](#). In her proposal, she advocates for the promotion of civic education and cross-cultural understanding, emphasising the vital essence of digital platforms for information sharing and dialogue. Additionally, she maintains that community involvement and the encouragement of practical voting conveniences are key steps towards increasing engagement and addressing diverse citizen needs.

Invited to comment on her proposal, Ms. Ebrahimi Pour, like many of the panellists, emphasised the need to fill the knowledge gap about the EU and to instill a sense of European identity in diverse cultures and underrepresented groups. This, she argued, would ultimately encourage political participation.

ECAS' Executive Director, Assya Kavrakova, concluded the conference by reiterating the paramount importance of voting in the upcoming European Parliamentary Elections in June. Additionally, she introduced ECAS' new podcast series and voting app designed to provide EU citizens with information how and where to vote during the elections.



ANNEXES

Annex A: Event's Agenda

Programme

**State of the Union
Citizens' Rights
CONFERENCE**

9:30 – 9:50
Keynote speech: State of Democracy
Dubravka Suica, Vice-President of the European Commission

10:00 – 10:20
Engaging citizens through crowdsourcing
Elisa Lironi, Programme Director - European Democracy & Savannah Schuurbiers, European Democracy Coordinator, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

Presentation of solutions provided by citizens on fostering political participation
Claire Morot-Sir, EU Rights Manager, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

10:20 – 10:30
Q&A

10:30 – 11:10
Panel discussion: Shaping an inclusive European Union by engaging all citizens (Moderation by Florence Ranson)

Encouraging political participation of homeless people
Simona Barbu, European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)

Engaging Roma people in the EU political landscape
Gabriela Hrabanova, European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO Network)

Improving voting access of citizens with disabilities
Cristian Leahu, Directorate General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission (DG JUST)

Revamp gender balance in political representation
Ionel Zamfir, European Parliament

11:10 – 11:20
Q&A

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Programme

**State of the Union
Citizens' Rights
CONFERENCE**

11:20 – 11:35
Coffee Break

11:35 – 12:15
Panel discussion: Towards a youth-centered European Union (Moderation by Florence Ranson)

Democracy and Young people
Kristof Papp, European Youth Forum (YFJ)

The future of youth democracy
Rita Dias, Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

Presentation of the EurHope campaign
Christelle Savall, Young European Federalists (JEF)

Presentation of the Your Europe, Your Say initiative
Laurențiu Plosceanu, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

12:15 – 12:30
Q&A

12:30 – 13:00
ECAS Awards 2023 on fostering citizens' participation in the 2024 European Parliament elections
Jean Lambert, Chairperson, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

Closing remarks by Assya Kavrakova, Executive Director, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

13:00 – 14:00
Lunch

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Annex B: Links to the Presentations

Introduction panel

- Presentation of Elisa Lironi and Savannah Schuurbiers (ECAS): [here](#)
- Presentation of Claire Morot-Sir (ECAS): [here](#)

Panel 1

- Presentation of Ionel Zamfir (EPRS): [here](#)
- Presentation of Cristian Leahu (DG JUST): [here](#)

Panel 2

- Presentation of Rita Dias (ESN): [here](#)
- Presentation of Christelle Savall (JEF): [here](#)
- Presentation of Laurențiu Plosceanu (EESC): [here](#)

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Welcome