

## ECAS' Projects, Activities and Events in 2025

### About ECAS

**The European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)** is an international, Brussels-based nonprofit organisation with a pan-European membership and more than 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, training, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, research and high-level events in two focus areas: **EU RIGHTS** and **EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY**.

### **ECAS in Central and Eastern Europe: from the Region for the Region**

Cautious of specific regional challenges, at the end of 2021, ECAS established its first branch office in Bulgaria with the aim of implementing tailored initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to tackle negative tendencies related to democratic deficiencies, such as the spread of disinformation and populist narratives, backsliding of the rule of law and narrowing of the civic space.

#### ***Anti-disinformation alliances***

In the period 2022 – 2025, ECAS is beeing supporting civil society organisations (CSOs) coalitions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Croatia to form anti-disinformation alliances to combat false narratives and implement impactful campaigns. Thus, CSOs in CEE would be able to react to disinformation attacks and build resilience among their target groups with effective and proactive communication. The knowledge accumulated fed into the creation of an operational framework for civil society

actors to counteract the phenomenon. These practical guidelines on the ideal alliance size and composition, capacity-building tools, approaches to various disinformation threats, etc. allow CSOs to build coalitions faster, in response to emerging narratives and not to rely on finding solutions by trial and error. This framework was tested through campaigns against disinformation before the European Parliament elections in 2024 and was part of the 'First Aid Democracy Toolbox' distributed to civil society. In 2025, in addition to supporting anti-disinformation alliances in Slovakia and Croatia, ECAS will encourage transnational CSO coalitions for tackling false narratives and propaganda through its grant-making to its members in the EU.

### ***Supporting Independent Media in CEE***

As civil society organisations and independent media are the first targets of populist and anti-democratic political actors, in the period 2024 – 2026, ECAS will be supporting through the MediaResilience project, led by the Open Society Institute – Sofia, about 30 media organisations directly in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Greece and up to 300 journalists and more than 400 participants, including CSOs indirectly through knowledge and lessons learnt, fostered collaboration and shared learning. Overall the initiative will contribute to enhancing access to quality journalism and information, restoring and increasing trust in media and to decreasing of polarization in society.

### ***Promoting EU Values in Bulgaria***

During 2023 – 2028, ECAS is implementing, as part of a partnership led by the Open Society Institute – Sofia, the ProEUvaluesBG project and the PACT project in order to raise public awareness on EU values at national, regional and local level in Bulgaria, and to provide capacity building and financial support to Bulgarian CSOs in order to enhance their role as key messengers in promoting these values. ECAS's branch in Bulgaria provides targeted capacity building support to CSOs to promote and uphold EU values. All project activities cater to the creation of a community of practice for the promotion of the Union Values among citizens across Bulgaria.

## **The ECAS's Training Centre**

Based on our 30+ years of experience in EU Rights & Democracy, EU funding & Project Management, EU advocacy, citizen engagement & capacity-building, ECAS provides [training](#) to a variety of stakeholders: civil society professionals, legal experts & citizens, and public authorities on various subjects and in different online and offline formats.

## Projects 2025

### Horizontal projects for the EU Rights and EU Democracy focus areas

**EURECA (European Citizenship Accelerator) 2025** project will further develop the capacities of ECAS and its members to empower citizens and promote EU citizenship rights and will give citizens the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the European Democracy Action Plan, the EU Citizenship package, the Defence of Democracy package and the Digital Compass for the EU's digital decade. EURECA will strengthen European citizenship and identity through support for the freedom of movement in the EU and through fostering EU mobile citizens' rights, with a special emphasis on their voting rights in the host countries. This will be achieved through capacity building of rights advice organisations and public authorities in Ireland, Portugal and Sweden, a focus group on voting rights in Portugal and a training on telework in Germany. The EURECA European Democracy activities will contribute to developing mechanisms to increase citizens' democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU based on EU values. This impact will be achieved through capacity building of CSOs on how to counter disinformation and other forms of interference in the democratic debate, civic monitoring of the implementation of the national digital roadmaps in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Austria, Croatia and a Pitch Competition on "Innovation for Democracy" which will bring together citizens and experts in digital democracy and in AI, Metaverse and Blockchain to deliberate and come up with proposals on how to upgrade European democracy through tech. ECAS will re-grant to its members in the EU to increase their capacity to develop coherent and coordinated activities in the areas of countering disinformation and ensuring a digital transformation that leaves no one behind. Through the EURECA awards, the State of the Union Citizens' Rights conference and its EU rights campaign, ECAS will raise awareness of 20000 EU citizens on their EU rights.

Funder: CERV operating grant (part of 4-year framework contract)

Timeframe: 2025

**The ProEUValuesBG** project raises public awareness of EU values at national, regional and local levels in Bulgaria and provides capacity-building and financial support to Bulgarian CSOs in order to enhance their role as key messengers. The project is led by the Open Society Institute – Sofia (OSIS) in collaboration with ECAS and Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation (WCIF). Two funding streams are available for applicants – one for

grassroots CSOs and the other for initiatives and strategic actions from more experienced organisations. ECAS leads the project's capacity-building work, providing training in both online and in-person environments to aspiring and selected applicant organisations.

Grassroots CSOs selected in the smaller funding stream receive intensive and detailed capacity-building, while masterclasses and exchanges of good practices will support organisations implementing larger projects. The training programme called "Guide," will focus on the three thematic areas of the call – European rights, Democracy and Nondiscrimination.

Funder: CERV programme through the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Timeframe: January 2023 – December 2025

**The PACT** project - Partnership among CSOs for making an impact on rights and values - is a strategic initiative aimed at deepening the understanding and appreciation of European values and the Charter of Fundamental Rights across Bulgaria, acknowledging the vulnerability of its democracy to various external and internal pressures. With a clear focus on empowering Bulgarian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), PACT is designed to elevate their role in promoting a culture rooted in democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental human rights. Through targeted capacity building and financial assistance to more than 110 CSOs across the country, the project seeks to enhance the impact and visibility of these organizations, ensuring they are recognized as key players in upholding democracy and a pluralistic debate in Bulgaria. Central to PACT's approach is the promotion of collaboration between CSOs of varying scales, from large, established organizations to smaller, local grassroots groups. This effort aims to forge a network of advocates dedicated to embedding European values within diverse communities, creating a unified effort that transcends geographical and societal divides.

Funder: CERV programme through the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Timeframe: January 2025 – December 2028

**MediaResilience** - Nurturing Quality News Journalism - project aims at strengthening a free, diverse, and pluralistic news media landscape and promoting quality journalism with emphasis on enhancing quality media outreach to the most vulnerable groups in society susceptible to disinformation. The project focuses on Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, and Slovenia - countries, which have been threatened by multiple vulnerabilities as relates to media freedom, quality of democracy, and potential resilience to disinformation. The project will provide funding to media entities and investigative

journalism and capacity building to increase knowledge and skills for promoting democracy and civic engagement in ever changing and challenging, including technologically, economically and legally, media landscape. The main target groups for the re-granting and capacity building will be independent media entities working to promote democracy, pluralism, social inclusion, human rights, media literacy, intercultural dialogue, EU values and help keep decision-makers accountable.

Funder: Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Timeframe: October 2024 – September 2026

## Specific projects per focus area:

### EU Rights

[Your Europe Advice](#) is an online **EU advice service** provided by legal experts from ECAS operating under contract with the European Commission. It consists of a **team of about 60 lawyers** who cover **all 24 official EU languages** and are familiar both with EU law and national laws in all EU countries. Your Europe Advice replies to questions from citizens or businesses on their personal EU rights. The experts respond to the questions within 72 hours, free of charge and in the language chosen by the user. Enquiries can be submitted either via an [online form](#) or by phone (**00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**).

Funder: DG GROW, European Commission

Timeframe: multiannual, till end of August 2026

**PROMISE** - Post-pandemic Reinvention Of Mobility for Inclusive and Sustainable Europe - vision is to increase awareness of mobile EU citizens, civil society, and local administrations on current obstacles to freedom of movement, by helping them to interpret and implement Directive 2004/38 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely in the EU. The project raises awareness on the new structured Guidelines (a new Communication was issued in December 2023) of the European Commission to the Member States on the Freedom of Movement Directive through awareness-raising campaigns, tailored training to public administration and rights advice organisations in the countries hosting the higher number of EU mobile citizens.

Funder: EPIM (European Programme of Integration and Migration)/Network of European Foundations

Timeframe: June 2022 – July 2025

**BOLSTER** project - Bridging Organizations and marginalised communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in Europe - is designed to understand how marginalized communities are affected by the European Green Deal (EGD)-related policies and to see if involving these communities in decision-making processes increases the support for transition plans. The project has 13 partners from 12 different countries that are working together on seven Work Packages (WPs) in order to make the BOLSTER project achieve its objectives, to actually succeed in helping marginalised communities and to become an example to other Horizon Europe related projects to come.

Funder: Horizon Europe framework programme

Timeframe: multiannual, till the end of August 2025

**SUPA** - Sustaining Public Administration in Modern Democracies - project originates from the observation that public administrations in advanced democracies are increasingly overburdened. Administrative overburdening arises from a continuous increase in the number of rules that require implementation and the relative stagnation in administrative capacities. This discrepancy between the rules up for implementation and the administrative resources available results in suboptimal policy outcomes, low-quality public services, and inconsistent implementation practices. In view of this assessment, it is the central objective of SUPA to examine strategies for enhancing the capabilities of the public sector to cope with the escalating challenges of administrative overburdening. Based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, SUPA (1) evaluates the effectiveness of so-called "rule-offsetting" schemes; (2) investigates how legislators can embed legal design principles to prevent unintended rule growth cascades; (3) assesses how policy growth affects the underlying administrative structures; and (4) examines citizens' experience and operational challenges linked to different ways of distributing implementation burdens across public authorities.

Funder: HORIZON-RIA (HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions)

Timeframe: multiannual, March 2025 - February 2028

## European Democracy

The **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Forum** is an online collaborative platform that offers support to citizens when organising a European citizens' initiative. The Forum allows citizens to learn more about the European Citizens' Initiative through best practices and enables them to discuss EU policies and European Citizens' Initiative proposals, to find partners in other countries, to ask for legal, campaigning and fundraising advice from

experts, and to exchange experiences. The Forum is operated by ECAS on behalf of and under contract with the European Commission.

Funder: Secretariat-General of the European Commission

Timeframe: multiannual, till the end of November 2025

**MORES** project argues that better understanding of the role of **moral emotions** in politics – which is a neglected approach in the field of study of political emotions – can provide key insights into making policymaking more responsive to citizens' and policymakers' emotional needs and values. MORES will study *how moral emotions, especially positive ones, contribute to the stabilisation of political identities, and how they, especially negative ones, trigger division and polarisation*. MORES aims to better understand the political role of moral emotions in order to develop a normative-analytical framework to inform democratic decision-making on how moral emotions should interact with values, policies and political practises; how can their unifying potential realised and their divisive power is limited; how should the extremes of either under- or overemotionalisation of politics be avoided; and what kind of practical tools as well as policy recommendations can enhance emotional regulation in politics and integrate citizens' emotional needs into policymaking.

Funder: Horizon Europe framework programme

Timeframe: multiannual, till the end of December 2026

**EU – CIEMBLY** project addresses the need for the introduction of new forms of citizens' participation and deliberation in EU political life and, particularly, an EU Citizens' Assembly whose design and implementation fully addresses issues of intersectionality, inclusiveness, and equality. This project will provide the analytical framework and the prototype through which a tool can be created in the form of a Citizens' Assembly that can be established at the EU level and with features allowing for the transfer of a (modified) prototype to the national and local levels of EU Member States. To do this, the project moves from theorising to evaluating and finally piloting such a tool and concludes with recommendations. In this way, EU-CIEMBLY seeks to be the first project that uses an academic and theoretical understanding of issues of intersectionality, equality, and power relations in the design of an innovative and inclusive EU Citizens' Assembly.

Funder: Horizon Europe framework programme

Timeframe: multiannual, till the end of December 2027

**INTERFACED** investigates the diverse forms of political participation that have arisen amidst the rise in protest, democratic and scientific mistrust, as well as growing societal divisions and inequalities heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic, INTERFACED does so by



distinguishing participation interfaces between citizens and representative institutions to then investigate their capacity to include citizens within decision-making and governance. INTERFACED pursues seven specific objectives that move the analysis of these interfaces beyond the state-of-the-art with the aim to enhance relations between citizens and governments. Together with the topical selection of a diverse set of eight European countries and Tunisia—spanning multiple forms of opposition, including opposition to authoritarianism— INTERFACED will thereby offer new and innovative research findings, and policy recommendations to maximize the mobilization and minimize the demobilization of the least engaged and most disadvantaged social groups.

Funder: HORIZON-RIA (HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions)

Timeframe: multiannual, January 2025 - December 2027

## ECAS's Events in 2025

<b>Conferences &amp; Workshops</b>
Crowdsourcing citizens' input on digital transformation that leaves no one behind (INDEU launch event in Belgium) – February 2025
Civil Society Week - March 17th - March 20th 2024 Workshop on Just Transition/Green and Blue Growth (2 <sup>nd</sup> BOLSTER EU Dialogue) and Workshop on Digital Transformation
ECI Forum workshop at ECI Day 2025 – 18 March 2025 (during Civil Society Week)
State of the Union Citizens & Rights conference - April 15th 2025 (3 <sup>rd</sup> BOLSTER EU policy dialogue: second panel on just transition)
PROMISE closing event (first part of 2025)
Info Days for BG CSOs in the six planning regions in Bulgaria (PACT project) – Spring





2025)

ECAS Day (June 2025)

YEA annual seminar (November 2025)

ECI Forum organisers event (TBC, Spring 2025 – possibly April)

Summer Academy in Bulgaria on media resilience (September 2025)

ECI Forum session at EYE Event (TBC 13-14 June)

Kick-off Meeting: Grant-making to ECAS Members in the EU 2025 (June 2025)

### Webinars

Focus group on voting rights in Portugal (May 2025)

Information Webinar: Grant-making to ECAS Members in the EU 2025 (January 2025)

BOLSTER 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> regional policy dialogues – between February and June 2025 (one will take place in March 2025)

ECI Forum – Webinar “Understanding Campaign Structures” (February 2025)

ECI Forum – Webinar “Mastering Fundraising for a European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI): Strategies for Success” (April/May 2025)

ECI Forum – Getting Started with the European Citizens’ Initiative: A Beginner’s Guide (October 2025)

YEA experts and SOLVIT centres training on Posting workers (first part of 2025)

Synergy Creation Webinar on media resilience (last quarter of 2025)

Webinars on rights and values, PACT project (first half of 2025)

### Co-creation & Crowdsourcing

“Innovation for Democracy” Pitch Competition event (Autumn 2025)/Digital Democracy Day

Crowdsourcing citizens’ proposals to adapt freedom of movement to new realities as part of the ECAS Citizenship Awards 2024



Crowdsourcing citizens' input on digital transformation that leaves no one behind in Belgium (INDEU)

Crowdsourcing citizens' opinions on the role of emotions in politics (MORES)

### Training Events

Training on Telework (Germany) - June 26<sup>th</sup> 2025

3 training on freedom of movement – (in Sweden) on June 10<sup>th</sup>, (in Portugal) on September 16<sup>th</sup>, (in Ireland) on September 25<sup>th</sup>

Training (lunch-and-learn) on non-discriminatory language (online) – 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2025 (April-June)

Training (lunch-and-learn) on accessibility of intellectual output (online) – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2025 (October-December)

Master Class for CSOs – ProEUValuesBG project, Bulgaria (February 2025)

### Campaigns

EU Rights awareness campaign

Coalition building and anti-disinformation campaign – Slovakia

Coalition building and anti-disinformation campaign – Croatia