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European Citizen Action Service



ACTIVITY REPORT 2024



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1. 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 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 in Central and Eastern Europe: from the Region for the Region

ECAS's branch office in Bulgaria coordinates ECAS's initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) related to tackling the spread of disinformation and populist narratives, backsliding of the rule of law and narrowing of civic space.

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.



FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024: ECAS's Citizen Centered Election Year

In the year when the European Parliament elections took place and the citizens of more than half of the EU Member States casted their votes at their national Presidential, Parliamentary or regional elections, ECAS mission was two-fold – to ensure that citizens have easy access to a reliable authoritative information on their rights and opportunities as Europeans and to support an enabling and trustworthy citizen-centred democratic space.



In addition to providing tailored advice to nearly **20 000 EU citizens** to help them exercise their EU Rights and supporting them in launching and carrying out citizens' initiatives on a variety of subjects, ECAS created an online app to support EU mobile citizens with their political rights. The app covered electoral rules of all EU Member States, displayed in all official EU languages and was used by **10 184 citizens** before the elections.

Moreover, ECAS developed a **First Aid Democracy Toolkit**. This toolkit provided various resources for citizens, Civil Society Organisations, and newly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Its goal was to boost voter turnout, tackle disinformation, mobilise undecided voters, and more, all aimed at promoting a healthy democracy. The Toolkit was a key part of the ECAS European Elections campaign which reached a total of **34 109 citizens**.

In 2024, ECAS continued to deliver high-quality training programmes for public administration, civil society organisations and citizens online and offline, engaging overall about **800 participants**.

In addition to ECAS overall reach to about **a million citizens in 2024**, eleven of ECAS members from Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Lithuania, Germany and Croatia implemented projects supported financially by ECAS in the areas of tackling disinformation and strengthening CSOs resilience and ensuring digital transformation that leaves no one behind. These projects reached more than **8 million Europeans**.

All ECAS's activities align with our ambition to develop ECAS by 2030 as an internationally recognized *European Citizen Centre of Excellence* on citizens' EU rights and European Democracy in the evolving digital age. As a Centre of Excellence, ECAS will continue to build a team of highly skilled team members who collaborate and work together to drive leadership, guidance, and support to citizens and innovation, best practices, and excellence to the EU level.

To make this ambition come true we need the support of our funders, the engagement of our members and partners, the wise advice of our Board of directors and Governing members and the commitment and highly professional work of ECAS' team.

I warmly thank all of them for their outstanding work and support in 2024 and look forward to a successful 2025!

Assya Kavrakova
ECAS Executive Director



2. EU RIGHTS FOCUS AREA

European citizenship is at the core of the European project and freedom of movement is one of the most cherished rights by European citizens.

ECAS activities in the EU Rights Focus area aim at ensuring that the practical implementation of 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.

In 2024 ECAS's work in the EU Rights area was focused on:

- Providing practical legal advice to more than 19,255 European citizens on their EU rights;
- Building capacity of public authorities and EU Rights' advice organisations on how to better implement the EU Rights of EU mobile citizens through training and focus groups;
- Providing tailored evidence-based advice to the EU institutions on the rights of EU citizens through the YEA quarterly feedback report and the analysis of the Commission's Guidance on the freedom of Movement Directive;
- Building a knowledge base on Just transition;
- Building capacity of Bulgarian CSOs to promote EU Values.

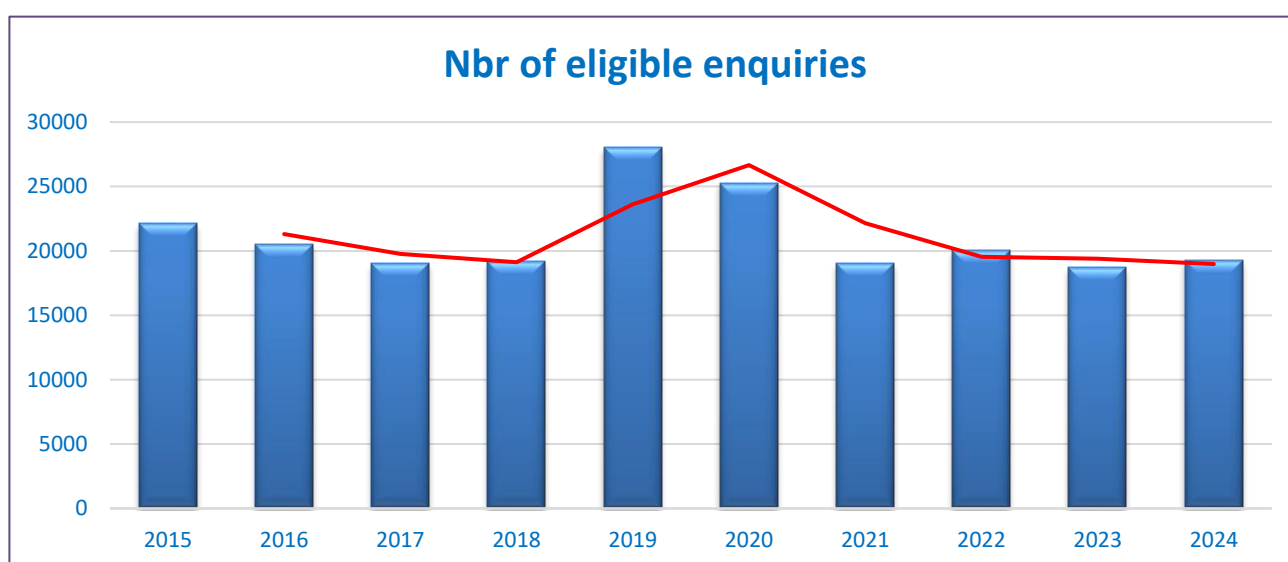
Services to Citizens

Your Europe Advice 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.

ECAS' team of 55 lawyers, who cover all 24 official EU languages and are experts in both EU law and national law in all EU countries, respond to citizens' questions within one week, 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).

Performance in 2024

In 2024, ECAS won the new YEA tender and continued to deliver the service. Throughout the year the service received 27,472 requests for legal advice, and the YEA legal experts responded to 19,255 requests for advice, **an increase of 3%** compared to the previous year. YEA responded to 164 requests for legal advice from 23 SOLVIT centres, **an increase of 49%** compared to 2023 and the highest number of requests for advice from SOLVIT centres that YEA has ever received.

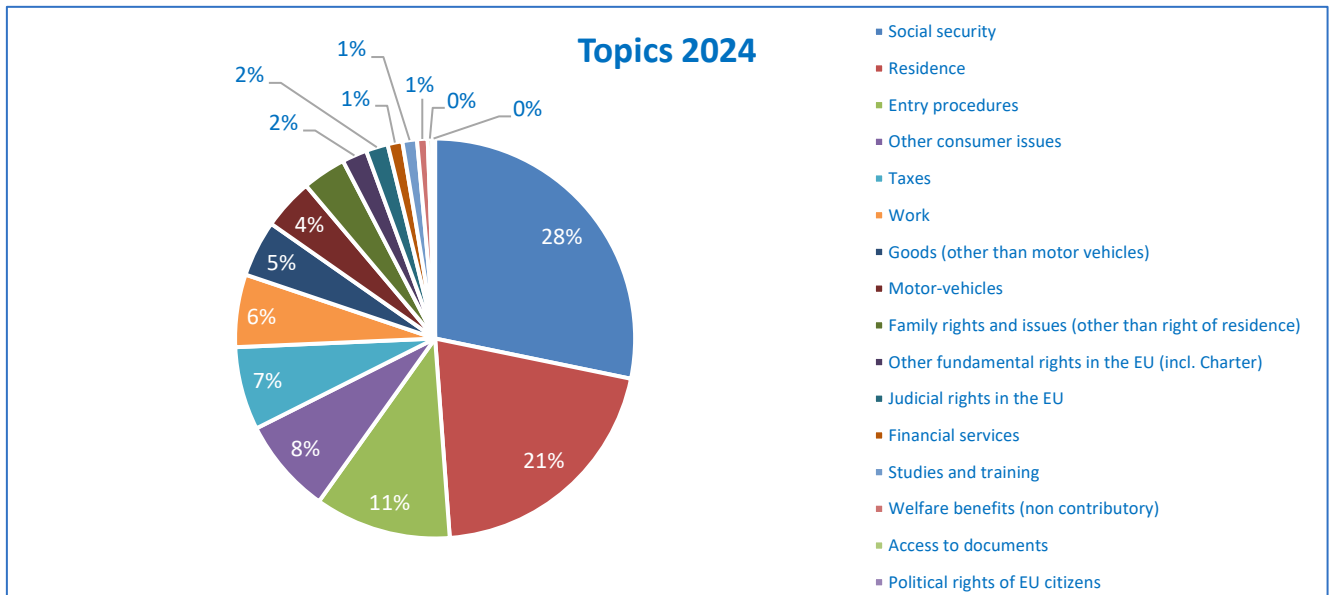


ECAS ensures the high quality of the replies by carrying out monthly quality control based on a sample of eligible enquiries that is 10% of all cases but not less than 150. Based on the results, ECAS provides targeted feedback and guides the experts if and where necessary. The quality control thus also acts as a guarantee mechanism that citizens receive good and useful answers.

In 2024, more than 94% of the checked cases fulfilled all the quality assurance criteria and 95% of all replies were provided within the deadline. The quality of the answers remains at a high level and has been very stable throughout the years, showing the high standard of YEA.

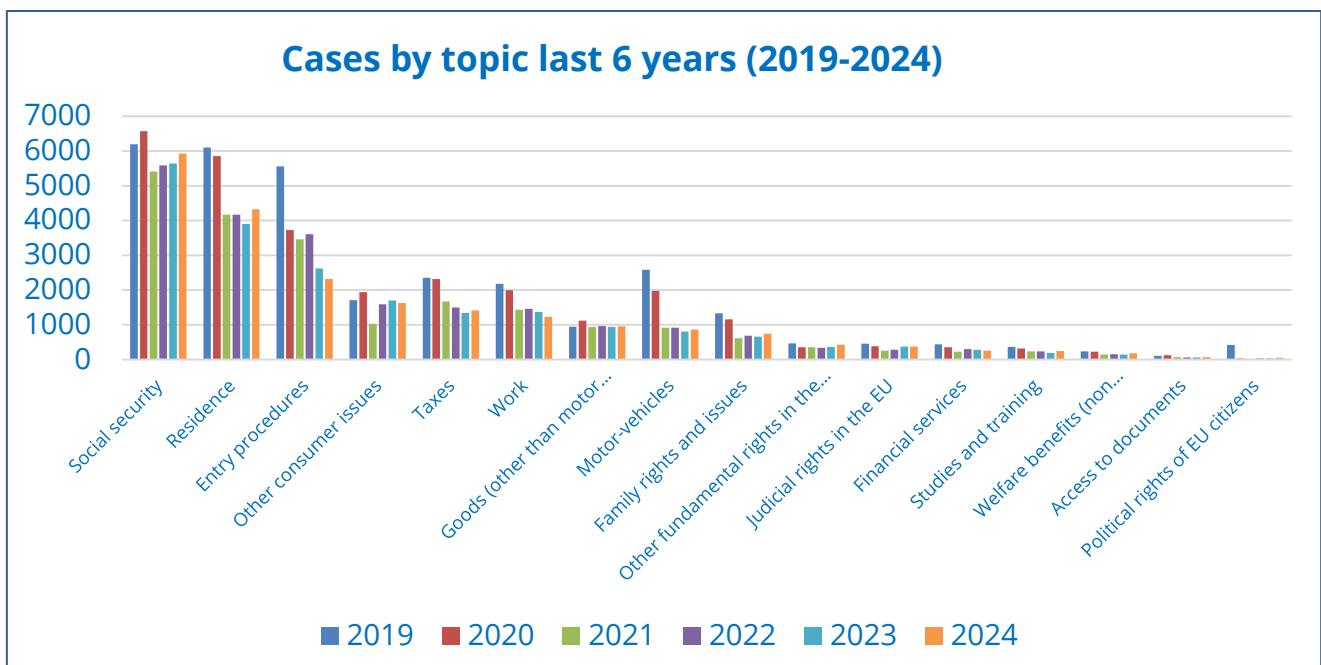
Nature of Enquiries

In 2024, there was a slight increase in the number of questions compared to the year before. Ineligible questions were slightly higher (23%) compared to 2023. Most UK-related enquiries are no longer covered by EU law. A significant number of enquiries come from third-country nationals and businesses that are not related to EU law and cannot be dealt with by YEA. The service also received an increasing number of scam enquiries.

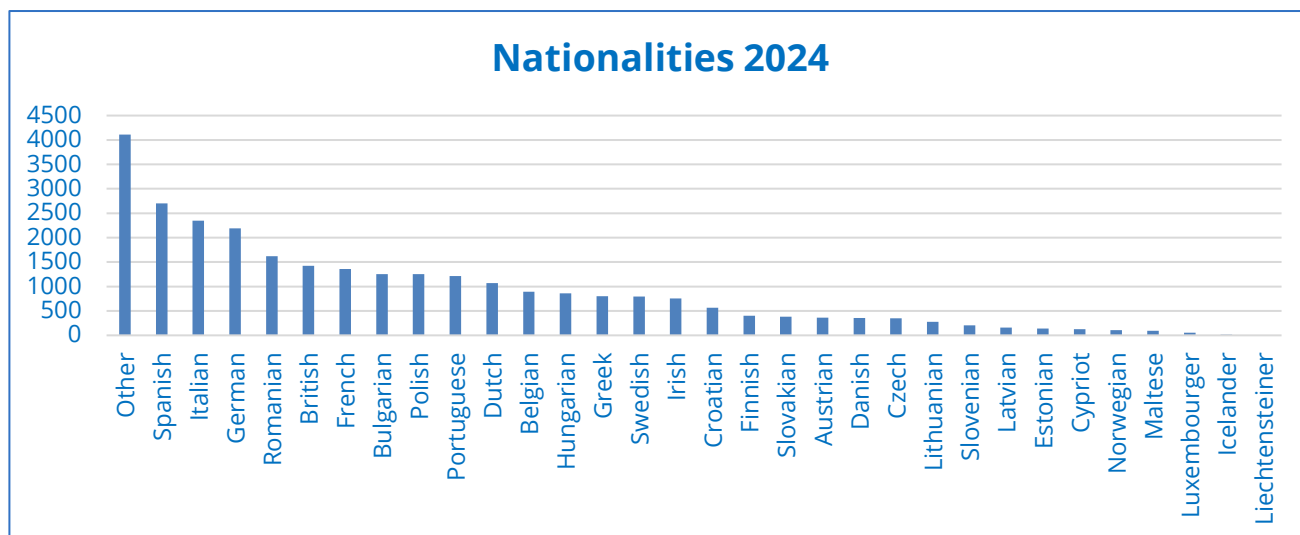


In 2024, YEA received a high number of social security enquiries (28%), followed by questions related to residence rights (21%) and entry procedures (11%). These are the same top 3 subjects as in 2023.

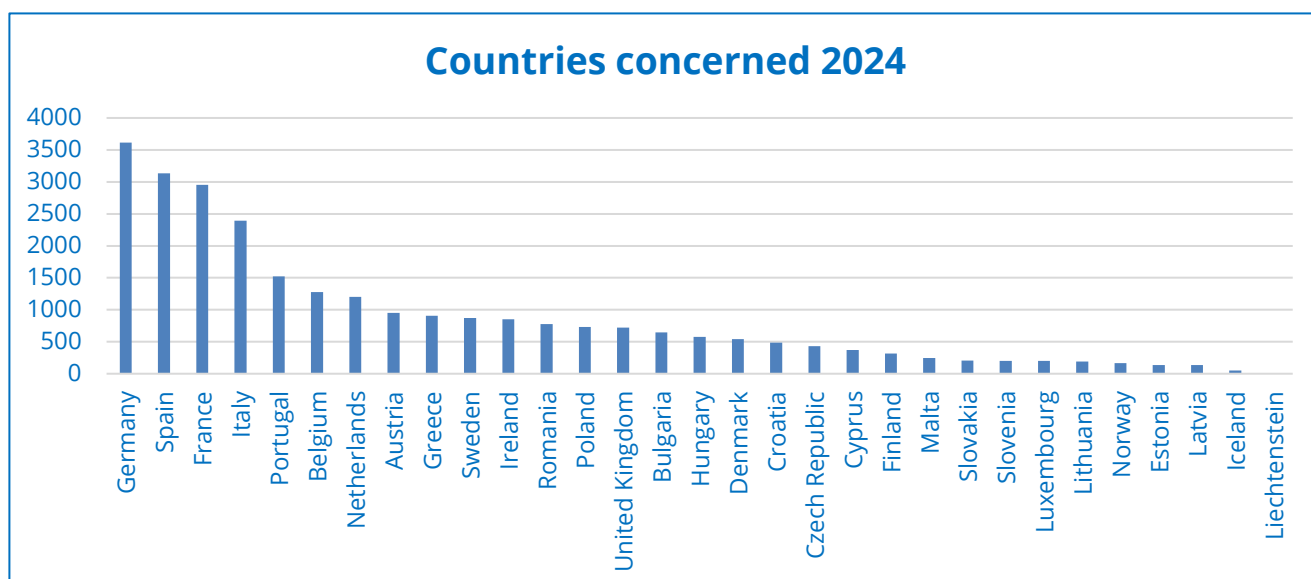
The number of questions related to working in another country and taxes, which are partly related to the new issues of telework, and questions on consumer law were stable compared to 2023.



YEA received enquiries from citizens of all 27 EU countries and from Norwegian, Icelandic, and third-country nationals who are family members of EU citizens. While 14% of the enquiries were from third-country nationals, YEA received fewer questions from British citizens compared to previous years. The top ten nationalities that contact YEA the most remain unchanged compared to 2023.



The enquiries received concerned all 27 Member States, as well as Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein. YEA received more questions related to Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal.



Outreach Activities

Six outreach activities were conducted by YEA experts in Ireland, Estonia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia. The number of participants varied significantly according to the type of event, but based on the experts' feedback reports, more than 600 citizens may have been reached.

The outreach activities can be categorised as network meetings and were organised by different services, networks, or agencies: the European Commission representation in Ljubljana and Dublin, the European Commission and the EU assistance services in Budapest, or the local Labour Mobility Labs organised by the European Labour Agency in Borovets (Bulgaria), Tallinn (Estonia), and Opatija (Croatia). YEA experts complied with the two main objectives: presenting and explaining YEA to potential multipliers and 'institutional' users and liaising with representatives from other networks who provide help and advice to citizens and businesses.

EU Legal Updates

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



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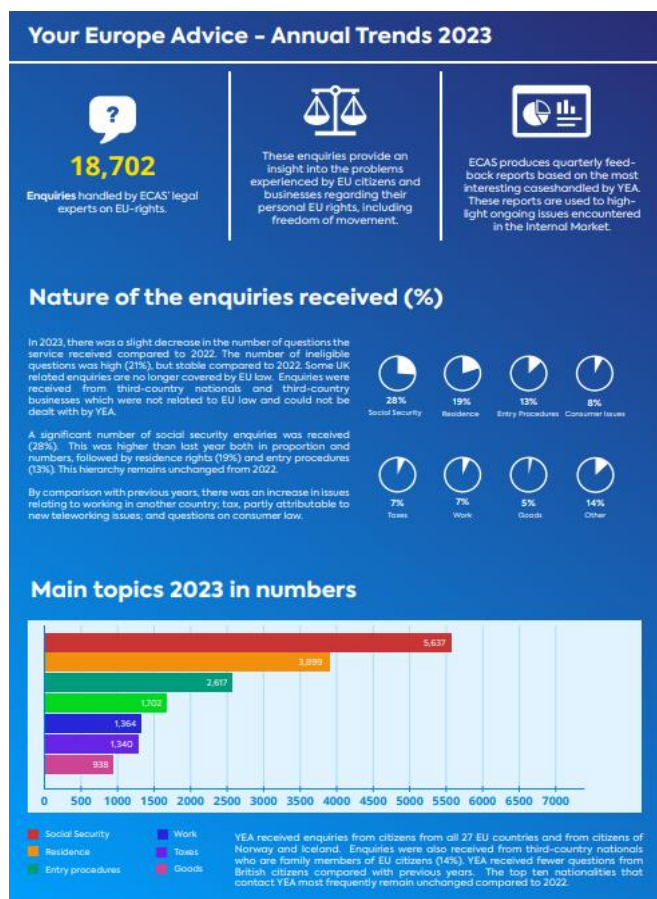
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Feedback Reports

At the request of the European Commission, ECAS produces four quarterly feedback reports. These reports contain details of the cases handled by the YEA experts and policy analysis of the issues raised by the enquiries. These reports provide a clear overview of the main problems citizens and businesses encounter in exercising their EU rights and helps the Commission understand which issues require attention. The content of the report is continuously adapted to current events. In mid-2024, the feedback report was changed from quarterly to bi-annual.

YEA annual trends

Based on the enquiries responded to in 2023, ECAS produced a [report](#) that identifies key trends in obstacles to free movement. This was published in March 2024. The trends provide useful information about the problems experienced by citizens who seek to exercise their right to free movement and can be consulted by citizens and organisations on the website of ECAS.



The Five Main Issues In 2023

Social Security: Country of Insurance

A Finnish employer who had an employee based in Italy, was unable to access information on how to pay social security contributions there. He was conscious that there may be other formalities with which he should comply, but was unable to obtain information about these.

The Belgian authorities were unable to identify the applicable law in respect of a British national who resided in Belgium, where he was self-employed. He also worked remotely for a UK-based employer. The Belgian social security institution (INASTI) appeared to have assessed him as working in the UK when, in fact, he worked remotely from Belgium, where he also resided.

Our recommendation

Administrative cooperation between national authorities must be improved. Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security schemes provides for such cooperation. National authorities must be trained in the applicable social security rules when citizens move within the EU.

Requests for information should be attended to without delay and, in any event, within three months. In exceptional situations, when it is not possible to respond within three months, the competent authority should indicate deadlines and provide updates.

Residence: Family Rights

A Mexican national moved to France with her Spanish husband upon which she applied for a residence card. After more than one year, no residence card was issued. There was no communication from the authorities and the certificate of application had expired.

The non-EU partner of an Italian citizen was requested by the Irish authorities to provide evidence of the durability of their relationship in addition to their rental agreement. The couple experienced difficulties in obtaining such evidence and were unsure what may be acceptable to the Irish authorities.

The British registered partner of a Belgian citizen waited for more than six months to obtain a decision on his application for a residence card from the French competent authority. As a result, the British partner was unable to travel outside France.

Our recommendation

Member States should ensure that national legislation is clear and sufficiently detailed to guarantee attainment of the objectives of Directive 2004/38/EC. The new guidance on the right to free movement, published by the European Commission on the 8th of December 2023, aims to help Member State authorities and national courts correctly apply EU free movement rules.

The new guidance provides some elements that can establish the existence of a duly attested de facto durable relationship. It also clarifies that, while the entry visa applies while waiting for the issuance of the residence card, non-EU family members do not have to return to their country of origin and obtain a new entry visa.

Member States' authorities and national administrations should be informed and trained to appropriately apply the rules.

Social Security: Health Care, Sickness or Maternity

It is impossible to register with the local French health insurance body (CPAM) with a Form S1 because the online procedure, which is the only means to obtain an appointment, is available only to those in possession of a French social security number or French health insurance card.

An Irish hospital refused to recognise an EHC presented by a Spanish student who was in need of a medical care. The Irish hospital claimed that the EHC was valid only for tourists and not for students and charged the student for the treatment received.

Our recommendation

Raise awareness among citizens and national authorities about the use of an EHC to obtain healthcare cover.

Raise awareness of patients' rights to reimbursement (independence of possession of an EHC) for cross-border healthcare to ensure that everyone who needs care knows their rights and can make informed choices.

Social Security: Old age Benefits

A Bulgarian citizen living in Italy applied for his pension there. The Italian pension authority failed to contact their Bulgarian counterpart, with the result that the citizen had not received any pension payment for more than a year.

A Portuguese citizen applied for an old age pension in France. The citizen claimed that the French authorities erred in calculating the amount of her pension. She complained to several authorities in France but received no response for more than a year.

Our recommendation

Pensioners need clear and reliable information, since the rules differ from one country to another. It should come both from the sending country before departure and the receiving country upon arrival. The obligation of communication and cooperation between Member States as stated in Article 78 of Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 should be reinforced by the European institutions.

Entry: Long/short term visas

The Japanese spouse of a Czech citizen applied for visa to visit Finland. She complained that a service fee was charged. The service fee is apparently imposed if the visa is applied for through a service centre. However, the Finnish Consulate did not offer the possibility to apply directly for a visa at the Consulate.

The Egyptian husband of a Greek citizen complained that the Italian Consulate in Australia refused to operate an accelerated procedure in respect of his Schengen visa application. The family member was requested to provide supporting documents beyond those permitted under Directive 2004/38/EC.

Our recommendation

Member States should put in place an effective, harmonised and efficient system of complaints against refusals to issue visas and establish a supervisory body to oversee the work of visa service providers and ensure correct application of the EU rules.

Positive action is required at EU and national level to find a solution that strikes a balance between preventing abuse and ensuring that EU free movement rules are respected so that family members of EU nationals are issued entry visas on the basis of an accelerated procedure.

Your Europe Advice (YEA) is an EU advice service on personal EU rights of citizens and businesses which ECAS manages under contract with and on behalf of the European Commission. A team of around 50 legal experts, who are familiar with both EU law and national law in all EU countries, provide free and personalised advice within weeks and in the language of your choice. They clarify the European law that applies in your case, and explain how you can exercise your EU rights. More information is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/european-council/en/yea>.

YEA training seminar

On 21 and 22 November, the European Commission and ECAS organised the annual Your Europe Advice training seminar. The seminar took place in a hybrid format: face-to-face and online.



An internal session with the experts was organised on 22 November.

In addition to the YEA experts, participants from SOLVIT and the Commission were also present.

The training content focused on several "usual" topics, such as Directive 2004/38, social security coordination and posting of workers; new topics were also covered, such as the Digital Markets Act and Digital Services Act. The seminar aimed to inform the YEA team about new developments in EU law and the results achieved during 2024 and to keep them up to date with the application of EU law.

YEA replied to 164 requests for legal advice from 23 SOLVIT centers. The experts' responses enabled SOLVIT to obtain a more complete picture of the legal situation regarding a specific SOLVIT case. The reply focused on establishing whether EU law is correctly implemented or interpreted. This is the highest number of requests for advice from the SOLVIT centres that the YEA has received since the start of this cooperation.

In 2024, the EU Commission (Secretariat-General) asked YEA to provide figures for a report on the implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement. The EU Commission (DG Grow) also asked for figures and examples on Article 20 of the Services Directive, the geo-blocking regulation and consumer issues. YEA has also been regularly asked to provide data or examples on ongoing issues, such as difficulties for EU citizens in registering their residence in Portugal or Sweden.

Projects

EURECA (European Citizenship Accelerator) 2024

The EURECA 2024 project is part of ECAS's 4-year framework contract under the CERV Operating Grant and aims to further develop ECAS and its members' capacities to empower citizens and promote EU citizenship rights. EURECA's activities provide citizens with the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the Defence of Democracy Package and the EU Citizenship Report 2023.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

One of our main objectives is to build a stronger, more inclusive democracy, where citizens feel empowered to use their right to vote. In early 2024, ahead of the European Parliament elections, ECAS created an online [app](#) to support EU mobile citizens with their political rights. The purpose of the app was to help EU citizens navigate through the registration formalities of the country where they reside, understand whether restrictions apply, and verify deadlines.

To make it optimal for all potential voters, including EU mobile citizens, the app covered electoral rules of all EU Member States, and is displayed in all official EU languages.

ECAS app was used by **10184 users** before the elections.

To raise awareness on political rights of EU mobile citizens, ECAS created in 2024 an interactive [online course](#), targeting civil servants, civil society and any stakeholders who have an interest in promoting voting rights of EU mobile citizens.

All EU citizens in voting age benefit from the right to vote and stand as a candidate in the country where they reside, even if they possess the nationality of another EU Member State. Yet, several obstacles remain in the way and prevent EU mobile citizens from fully enjoying their political

rights. This online course provides an overview of the main hurdles which persist in most Member States and provides tailor-made solutions to tackle the low political participation of EU mobile citizens.

The online course is divided into two modules: a module on voting rights of EU citizens at the local level (municipal elections), and a second module on voting rights of EU mobile citizens in the European Parliament elections.

Each module is available in all EU languages and ends with a short quiz which allows participants to obtain a certificate upon completion.

In 2024 the online course was attended by **239 learners**.

ECAS Citizenship Innovation Awards



The 2024 edition of the ECAS awards was launched on July 15th, through the ECAS [crowdsourcing platform](#). During the first phase of the ECAS Awards, all citizens interested in participating were invited to share their solutions and ideas on how to enhance digital inclusion.

Indeed, recent data from Eurostat reveals that in 2023, 90% of EU residents accessed the internet weekly, yet 44% lacked basic digital skills¹. ECAS is therefore soliciting concrete measures to foster digital inclusion, make it more accessible, more inclusive, and ensure that digital transition leaves no one behind.

To collect as many contributions as possible, ECAS will close the first phase of the Awards at the end of January 2025. In early February 2025, the voting phase will open! Citizens will be invited to select the best idea. The winner will receive prizes including a promotional video and will be able to present their idea during the State of the Union Citizens' Rights Conference which will take place on April 15th 2025.

Civil Society Accelerator

The Civil Society Accelerator is a community service provided by ECAS in an effort to support citizens and small Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in maximising their impact and achieving their EU-related mission.

Under this service, ECAS' experts respond to requests from civil society on the following topics:

- Advocacy for EU Rights
- Guidance for effective campaigning

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/digitalisation-2024#:~:text=44%25%20of%20EU%20citizens%20lack,or%20above%20basic%20digital%20skills>

- Making CSOs a credible source of information
- Financial management
- Programme strategy
- Human resources management
- Implementing a training activity
- Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Accessibility

To benefit from the CSA service, individuals need to apply via an [online form](#) and articulate their request. Upon receipt, they are assigned to a suitable expert.

In 2025 in the framework of the CSA ECAS organised two thematic 1-hour lunchtime webinars endorsing a proactive awareness raising and mentoring approach as a means to reach out and support its stakeholders. In total, 32 citizens and organisations benefitted from the [Digital Democracy](#) and [How to organise inclusive events](#) webinars.

Focus groups on Voting Rights in Belgium

To continue raising awareness on electoral rights among the EU mobile citizens' community, ECAS organised an online "focus group" session a few weeks before the municipal elections, gathering NGOs, policymakers, and EU mobile citizens from Belgium. The purpose of the focus group on voting rights was to discuss obstacles and develop recommendations to encourage EU mobile citizens to vote and/or stand as candidates at the local level.

During the first half of the focus group, challenges that EU mobile citizens face to fully enjoy their voting rights were discussed, including the lack of awareness about existing rights. The second part of the focus group session gathered recommendations and solutions to tackle these challenges, concluding in a set of recommendations that can be applied both by local authorities and civil society. Our report can be found [here](#)!

"Europeans on the Vote" Podcast



ECAS has launched a series of podcasts, available on [Spotify](#), on the theme "[Europeans on the vote](#)". Each podcast features a 20-minute interview with relevant stakeholders who play a significant role in promoting and enhancing the political rights of EU citizens.

A total of six interviews have been conducted on various topics, notably on the benefits of crowdsourcing to engage citizens, the future of digital democracy, or the adaptation of citizens'

engagement to new realities. Youth engagement, challenges faced to make democracy more accessible, and obstacles encountered by EU mobile citizens to get elected have also been discussed in the different episodes.

ECAS is thankful to all Civil Society Organisations, civil servants and academics who accepted our invitation to participate in the “Europeans on the move” podcasts.

The podcast series was **listened to by 293 citizens in 2024**.

Training on Freedom of Movement Rights

Since 2022, ECAS has organised training events aiming at sharing knowledge with both civil society members and civil servants on the application of freedom of movement at the national level. Our purpose is to help participants understand and interpret the current EU legislation, especially the Guidance² published by the European Commission in late 2023.



In 2024, ECAS organised training sessions in two cities with a high number of EU mobile citizens:

Brussels and Luxembourg.

Each training session was provided by a legal expert specialised in the local jurisdiction, and presented in an interactive manner, including a quiz to the audience at the beginning and at the end of each session. Trainers provided tailor-made advice to participants who were able to raise questions related to their everyday work.

All training sessions took place in a hybrid format, in the local languages. Bringing together public authorities and civil society fostered a very dynamic and positive synergy.

PROMISE (Post-pandemic reinvention of Mobility for Inclusive and Sustainable Europe)



PROMISE

The Promise project, funded by EPIM, aims at analysing the need to enhance a more inclusive implementation of EU free movement rules and providing relevant support to fill the remaining gaps. In December 2023, the European Commission issued its “Guidance” on Directive 2004/38

² [Guidance on the right of free movement of EU citizens and their families - European Commission](#)

on freedom of movement. While ECAS welcomes this Guidance and the added value it brings to better understand how to interpret and implement the Freedom of Movement Directive and related case law, further improvements need to be added to make the content of the Guidance clearer. Together with [FEANTSA](#), ECAS developed a [Policy paper](#) based on a legal analysis performed by Dr Anthony Valcke, to present the main recommendations to make the Guidance more inclusive and clarify certain definitions which may lead to misinterpretation by the local authorities.

ProEUValuesBG



2024 was the second year of the ProEUValuesBG project, which aims to enhance the role of Bulgarian CSOs as key messengers of EU values at national, regional and local levels in Bulgaria through capacity-building and financial support. 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 – one for grassroots CSOs and the other for initiatives and strategic actions from more experienced organisations.

Leading on the project's capacity-building work, in 2024, ECAS provided online and in person training to the participating CSOs, developing projects on one of the three thematic areas – European rights, Democracy and Non-discrimination.

Two Masterclasses were organised – one in March on tackling disinformation and building successful campaigns, and one in November – on promoting EU values in a hostile or intolerant environment. During the Masterclasses, the participants examined specific case studies, looked at examples of successful CSO campaigns and heard from NGOs and practitioners from Latvia, Greece, Slovenia, and Poland, gaining a deeper cross-regional perspective.

In addition, in October and December ECAS also organised two online networking events for all CSOs under the project, giving the participants the opportunity to exchange on key concerns, common challenges and best practices and to create synergies for the way forward, particularly for those working in the same field. The networking sessions informed the theme of the next (and last) Master class under the project – building a common communications strategy - which is planned for February 2025.

As a result of the capacity building and the networking activities, both large and small organisations from the big cities and the rural areas fostered collaboration, sharing of resources, and developing joint strategies to combat threats to democracy and EU values (such as disinformation) more effectively in the currently difficult environment in Bulgaria.



Started in September 2022, the BOLSTER project (Bridging Organisations and Marginalised Communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in Europe), funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe Framework Programme, seeks to understand how marginalised communities are affected by policies related to the European Green Deal (EGD) and to determine whether including these communities in decision-making processes enhances support for transition plans.

BOLSTER aims to provide new scientific insights into decarbonisation strategies and their intersection with various dimensions of inequality, including gender, race, age, and class. The project also seeks to operationalise the principle of "leaving no one behind" by developing participatory governance models and transition guidelines grounded in climate justice and gender equality.

As a consortium partner, ECAS is tasked with organising a series of policy dialogues: three EU-focused dialogues and ten regional dialogues in the project's target regions, including Istria (Croatia), Silesia (Poland), Prahova (Romania), Hainaut (Belgium), Halle (Germany), León (Spain), and Stara Zagora (Bulgaria).

In 2024, ECAS facilitated **five online regional dialogues** and **one in-person EU dialogue in Brussels**, engaging overall **280 participants** from diverse backgrounds, including researchers, policymakers, civil society representatives, EU officials, and local and national authorities. These events provided a platform for discussing inclusive, sustainable strategies for the green transition.

The [3rd BOLSTER regional policy dialogue](#), held on 15th March 2024, focused on inclusive youth engagement in the green transition. Discussions explored challenges and best practices from Halle (Germany), Ukrainian coal areas, and EU perspectives, emphasising the importance of youth participation, sustainable funding, and promoting career opportunities in transition regions.

The [4th BOLSTER regional policy dialogue](#), held on 15th April 2024, focused on green transition and citizen participation. Discussions explored challenges and best practices from Hainaut (Belgium) in engaging marginalised communities, such as women and youth, in the green transition.

The [5th BOLSTER regional policy dialogue](#), held on 11th June 2024, focused on the role of culture in driving societal transformation in former mining regions, with insights from León (Spain). Discussions emphasised a community-centric approach and the need for increased EU support for cultural initiatives to ensure these regions' sustainable and inclusive transformation.

The [6th BOLSTER regional policy dialogue](#), held on 23rd September 2024, focused on addressing energy poverty through the Just Transition Mechanism. Discussions explored challenges and best practices from Prahova (Romania), emphasising inclusive strategies, sustainable construction, accessible funding, and participatory governance. Collaboration between international networks and local stakeholders was also seen as vital to ensure the inclusion of marginalised communities in decision-making.

The [7th BOLSTER regional policy dialogue](#), held on 2nd October 2024, focused on inclusive Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTP) for marginalised communities, with insights from Stara Zagora (Bulgaria). Discussions highlighted the need for tailored consultations, simplified funding, and local organisation involvement to ensure equitable participation and resource allocation in the green transition.

The [first BOLSTER EU dialogue](#), held on 10th October 2024 within the framework of EU Week of Regions and Cities, focused on making small, remote regions more attractive within the Green Deal and Just Transition. Discussions emphasised balancing EU policies with local autonomy, preventing displacement, and using funds to revitalise shrinking areas, advocating for flexible, tailored policies.



The project consortium is led by the [Tilburg University \(TiU\)](#) and includes, in addition to ECAS, the following partners:

- RMIT-EU - Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Spain (Spain)
- UEKAT - University of Economics in Katowice (Poland)
- SPI - Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (Portugal)
- CHX - Crowdhelix Limited (Ireland)
- UNWE - University of National and World Economy (Bulgaria)
- FTHM - Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (Croatia)
- University of Liège (Belgium)
- MKBT - MAKE BETTER Association (Romania)
- CGE - Culture Goes Europe (Germany)
- BWN - CEE Bankwatch Network (Czechia)

Events and Advocacy Activities

State of the Union Conference 2024: Towards a stronger democracy that leaves no one behind



The “State of the Union Citizens’ Rights” conference is the yearly flagship annual event of ECAS in its EU Rights focus area since 2018. Its main purpose is to provide a forum to discuss current developments in the field of EU rights and engage stakeholders who have an interest in contributing to a stronger EU Citizenship. Every year, the focus of the conference is different and adapted to the latest political developments.

In 2024, the conference focused on building a stronger democracy that leaves no one behind. The event took place on March 19th and gathered high-level speakers who shared their thoughts on how to foster a more inclusive EU democracy ahead of the European Parliament elections. The event gathered 86 participants, both online and offline.

After an introduction from ECAS’s Executive Director Assya Kavrakova, Dubravka Suica, vice-president of the European Commission, opened the 2024 State of the Union Citizens’ Rights conference with a keynote speech on the current state of democracy. Highlighting that democracy is a dynamic process which should not be taken for granted, Ms. Suica declared that the EU’s main task ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections should be to counteract political alienation with greater political participation and institutional listening, in order to create a democracy fit for the future and upcoming generations.

The keynote speech was followed by a first presentation on the topic “Engaging citizens through crowdsourcing”. Elisa Lironi, ECAS’s Programme Director of ECAS, together with Savannah Schuurbijs, European Democracy Coordinator, and Claire Morot-Sir, EU Rights Manager, presented two crowdsourcing exercises, (respectively on dystopia³ and political participation⁴), organised by ECAS to collect opinions and recommendations of EU citizens on the upcoming European Parliament elections.

³ [ECAS-FADT-Dystopia-Citizens-0424.pdf](#)

⁴ [ECAS-FADT-Dystopia-Citizens-0424.pdf](#)

The first panel of the 2024 edition of the State of the Union Citizens' Rights conference focused on shaping an inclusive European Union by engaging all citizens. Simona Barbu from [FEANTSA](#), Gabriela Hrabanova from the [European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network](#), Cristian Leahu from the [European Commission's Directorate General for Justice](#), and Ionel Zamfir from the [European Parliamentary Research Service](#) discussed best practices and recommendations to make the democratic process more inclusive towards minorities, and more gender-balanced.

The second panel gathered Kristof Papp from the [European Youth Forum](#), Rita Dias from the [Erasmus Student Network](#), Christelle Savall from [JEF Europe](#) and Laurențiu Plosceanu from the [European Social and Economic Committee](#) who presented their main analyses and recommendations towards a youth-centered European Union.

Both panels were moderated by journalist [Florence Ranson](#).

Finally, as every year, the conference ended with the disclosure of the names of the ECAS' Awards 2023 winner, presented by Jean Lambert, Chairperson of the ECAS Board. Our awardee, [Havva Ebrahimi Pour](#), took the floor to present the work she has performed to "engage EU citizens in the democratic process".

More information can be found [here](#).

ECAS's Analysis of the European Commission's Guidance on the Right to Free Movement



ECAS, in partnership with FEANTSA, has developed a policy brief which summarises the main takeaways from an analysis of the European Commission's Guidance on the right of free movement. The Guidance was published by the European Commission in December 2023 and clarifies key notions and aspects of Directive 2004/38 on the right of EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely in the EU. The policy brief outlines the areas successfully clarified by the Guidance and the areas that remain problematic regarding freedom of movement in the EU legal framework. A set of recommendations suggests how these challenges can be addressed.



3. EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY FOCUS AREA

ECAS's European Democracy focus area has two main objectives. On the one hand, to explore democratic innovation and a more open and inclusive form of policy-making by involving citizens through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). On the other hand, to develop a more precise understanding of how trends, such as populism and online disinformation, affect our societies and to encourage civic engagement to increase the resilience of our democracy.

In 2024, ECAS's work in the European Democracy's focus area was on:

- **European Elections** – In 2024, year of the European Elections, ECAS developed the 'First Aid Democracy Toolkits' composed of the recommendations to counter a 'European Dystopia' and guidelines to tackle online disinformation, and were guides designed for citizens, civil society organisations, and Members of the European Parliament.
- **Digital Inclusion** – Proceeding with the work as chair of Civil Society Europe's Digital Transformation cluster, ECAS published a full report on the updated recommendations of CSOs and the Digital Inclusion Guidelines based on consultations in 10 member states. Furthermore, in order to ensure meaningful citizen involvement in shaping inclusive digital policies across Europe, ECAS is leading a consortium of seven partners in the INDEU project to crowdsource citizens' opinions on this topic and make sure their voices are heard.
- **Civic Engagement** – ECAS has continued managing on behalf of the European Commission, the European Citizens' Initiative Forum, an online collaborative platform (available in all 24 EU languages) that provides advice and information to initiative organisers before, during and after the process of launching and implementing an initiative.

Services to Citizens

European Citizens' Initiative Forum



In 2024, ECAS continued its work on the European Citizens' Initiative Forum, operated on behalf of and under contract with the European Commission (2022-2025). The purpose of the online collaborative platform 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 European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). The Forum aims to become a reference entry point for all information and capacity building related to the ECIs. Over the course of 2024, ECAS operated the platform on a daily basis and implemented all the activities set out in the Work Plan, together with its subcontractors, Democracy International and ProMedia Productions.

In 2024, ECAS continued enhancing the Forum with accessible learning materials and up-to-date resources. These included three new Success Stories, a new Guidance Note on Financial Reporting, and updates to two existing Guidance Notes. ECAS also published two videos: *Meet-and-Greet with ECI Organisers 2024* in May and *How to Raise Funds* in October.

ECAS also continued managing the 'Seek Advice' service of the Forum, handling citizens' enquiries and providing legal, campaigning, and fundraising advice, available in all 24 EU languages to 34 potential and current organisers over the course of 2024. Of these, 16 enquiries were legal, 8 related to campaigning, 1 concerned fundraising, and 9 addressed other relevant topics.

ECAS's communication and outreach efforts achieved excellent results in 2024, with a monthly average of 22,956 unique visitors and growing geographical diversity. By the end of the contract's second year (2024), the ECI Forum reached 999 subscribers and 1,246 online course subscribers. Additionally, the ECI Forum organised five stakeholder consultation activities to constantly improve the platform. ECAS also undertook a major revamp of the ECI Forum, redesigning its structure to enhance usability and interactivity. Set to launch in January 2025, the revamped site features improved navigation, new pages like "The ECI Community," and tailored subpages for guidance materials, ensuring a user-friendly experience informed by extensive user feedback.

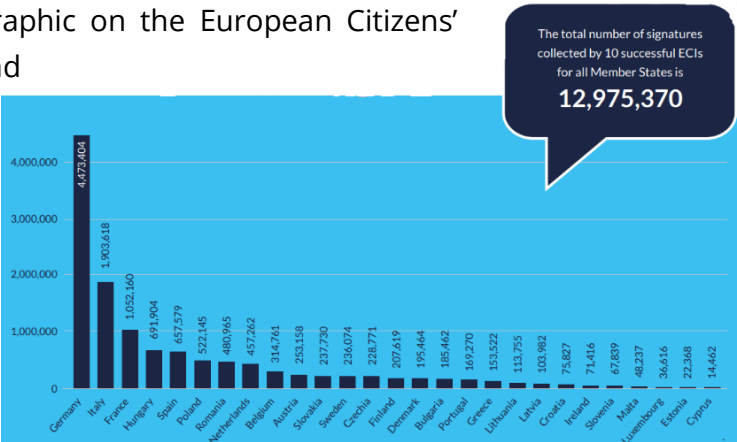
ECAS published its annual updated infographic on the European Citizens' Initiative, showcasing key statistics and insights, including demographic data on organisers, supporters, and funding sources, alongside a blog analysing trends from the past 12 years.

In 2024, ECAS organised several online and in person events to enhance citizens' knowledge about the ECI as a tool for participatory democracy in the EU. ECAS held three webinars on topics related to the European Citizens' Initiative: effective social media communication strategies; outreach and engagement strategies and why the ECI stands out as an important participatory democracy tool. A total of approximately 60 people attended the three webinars. To support citizens further, ECAS also improved the online course, *'Essential Skills for European Citizens' Initiative Organisers'* with additional visuals and conducted tailor-made training sessions (Welcome Calls) with the organisers of eight newly registered initiatives in 2024.

In August, ECAS conducted a workshop at the Summer Academy titled "Strengthening Democracy: Civic Engagement and Responsibility," with 140 participants from 13 scholarship organisations and held at Kloster Banz Educational Centre in Germany.

The workshop, entitled "Citizen Participation at the EU Level and Deliberative Democracy", introduced the European Citizens' Initiative and its role in fostering cross-border civic engagement. Participants were shown how the ECI serves as a vital democratic tool, allowing citizens to propose legislative changes directly to the European Commission, provided that the proposal secures at least one million signatures across seven EU member states. To deepen understanding, we conducted a simulation exercise where participants crafted their own ECI proposals. This hands-on activity allowed them to experience the ECI process firsthand.

Last but not least, for the EESC's annual ECI Day, which was held in March and has become part of the EESC's Civil Society Week, ECAS organised a workshop, *'How to Navigate the ECI Support Infrastructures'*, which was attended by 93 people (44 in person and 49 online).



Projects

INDEU

Inclusive Digitalisation in the EU (or INDEU) is an innovative 3-year project that started in June 2024, co-funded by the European Commission under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme. The implementation of the INDEU project consists of both a transnational crowdsourcing with a specifically developed platform and an advocacy strategy at local and EU level on the topic of digital transformation.



The INDEU - Inclusive Digitalisation in the EU project has three main objectives:

1. **Engage over 2,300 citizens** from six EU countries in an inclusive crowdsourcing process, promoting awareness of digital policies and empowering them to monitor key performance indicators.
2. Foster collaboration and policy impact by building partnerships with local authorities, providing recommendations for an inclusive digital transformation, and **integrating citizen insights into the EU's digital agenda**.
3. Promote democratic participation by **increasing awareness of crowdsourcing as a democratic tool**, engaging citizens in policy development, and sharing best practices to foster interest in political innovation and e-participation.

On July 2, the INDEU partners took part in the project's kick-off meeting and a training session highlighting the role of crowdsourcing in enhancing direct participation in decision-making at local, national, and EU levels. The event featured experts from ECAS, SciFY, ProInfo Bulgaria, and Democracy International, who presented on topics such as the potential and challenges of crowdsourcing, developing secure and user-friendly platforms and effective communication strategies. The session aimed to equip attendees with practical knowledge and strategies to successfully implement crowdsourcing activities, ensuring meaningful citizen involvement in shaping inclusive digital policies across Europe.

Project partners:

- ODRAZ (Croatia)
- ProInfo (Bulgaria)
- Democracy International (Germany)
- Science For You – SciFY (Greece)
- Romanian Center for European Policies (Romania)
- Fundación Cibervoluntarios (Spain)

MORES

Moral Emotions in Politics (MORES) is an innovative three-year project funded by the Horizon Programme, which started in January 2024.

MORES intends to gain a deeper understanding of the role of moral emotions in politics by developing a normative-analytical framework to inform democratic decision-making regarding how moral emotions interact with values, policies, and political practices. The project will

explore how to harness the unifying potential of these emotions while minimising their divisive effects. Ultimately, it aims to create practical tools and policy recommendations that enhance emotional regulation in political processes, ensuring that citizens' emotional needs are integrated into policymaking.

During the kick-off meeting in January, ECAS presented its role in the project and its activities in the upcoming years. ECAS is responsible for crowdsourcing citizens' opinions on the role of emotions in politics and will also develop policy recommendations and support project dissemination efforts at the EU level. Furthermore, ECAS will conduct a focus group in Bulgaria to examine the moral and emotional effects of messages related to European identity and organise a Summer Academy in Bulgaria.

On October 1, ECAS represented the MORES project at the PLEDGE's Synergy Building Event at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). This event brought together representatives from all projects funded under the "Emotional Politics of Democracies" call to foster collaboration and mutual understanding on how scientific knowledge of emotions can improve policymaking and strengthen democracy.



Project Partners:

- Centre for Social Sciences (Hungary)
- Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland)
- Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary)
- European University Institute (Italy)
- European University Viadrina (Germany)
- Game in Society (France)
- Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)
- University of Lorraine (France)

EU-CIEMBLY

EU-CIEMBLY - Creating an Inclusive European Citizens' Assembly is a 4-year project (2024 – 2027) funded by the Horizon Europe programme of the European Commission. It 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 tackles the issues of intersectionality, inclusiveness, and equality.

In 2024, ECAS was involved in the mapping of existing citizens' assemblies in Europe to identify best practices to transfer in the 3 pilot citizens' assemblies which will be implemented in 2026. After the mapping, ECAS collaborated with the relevant project partners to further select the citizens' assemblies that will inform the practical framework of the pilots. ECAS also participated in partner events aimed at building the consortium's capacity and awareness of the intersectional approach in participatory democracy.

The project consortium is led by the Universidade de Coimbra (Portugal) and includes, in addition to ECAS, the following partners:

- Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain)
- University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (South Africa)
- Institute for Methods Innovation (Ireland)
- ASPON Consulting Ltd (Cyprus)
- Università degli Studi di Bergamo (Italy)
- The Research Trust of Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)
- University of Waikato (New Zealand)
- Make.org (France)

MediaResilience



MediaResilience - Nurturing Quality News Journalism is a 3-year project (2024 – 2026) funded by the Creative Europe Programme (CREA) of the European Commission. The 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.

MediaResilience 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.

A kick-off meeting took place on October 2025 in Brussels. In 2024, ECAS created the project's visual identity and stakeholder engagement and dissemination strategy.

This project is led by the Open Society Institute – Sofia (OSIS) in collaboration with ECAS and ProMedia.

EURECA (European Citizenship Accelerator)

The EURECA 2024 project further developed the capacities of ECAS and its members to empower citizens and promote participatory democracy. The objective is to also give citizens the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the European Democracy Action Plan and the EU Citizenship Report 2020.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Addressing disinformation in CEE

In response to disinformation attacks in European societies which threaten the democratic process and shrink democratic space in Europe, ECAS has been steadily building expertise in the domain of countering disinformation and building civil society resilience. In 2022 and 2023 ECAS fostered the creation of civil society coalitions responding to particular disinformation narratives in Central and Eastern Europe, notably in Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary, Czechia and Poland. As a result, approximately 40 CSOs, and hundreds of thousands of citizens across these five countries were successfully engaged in an array of social media campaigns; educational videos; public debates; and training dispelling disinformation myths and promoting critical thinking. On the basis of the lessons learnt from these campaigns, in 2024, ECAS put forward a [Framework for Civil Society Action Against Disinformation](#), with the goal to equip CSOs with a ready tool to address disinformation narratives in a quick, timely and effective manner and build preventive mechanisms against them. The Framework includes practical guidelines in six key areas on how to: 1) build a versatile CSO coalition and clearly divide responsibilities between its members; 2) develop meaningful activities for the campaign; 3) dedicate time and resources to research; 4) be prepared to adapt planned activities to new circumstance; 5) take advantage of concurrent events to increase and measure impact; and 6) use innovative approaches to deliver the campaign's messages.

The Framework for Civil Society Action Against Disinformation was included in the Toolkits for Civil Society and Citizens, which ECAS prepared ahead of the European Parliament elections in June 2024, to support organisations and citizens in a year of increased disinformation attacks and populist discourse. Alongside the Framework, ECAS also put forward two additional resources - [practical tips \("Dos and Don'ts"\) for CSOs, citizens and MEPs on addressing disinformation](#), and [a step by step approach to debunking of fake narratives](#) - in an effort to prepare and equip citizens and stakeholders with the means to effectively identify and counter, the spread of disinformation while fostering informed and critical engagement in the public discourse.

In addition, in 2024, the Framework was presented at two renowned European forums – during the Civil Society Week of the European and Social Committee in March, and at the GLOBSEC strategic conference on CEE in August. It was also provided to the ECAS' members across the EU

and to organisations in the European Hub for Civic Engagement, to expand its reach and ensure that stakeholders working on tackling disinformation and strengthening civic engagement across Europe are well equipped for the task.

Online Course: Crowdsourcing for Civil Society Organisations

In 2024, **225 people** enrolled in ECAS's online course called "Crowdsourcing for Civil Society Organisations" which was designed to equip Civil Society Organisations, civic movements and anyone with an interest to get a better understanding of how to leverage the power of crowdsourcing for effective citizen involvement.



The course includes four modules:

1. Basics of Crowdsourcing: Defines crowdsourcing, its principles, and history; compares it with EU citizen participation tools; and highlights examples from Iceland and Finland.
2. Use of Crowdsourcing by Citizen Organisations: Reviews CODE Europe and DigiDEM projects, highlights a transnational air quality crowdsourcing initiative, and offers setup recommendations for organisations.
3. IT Solutions for Gathering the Wisdom of the Crowd: provides a comprehensive overview of the technological infrastructure required to establish and maintain digital crowdsourcing platforms.
4. Communicating and Engaging Citizens in Crowdsourcing: Explores strategies like storytelling, framing, and communication channels to mobilise and engage citizens in crowdsourcing.

First Aid Democracy Toolkits

To raise awareness about and prepare citizens for the 2024 European Parliament Elections, ECAS developed a 'First Aid Democracy Toolkit' with various resources for citizens, Civil Society Organisations, and newly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The dissemination efforts around the toolkit had several objectives - to boost voter turnout, tackle disinformation, mobilise undecided voters, and more, all aimed at promoting a healthy democracy.

The toolkit included the following materials:

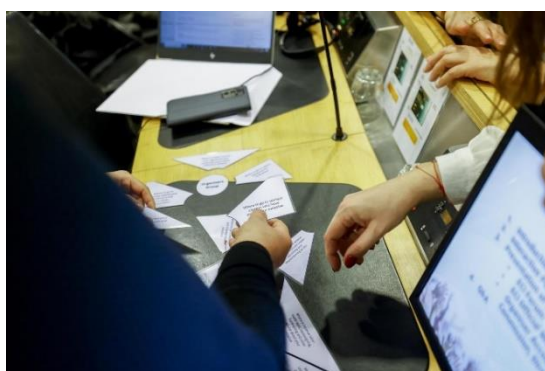
- [Voting App](#)
- [ECAS Podcast: "Europeans on the Vote"](#)
- Online courses on [Political Rights of EU Citizens](#) and [Crowdsourcing for Civil Society Organisations](#)
- How to address disinformation?
 - [Do's and Don'ts for citizens](#)
 - [Do's and Don'ts for CSOs](#)
 - [Do's and Don'ts for MEPs](#)
- Go Vote for European Values campaign
 - [Guide for youth](#)
 - [Guide for the undecided](#)
- [Digital Inclusion Guidelines](#)
- [Framework for civil society action against disinformation](#)
- [Debunking of Fake Narratives: A step by step approach](#)

The ECAS European Elections campaign **reached a total of 34,109 people**.

Events and Advocacy Activities

The ECI Day 2024

ECAS actively participated in the 2024 ECI Day organised by the European Economic and Social Committee. The 13th edition of the ECI Day which took place during the first edition of Civil Society Week, entitled 'Rise up for Democracy' on 5 March 2024. During the event, ECAS organised and moderated the workshop: 'How to Navigate the ECI Support Infrastructures'. This workshop, designed with an interactive approach, aimed to explain and showcase the support infrastructures of the ECI, specifically the ECI Forum, the Organiser Account and the ECI official website (portal). Participants explored the ECI support infrastructures through an interactive puzzle, complemented by a detailed presentation from the ECI Forum team and a Commission expert managing the Organiser Account, the Central Online Collection System, and the ECI official website.



@EU2024 - source: EESC

Digital Democracy Day 2024 10th Anniversary

ECAS's Digital Democracy Day 2024 celebrated a decade of advancing the intersection between technology and democratic governance, addressing both the opportunities and challenges presented by emerging technologies. The event commenced with MEP Brando Benifei highlighting the transformative impact of AI and digital platforms on democracy, emphasising the dangers of disinformation and advocating for stricter transparency measures and comprehensive education to empower citizens.

Assya Kavrakova, Executive Director of ECAS, reflected on the organisation's evolution and underscored the critical question of how technology can strengthen rather than undermine democratic values. The first panel, "Digital Democracy Unleashed," reviewed a decade of e-participation initiatives, with experts discussing the successes, such as increased citizen engagement through digital platforms, and ongoing challenges like resource allocation and the digital divide. Key insights included the uneven adoption of e-participation across Europe and the vital role of civil society in fostering inclusive digital engagement.

The second panel, "The Next Frontier – Can AI, Blockchain, and the Metaverse Transform Democracy?" explored the potential and risks of advanced technologies in enhancing democratic processes. Experts debated the benefits of blockchain for secure voting systems and decentralised organisations, the necessity of integrating AI responsibly to support rather than replace human decision-making, and the transformative possibilities of virtual worlds for citizen engagement.

Discussions also highlighted the importance of ensuring these technologies are accessible, transparent, and aligned with EU values to prevent exacerbating existing inequalities.

An audience of approximately 45 policy-makers, CSOs and social innovators participated in the event and contributed actively to the debate, providing solutions for increasing trust in



policymaking through crowdsourcing and encouraging citizens to participate in crowdsourcing projects.

Throughout the day, interactive Q&A sessions enabled participants to dig deeper into topics such as the balance between AI's influence and democratic principles, the evolving role of civil society in public consultations, and strategies to enhance meaningful citizen participation. The event concluded with a consensus on the need for collaborative efforts to harness technology for democratic renewal, ensuring that digital advancements support inclusive and transparent governance across Europe.

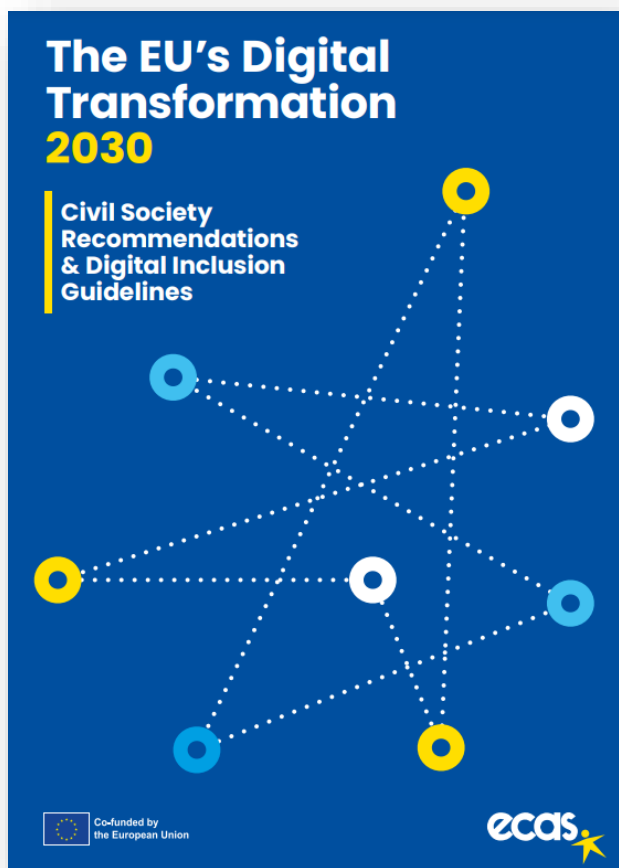
Digital Democracy Day 2024 successfully fostered dialogue among citizens, experts, and policymakers, reinforcing the commitment to leveraging technology to strengthen democratic institutions and promote active, informed participation in the digital era. You can read the full report of the event [here](#) and find a promotional video [here](#).

Digital inclusion guidelines on the improvement of the EU's digital targets 2030

The Digital Inclusion Guidelines by the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) aim to shape an inclusive digital transformation in Europe that works for all, preventing further digital divides and reducing inequalities. While digital policy has long been integral to EU legislation, the challenge today is to achieve a digital transformation that prioritises all citizens and leaves none behind.

In response, ECAS, in collaboration with over 1,200 civil society organisations (CSOs) from across Europe, has developed policy recommendations for a people-focused EU digital strategy. These guidelines are based on input gathered during ECAS's participation in the Civil Society Convention on the Future of Europe, which united more than 80 organisations across five thematic clusters, including a Digital Transformation cluster chaired by ECAS's Programme Director for European Democracy, Elisa Lironi. This cluster contributed to the EU's digital transformation priority, "A Europe fit for the digital age," with recommendations to enhance digital sovereignty and set standards for data, technology, and infrastructure while upholding European values like ethics, fundamental rights, and education.

The crowdsourcing exercise within this framework collected 216 ideas and recommendations, which informed 84 detailed recommendations published in the Civil Society State of the Union Report 2023. These ideas span five key areas of digital transformation:



1. Digital Democracy – Promote citizen participation and ensure that digital tools enhance inclusivity in EU decision-making processes.
2. Digital Economy – Ensure accessibility to affordable, high-speed internet and address fair taxation in the digital economy.
3. Digital Rights and Freedoms – Protect fundamental rights in digital infrastructures, safeguard data privacy, and promote online freedom by preventing geo-blocking and supporting accessible broadcasting.
4. Digital Safeguards – Strengthen cybersecurity, ensure transparency in AI and automated decision-making, and combat online hate speech.
5. Digital Education – Bridge the digital divide with access to digital education, promote lifelong digital literacy, and encourage critical thinking skills.

These guidelines serve as a roadmap for policymakers to ensure that Europe's digital transformation is inclusive, equitable and people-driven, ultimately setting standards for a digital future that reflects European values.



4. ECAS' MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH

ECAS' Membership

ECAS' membership is mission-driven and free-of-charge. At the end of 2024, [ECAS Membership](#) consisted of 166 Members, including organisations and individuals, who subscribe to the [ECAS Mission and Vision](#) and are active in the ECAS focus areas (EU Rights and European Democracy).

ECAS' Network of Members covered 42 countries (27 EU Member States and 15 non-EU Member States) and included:

- 103 Member Organisations (27 of which are network organisations) and 63 Individuals.

ECAS actively involves its members in delivering its mission and in its activities focused on the promotion and defence of citizens' rights as well as the development and support of mechanisms aimed at increasing the democratic participation of citizens and citizen organisations in, and engagement with, the EU.

ECAS's **27 EU Member States' membership includes 79 organisations** and **52 individual members**. The organisational membership covers 24 EU Member States. ECAS's network of organisation members has expanded by almost 32% in the last three years.



ECAS' Grant-making to its Members in the EU

During the last three years, as part of its CERV Operating Grants, ECAS has implemented a grant-making scheme, supporting members' projects in the EU in the areas of citizens' rights, tackling disinformation and promoting a digital transformation that leaves no one behind (23 projects totaling 538,399 euros were funded in 2023-2024).

In 2024, ECAS launched the second edition of the regranting scheme for its member organisations based in the EU, which is part of the [EURECA \(European Citizenship Accelerator\)](#) framework partnership, co-funded by the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme of the European Union.

After a [2-month call for proposals](#) launched on January 15th and the assessment of project applications, 11 member organisations were awarded the ECAS' grant to implement 6-month projects contributing to the achievement of the EURECA 2024 objectives, in the areas of **1) tackling disinformation and strengthening CSOs resilience** and **2) ensuring a digital transformation that leaves no one behind**. All projects needed to demonstrate the clear European dimension of their activities, focusing on the following:

- awareness raising and outreach campaigns, for the general public and key stakeholders;
- organisation of civic platforms and civic dialogues;
- watchdog, monitoring, lobbying and advocacy activities;
- training and capacity-building of key stakeholders;
- research and analysis, linked to the Call for proposals themes.

ECAS members' projects addressed a wide range of topics, including strengthening citizens' and CSOs' participation in local decision-making and promoting accurate, pluralistic information to combat disinformation. They focused on empowering CSOs to advocate for EU values, enhancing their capacity to identify, analyse, and counter disinformation, and providing tools such as open-source frameworks and data-sharing initiatives. The projects also emphasized fostering inclusive digital transformation by bridging digital divides or raising awareness of AI's role in education. Additionally, projects sought to encourage active participation in shaping Europe's digital future and advocate for EU democratic renewal.

DATA on ECAS projects:

- Number of projects funded and overall amount in EUR:
 - o 11 projects
 - o € 164,000.592
- Number of people reached through the 11 projects
 - o 8,082,5973
- Number of people engaged (training, meetings, participatory activities)
 - o 1,757

More information about the 11 awarded projects is available [here](#).

A kick-off meeting of the grantees' projects took place on 2nd July in Brussels, and the implementation of projects was concluded by 19th November.



ECAS's Outreach

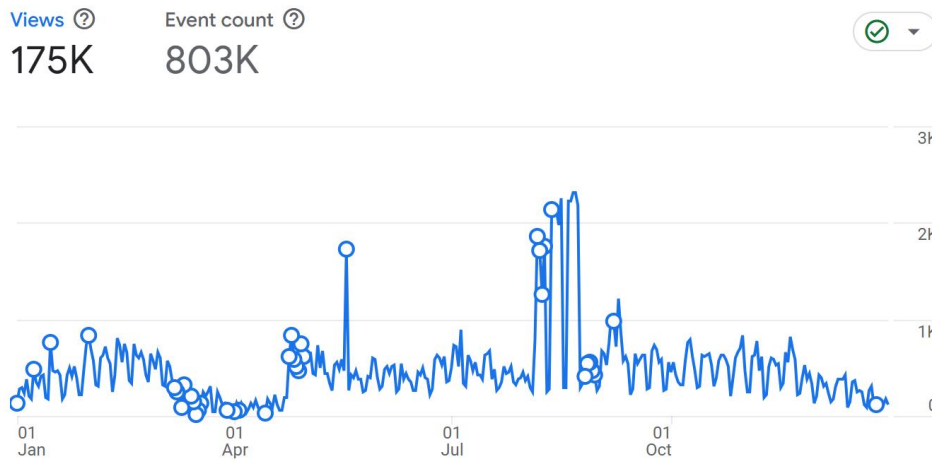
ECAS continued to expand its outreach in 2024 through its website, social media communication channels and newsletter.

In 2024 the website of ECAS (ecas.org) received a total of 175,191 page views for the year. This constitutes an increase of **+21%**, compared to 2023. Apart from pageviews, the website of ECAS (ecas.org) received a total of 95,264 total users for the year. This constitutes an increase of **+13%**, compared to 2023.

Day-to-day activities and updates of ECAS were also widely publicised via Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram. In 2024, ECAS has recorded a noticeable increase in followers on all platforms, except for Twitter (X) where there is an unprecedented downward trend ECAS is facing together with other similar civil society organisations in Europe since the acquisition of Twitter by American businessman, Elon Musk.

Website activity

In 2024, the ECAS website continued to generate a steady flow of pageviews, recording a monthly high of **35,018 (August)** and a monthly low of **6,726 (April, due to a Google update)**, for an annual total of **175,191 pageviews**, a **21% increase compared to 2023**.



Users

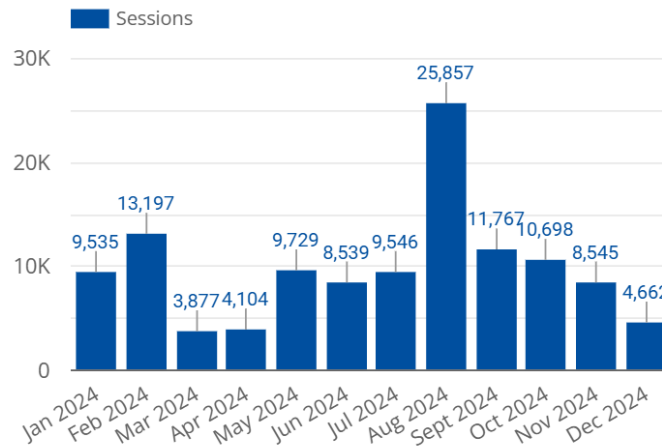
In **August** 2024, we saw our highest user count ever with **22,059 active users** (thanks to a well targeted advertising campaign of our First Aid Democracy Toolkits), while **March** came in lowest with 2,898 active users. We experienced an unprecedented 85.6% drop in users (From 334 to 48 users per day on average) in the beginning of March due to the Google Ranking Algorithm core & spam update launched on 5 March.

Despite the setback, we managed to recover the traffic and registered a **record high of 95,264 total users** on the ecas.org website until the end of the year (**13% increase** compared to 2023), beating our all-time record of 89,895 users from 2017.



Sessions

The number of sessions registered a record high level of **25,857** in August and a low of **3,877** in March, for an annual total of **119,914** for 2024, which is a total **increase of 17%** compared to 2023.



Social Media

ECAS manages six social media platforms – Twitter (X), Threads, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

X

By the end of 2024, ECAS had a total of 5,115 followers, which represents a decrease of 2.27% in followership compared to the previous year. ECAS posts have been retweeted 165 times. The posts have received 894 engagements. ECAS posted 390 tweets (20% less than in 2023), generating 28,885 impressions, which constitutes a decrease of 95% compared to 2023.

Facebook

In 2024, the ECAS Facebook page reached a total of 6,261 followers, a net annual gain of 142 followers. The 207 Facebook posts published by ECAS reached 515 engaged users, with 2,638 page and post engagements, which is also a 28% drop compared to last year.

LinkedIn

By the end of 2024, ECAS had a total of 4,713 followers, achieving a net gain of 1,422 from the previous year. The number of posts was 342 with an **increase of 13% in comparison to 2023**, which generated **159,666 impressions, 91% more than last year**. The average engagement rate was 5.98 %.

Top 3 posts based on engagement level:

Instagram



In 2024, ECAS kept developing its Instagram account that led to **gaining 233 followers**. The slow, but steady growth of the channel was due to 79 posts throughout the year, generating 566 likes, 77,294 impressions and 65,434 post reach.

YouTube

ECAS YouTube channel is also growing, with published 15 videos for 2024 generating a total number of 17 new subscribers, 45,179 total views, 1,780 hours of watch time (estimated total hours of viewing time) and **26K impressions**.

Threads

In response to the decline of civil society's support from Twitter (X), ECAS decided to set up its Threads account in search of an alternative. There were no significant efforts invested into growing the channel and ECAS will keep searching for the right alternative channel used by the Brussels bubble, with special attention to BlueSky.

Monthly Newsletter

The ECAS Newsletter was first published in January 2016. It is structured around the two focus areas of ECAS: EU Rights and European Democracy. It serves to promote the activities and events of ECAS, along with those of ECAS members and partners. The newsletter also informs stakeholders and citizens about the main ongoing initiatives at the EU level relevant to the areas of work of ECAS, while facilitating discussions on these subjects.

In 2024, 14 editions have been published and disseminated to an audience of 4,376 subscribers (**701 more than in 2023**), compiled of EU decision-makers, experts in the fields of European democracy and EU rights, civil society organisations, citizens and other stakeholders. On average, 31.7% of 51,653 delivered emails were opened and 1.8% of openers interacted with the emails.

5. ANNEXES

Annex 1: YEA testimonials

In 2024 Your Europe Advice received more than 200 “Thank You” emails.

- “This is wonderful information- thank you very much! I am impressed!” Joy (Germany)
- “Hello, Thank you very much for the most informative reply. Outstanding work. Well done. Kind regards.” Iain (Sweden)
- “Thank you 🙏 so much for the update and supplementary texts, which are most appreciated.
- With my very best regards”. Corinne (Ireland)
- “Hello, Thank you so much for getting back to me so quick. The information you've provided was more helpful than any institute ever provided in Portugal. Kind Regards” Alp (Portugal)
- “Dear Your Europe Advice, I am not sure if you are able to receive this email, but if you can please thank the person who wrote the below email for their kindness and very helpful information. Thanks again!” Ben (France)
- “Good morning, Thank you so much for the prompt reply, very much appreciated. Fyi, I spoke to the seller after your email, and we clarified the situation. They finally agreed to reimburse the amount on my credit card and the shipping cost to return the item. Wishing you a great day and keep up the good work 😊 Best” Luigi (Italy)
- “Thank you - this is incredible. I did not expect such a valuable answer. If I can fill out any type of feedback form to give you a million stars, I will do so! This is really very helpful for confirming what documents we need, where we can pass, etc. Thank you!” Ashley (Lithuania)
- “Hello, Thank you very much for your advice. This is so massively appreciated. We were so confused, and this clears it up and gives us a very useful reference point. Thanks again,” Richard (Cyprus)
- “Dear, what can I say? Your answer is very professional and has plenty of useful information, and I am very happy there are people like you in the EU community who can help the population with advice. Thanks!” Marco (Italy)
- “Je vous remercie de votre réponse très rapide et complète. C'est absolument parfait! Avec mes salutations européennes ” Elspeth (France)
- “Dear Sir / Madam, I just wanted to thank you for the quality and timeliness of your reply to my queries, which I found very helpful. Yours sincerely,” Richard (Cyprus)
- “Thank you for your comprehensive reply! The EU is wonderful, and I'm sorry my government left. Best wishes,” Nathan (United Kingdom)



ACTIVITY REPORT 2024

ECAS BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN CITIZEN ACTION SERVICE

HEADQUARTERS:

BRUSSELS
EUROPEAN CITIZEN ACTION SERVICE
12 CANTERSTEEN
BECENTRAL
1000 BRUSSELS
BELGIUM

BRANCH OFFICE:

SOFIA
EUROPEAN CITIZEN ACTION SERVICE
BRANCH BULGARIA
65 EVLOGI I HRISTO GEORGIEV BLVD
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