Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020

COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) No 390/2014

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establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 352 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the consent of the European Parliament,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee[(1)],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions[(2)],

Acting in accordance with a special legislative procedure,

Whereas:

(1) In line with Articles 10 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union, every citizen has the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union and the Union's institutions should give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action, as well as maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

(2) With the Commission Communication of 3 March 2010 entitled 'Europe 2020 — A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', the Union and the Member States aim at delivering growth, employment, productivity and social cohesion for the coming decade.

(3) While there is objectively an added value in being a Union citizen with established rights, the Union does not always highlight in an effective way the link between the solution to a broad range of economic and social problems and the Union's policies. Hence, the impressive achievements in terms of peace and stability in Europe, long-term sustainable growth, stable prices, an efficient protection of consumers and the environment and the promotion of fundamental rights, have not always led to a strong feeling among citizens of belonging to the Union.

(4) In order to bring Europe closer to its citizens and to enable them to participate fully in the construction of an ever closer Union, a variety of actions and coordinated efforts through transnational and Union level activities are required. The European Citizens' Initiative

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provides a unique opportunity to enable citizens to participate directly in shaping the development of EU legislation[(3)].

(5) Decision No 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council[(4)] set out an action programme which has confirmed the need to promote sustained dialogue with civil society organisations and municipalities and to support the active involvement of citizens.

(6) The interim evaluation report of the Europe for Citizens programme (2007-2013), together with a public online consultation and two consecutive stakeholder consultation meetings, have confirmed that a new 'Europe for Citizens' programme is considered relevant both by civil society organisations and by participating individuals. It was also considered that it should be established in order to have an impact at an organisational level in terms of capacity-building and on a personal level in terms of increased interest in Union matters. This Regulation should therefore establish a 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period from 2014 to 2020 (the Programme).

(7) With regard to the themes of projects, their embedding in the local and regional context, and the composition of stakeholders, there should be important synergies with other Union programmes, namely in the areas of education, vocational training and youth, sport, culture and the audiovisual sector, fundamental rights and freedoms, social inclusion, gender equality, combating discrimination, research and innovation, information society, enlargement and the external action of the Union.

(8) The Programme should cover a wide spectrum of different actions, including, citizens' meetings, contacts and debates on citizenship issues, Union level events, initiatives to raise awareness of, and to promote reflection on, defining moments in European history, initiatives to make European citizens, particularly young people, aware of the history of the Union and of the functioning of the Union institutions, and debates on European policy issues, with a view to invigorating all aspects of public life.

(9) The European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism and the Council Conclusions of 9-10 June 2011 on the memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe underline the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive as a means of moving beyond the past and building the future, and highlight the value of the Union's role in facilitating, sharing and promoting the collective memory of these crimes. The relevance of historical, cultural and intercultural aspects should therefore also be taken into account, as well as the existing links between remembrance and European identity.

(10) A horizontal dimension of the Programme should ensure the valorisation and transferability of results for enhanced impact and long-term sustainability. For this purpose, activities launched should have a link to the Union political agenda and be communicated appropriately.

(11) Special attention should be paid to the balanced integration and participation of citizens and civil society organisations from all Member States into transnational projects and activities, taking into account the multilingual character of the Union and the need to include underrepresented groups.

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(12) The acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates benefiting from a pre-accession strategy on one side, and the EFTA countries party to the EEA Agreement on the other side are recognised as potential participants in Union programmes, in accordance with the agreements concluded with them. Furthermore, pursuant to Council Decision 2001/822/EC[(5)], overseas countries and territories are eligible to participate in the Programme.

(13) The objectives of establishing deep and sustainable democracy and developing a thriving civil society should be common to both the Programme and Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council[(6)]. The Union offers a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to shared values and principles, to the countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Instrument.

(14) The resources allocated to communication actions under this Regulation could also contribute to institutional communication of the political priorities of the Union as far as they are related to the general objectives of this Regulation.

(15) The Programme should be monitored regularly and evaluated independently in cooperation with the Commission and the Member States in order to allow for the readjustments which are necessary if the measures are to be properly implemented.

(16) The financial interests of the Union should be protected through proportionate measures throughout the expenditure cycle, including the prevention, detection and investigation of irregularities, the recovery of funds lost, unduly paid or incorrectly used and, where appropriate, administrative and financial penalties in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council[(7)] (hereinafter 'the Financial Regulation') and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012[(8)].

(17) Preference should be given to grants for projects irrespective of their size but with a high impact, in particular those which are directly linked to Union policies with a view to participating in the shaping of the Union political agenda. Moreover, following the principle of sound financial management, the implementation of the Programme should be further simplified by recourse to lump-sums, flat-rate financing and the application of unit-cost rates.

(18) In order to ensure continuity in the funding support to be covered by the Programme, this Regulation should apply from 1 January 2014. For reasons of urgency, this Regulation should enter into force immediately after its publication.

(19) Since the objectives of this Regulation, namely to contribute to citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity, and to foster European citizenship and improve the conditions for civic and democratic participation, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the transnational and multilateral nature of the Programme, be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Regulation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve those objectives.

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(20) A financial reference amount for the Programme, within the meaning of point 18 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management[(9)], is included in this Regulation for the entire duration of the Programme, without the budgetary powers of the European Parliament and the Council, as set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, being affected thereby.

(21) This Regulation should provide for transitional measures to monitor actions which began before 31 December 2013 under Decision No 1904/2006/EC.

(22) In order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of this Regulation, implementing powers should be conferred on the Commission within the scope and the objectives of the Programme. Those powers should be exercised in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council[(10)],

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Subject matter and scope

1 This Regulation establishes the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020 (the Programme).

2 Under the overall aim of bringing the Union closer to citizens, the general objectives of the Programme are the following:

a to contribute to citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity;

b to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level.

Article 2

Specific objectives of the Programme

The Programme shall have the following specific objectives which shall be implemented through actions at transnational level or with a European dimension:

(a) to raise awareness of remembrance, the common history and values of the Union and the Union's aim, namely to promote peace, the values of the Union and the well-being of its peoples, by stimulating debate, reflection and the development of networks;

(b) to encourage the democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level, by developing citizens' understanding of the Union policy making-process and promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at Union level.

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Article 3

Structure of the Programme and supported actions

1 The Programme, while fostering European citizenship in accordance with the general objectives as set out in Article 1(2), shall be divided into the following two strands:

a 'European remembrance';

b 'Democratic engagement and civic participation'.

The two strands shall be complemented by horizontal actions for analysis, dissemination and use of project results ('Valorisation' action).

2 In order to achieve its objectives, the Programme shall finance, inter alia, the following types of action, implemented at transnational level or with a European dimension:

a Mutual learning and cooperation activities such as:

— citizens' meetings, town-twinning, networks of twinned towns;

— projects implemented by transnational partnerships including different types of stakeholders listed in Article 6;

— remembrance projects with a European dimension;

— exchanges based, inter alia, on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and/or social media;

b Structural support for organisations such as:

— bodies pursuing an aim of general Union interest as defined in Article 177 of Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012;

— Europe for Citizens Contact Points;

c Union level analytical activities such as:

— studies focusing on issues relating to the objectives of the Programme;

d Awareness raising and dissemination activities designed to use and further valorise the results of the supported initiatives and to highlight good practices, such as:

— Union level events including conferences, commemorations and award ceremonies;

— peer reviews, expert meetings and seminars.

3 Initiatives relating to the actions listed in paragraph 2 are described in the Annex to this Regulation.

Article 4

Union measures

1 Union measures may take the form of grants or public procurement contracts.

2 Union grants may be provided through operating grants or action grants.

3 Public procurement contracts shall cover the purchase of services, such as for organising events, studies and research, information and dissemination tools, monitoring and evaluation.