



Common call for:

2013 EUROPEAN YEAR OF CITIZENS THROUGH CULTURE

The **Lisbon Treaty** of the European Union introduced fundamental changes in regard to the role of the citizen and civil-society organizations offering citizens and civil-society-organizations for the first time a legal basis to influence, control, discuss and support EU policies and legislation.

The above-mentioned legal basis needs to be applied in order to bring the citizens and Europe together.

On the 11th of August 2011, the European Commission proposed to the European Parliament and the European Council the year 2013 to be the **European Year of Citizens**.

In order to create a strong citizen's Europe in line with **Europe's 2020 strategy** of inclusive growth, it is necessary to foster active citizenship. Active citizenship should be the objective of any democracy, and the sovereignty of an active citizen its starting point. This includes the autonomy to define the forms of citizens' contribution towards the development of Europe and the purpose and form of citizens' European engagements.

We, as members of the European Parliament and cultural and civil society initiatives, take responsibility and involve citizens as active participants in the European integration process and claim the Right to Access Culture for All*.

"Citizenship cannot be understood without referring to culture [...] A non-cultural citizenship is impossible. To state that an abstract citizenship is possible, beyond or ahead of culture, is to show a complete ignorance of human life".¹

Citizenship includes the fundamental right of all citizens to access culture, as stated in the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** of the European Union:

Participation in cultural life, exposure to art, access to artistic knowledge and training are enriching both to the individual and communities. They also strengthen civic and social ties. Arts and culture are key to increasing the public's awareness of political and societal issues. A democratic society where people actively participate in culture has the means to foster social inclusion.

European Years in the past have always been celebrated with partnerships with civil society and served to raise awareness to certain pertinent topics such as Volunteering in 2011 and Active Aging in 2012. 2013 is no exception, thus:

We, the signatories of this common call, very much welcome and congratulate the European Commission for this proposal.

We not only express our readiness to offer our support for the 2013 European Year of Citizens,

We call the European Institutions involved in the co-decision procedure to endorse our proposal to nominate:

2013 to be the EUROPEAN YEAR OF CITIZENS THROUGH CULTURE

and ask the support of National and local governments, civil society and citizens to include a strong cultural focus in the European Year 2013, by:

*Ref. Policy Paper of the Access to Culture Platform Legal Framework www.access-to-culture.eu: The civil society Platform Access to Culture set up under the **European Agenda for Culture** raises awareness of the legal framework of access to culture as an instrument to be translated into genuine policies / Ref: "A Soul for Europe" Berlin Conference 2010, www.asoulforeurope.eu.

¹ Generalitat Valenciana, Conselleria d'Educacio, "Citizenship and Culture: The Cultural Reinvention of Citizenship" in *Citizenship and Human Rights Education*.



1. Recognizing the fundamental right of all citizens to access culture, increasing public awareness that Europe is a culturally diverse ground for which each citizen takes responsibility;
2. Sharing the responsibility and participation in increasing public ownership by mobilizing actors from the cultural field to address their audiences into discussions about Europe and audiences/citizens' European responsibility;
3. Re-enforcing the European Agenda for Culture and OMC working groups related to access to culture and in EU's Social Agenda to include the cultural component of citizenship in their work agenda;
4. Creating cross-sectorial alliances in cities, regions and countries throughout various levels, in particular business, culture and political representatives;
5. Setting up public forums for debate between citizens and public authorities on a local level and in a decentralised manner involving individuals, from artists, to audiences and cultural initiatives to give input to an emerging concept of cultural citizenship and shape the discourse on a European level;
6. through civic activities and initiatives; Reiterating the strong political commitment of the EU and its Member States to make a decisive impact on fostering active citizenship through culture by opening the EC consultation-process with civil-society to individual citizens and advocating for the development of EU supporting programmes to encourage and support citizens to carry
7. Calling for both responsible Commissioners for Culture and Citizenship to collaborate closely in this European Year.

In order to support our common calling, a **trans-sectorial coalition for a "2013 European Year of Citizens Through Culture" is going to be organized under the umbrella of "A Soul for Europe"**.

In the long run, the coalition's aim is to include a cultural component in all EU policies; and to support those formats of individual responsibility that offer tools to activate Europeans and mobilize all citizens in Europe to act for Europe. This includes raising awareness of the legal framework of access to culture as a legal instrument to be translated into genuine policies referring, in the first place, to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Signatories include members of the European Parliament Advisory Board and Working Group of "A Soul for Europe":

Mr. Jerzy Buzek
Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering
Mr. Erhard Busek
Mr. Dieter Berg
Mr. Elmar Brok
Ms. Sandra Kalniete
Mr. Ömer Koç
Ms. Doris Pack
Mr. Martin Schulz
Mr. Hannes Swoboda

Ms. Helga Trüpel
Mr. Emilio Rui Vilar
Ms. Hans van Baalen
Ms. Maria Badia i Cutchet
Mr. Ivo Belet
Mr. Thijs Berman
Ms. Emine Bozkurt
Ms. Silvia Costa
Mr. Michael Cramer
Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene

Ms. Tanja Fajon
Mr. Jo Leinen
Ms. Elisabeth Morin-Chartier
Mr. Jan Olbrycht
Ms. Chrysoula Paliadeli
Ms. Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid
Ms. Judith Sargentini
Mr. Hannu Takkula
Sir Graham Watson

Contact: Advisory Board & Advisory Board Parliamentarian Working Group "A Soul for Europe"
c/o European House for Culture, Place Flagey 18, 1050 Brussels, e-mail: asfe@houseforculture.eu