

Policy Research Alert

FROM FLASH-IT, A DISSEMINATION PROJECT RELATING EUROPEAN POLICY PRIORITIES TO EU-FUNDED RESEARCH IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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Identity with Rights: 20 Years of EU Citizenship

European Union citizenship was introduced 20 years ago with the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty. To mark this anniversary, the EU designated 2013 “The European Year of Citizens”. The anniversary is encouraging intense reflection on the topic, with a new research-based policy review offering suggestions on how to exploit the potential of EU citizenship more effectively.

The [review](#)¹, which highlights the results from 15 EU-funded research projects, notes that citizenship operates on multiple levels. It connotes a sense of belonging to the polity (or body politic); it provides protection by the polity (passive citizenship); and it implies participation in the polity (active citizenship). While EU citizenship shares some of these aspects in common with national citizenship, there are also differences.

In particular, whereas “national citizenships pre-suppose people’s rootedness”, the report observes, “EU citizenship has been intimately linked to citizens’ mobility and to border crossings”. The right to mobility is an essential part of EU citizenship; aside from promoting economic growth, productivity and integration, it might lead to “potentially more meaningful life options and to transformed subjectivities”.

Realizing the full potential of EU citizenship, however, remains a huge challenge. Ideas for addressing that challenge are outlined in the 64-page review. Distilled from the findings of past and on-going EU-funded research projects, the recommendations include the following:

- Promote the European Citizen’s Initiative as a key institutional means of fostering active citizenship and direct democratic participation.
- Consistently implement the Citizenship Directive and EU anti-discrimination directives.
- Embed *European social* citizenship in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.
- Encouraging debates on what possible EU citizenship obligations might look like and enhancing education and information on European citizenship

An opportunity to debate challenges associated with EU citizenship was provided at a two-day [conference](#) in Hungary in late June. Co-organized by the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities unit of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, the conference featured distinguished scholars and policymakers from around Europe.

¹ European Commission, *Co-creating European Union Citizenship – Policy Review*, Luxembourg, 2013. <http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/co-creating_eu_citizenship.pdf>