

STUDY

Requested by the CULT committee



# Research for CULT Committee - Europe for Citizens: Towards the Next Programme Generation



**Culture and Education**



Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies  
Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union  
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# Research for CULT Committee - Europe for Citizens: Towards the Next Programme Generation

## **Abstract**

Citizenship is a key element of democracy, and citizens' participation is needed for democracy to function. As interests and challenges touching citizens do not follow state borders, it is important that citizens' activity also crosses borders. The funding distributed through the Europe for Citizens programme is therefore crucial. Due to its combination of participation and remembrance, the programme allows addressing the complex challenges and promises related to democracy, citizenship and diversity, the core topics of the programme.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CULT</b>	Culture and Education Committee
<b>EACEA</b>	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
<b>EfC</b>	Europe for Citizens
<b>EHL</b>	European Heritage Label
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECI</b>	European Citizens' Initiative
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EYCH</b>	European Year of Cultural Heritage
<b>OMC</b>	Open Method of Coordination
<b>REC</b>	Rights, Equality and Citizenship
<b>TFEU</b>	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

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## SUMMARY

We are not born as citizens but we become citizens by acting as citizens and by using citizens' rights. The Europe for Citizens programme can support citizens in their processes of becoming citizens. Citizenship is a key element of democracy, and citizens' participation is needed for democracy to function. Its unique combination of remembrance and participation makes the EfC programme a platform in which citizenship can be addressed and promoted as a complex agency – beyond the narrow understanding of citizenship as a legal status or as an entitlement to electoral rights. Projects funded by the EfC may help tackling polarisation and marginalisation of societies, populism and extremism as long as they make space for diversity of actors and perspectives.

As interests and challenges touching citizens do not follow the state borders, it is important that citizens' activity also crosses borders. Citizens have always acted on several scales from local and regional to national and international, for example via international organizations and movements. The funding distributed through the Europe for Citizens programme is therefore crucial.

The aim of the present study is to provide a qualitative analysis on the Europe for Citizens programme (EfC). It will inform the debates about how to develop the programme in the following programme period. The analysis draws insights from the academic research focusing on the Europe for Citizens programme and the topics related to it as well as experiences of the beneficiaries of the EfC programme. The question regarding decision making via delegated and implementing acts is analysed through the Council Regulation (2014) on EfC and the work programmes concerning the programme in 2014-2018.

The analysis brings first-hand information about the practical reality of the Europe for Citizens programme based on actors' experiences. Previous studies cover several actors, such as national contact points, members of the Civil Dialogue Group and beneficiaries (e.g. Deloitte and Coffey 2018; European Parliament 2017a, Jefferies and Rohmer 2016). To develop the programme, it is important to learn more about the experiences of the funded projects themselves. Therefore an email interview was conducted with the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries' experiences of the EfC programme are predominantly very positive and indicate that the programme provides significant support for the activities in the civil society and towns.

The recommendations suggested in this analysis concern streamlining the programme, the role of the beneficiaries, structure of the programme, budget, decision making, practicalities, and relationships of EfC to other EU activities. They aim to increase the thematic cohesion and simplicity of the programme, so that its different elements and topics would link to each other seamlessly and consistently. Therefore it is recommended to streamline the programme in a more consistent way around citizenship, participation and democracy that are the core topics of the programme. The objectives of EfC are crucial for strengthening citizenship and democracy in the EU and therefore it is important that decision-making regarding the core elements of the programme is conducted in the basic act to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making. Moreover, in the legal base of the programme, the Parliament should have the co-decision-making power together with the Council. The recommendations conclude that Europe for Citizens is a unique funding instrument and the budget of the programme should be substantially increased.





# 1. PARTICIPATION AND REMEMBRANCE – CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PROMISES

## KEY FINDINGS

- The triad of participation, citizenship and democracy lies at the core of EfC.
- Polarisation of societies is a serious threat to citizenship, participation and democracy. Also populism, extremism and fake news present challenges to them. Declining numbers in traditional ways of participation raise concerns. In addition, participatory governance challenges the ideas of citizenship and citizens' participation.
- Less-institutionalised forms of participation can be seen as promising signs of democratisation. Also participatory governance may offer space for democratic participation.
- Due to its cluster of remembrance and participation, the EfC programme allows addressing the complex questions of diversity, which is a crucial condition of citizenship and democracy. This cluster also makes it possible to approach citizenship and participation in the framework of culture and identities and thus to go beyond the narrow understanding of citizenship as a legal status or as an entitlement to electoral rights, which is an asset when tackling the inequalities related to citizenship.
- The EfC programme offers an arena to remember the past and to learn from it. Because participation lies at the core of the programme, the Remembrance strand is a way to strengthen the participatory approach to cultural heritage, emphasised in several EU documents, and thereby make visible the different perspectives and interpretations regarding the pasts.

The Europe for Citizens programme seeks to establish “deep and sustainable democracy and [to develop] a thriving civil society”, and promotion of democracy, participation and citizenship are included in its general and specific objectives (Council Regulation 2014). The programme gives funding for activities by civil society, which have been seen as one of the key elements of democracy (Dahl 2000; Westholm et al. 2007). This is why I approach the EfC programme in this analysis from the perspective of democracy. I seek to understand how citizenship — a cornerstone of democracy — and participation — a dimension of citizenship through which citizens' activity contributes to democracy — are present in the programme and how they are connected to democracy — one of the key words of the programme. I aim to find ideas how the programme can be developed from the perspective of political participation and democratic citizenship.

Citizens' right to participate in the decision-making and the democratic life of the Union is emphasised in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007, 15, Article 8a). Citizens' participation has broader effects on communities: “active citizenship, education for citizenship and intercultural dialogue are key to building open, inclusive and resilient societies” (European Parliament 2017b, 2). Active European Citizenship (2004-2006) and Europe for Citizens (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) are central instruments launched by the European Union to encourage citizens' participation.

Participation, citizenship and democracy form a triad that consists of multiple conceptual and practical links in political life and theory (see Annex), and this triad is at the core of EfC (see Recommendations 1–4). There is a long-standing debate on the quantity and quality of democracy in the context of the emerging political community of the EU (Bellamy and Warleigh 1998; Blondel et al. 1998; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007; Magnette 2003; Schmitter 2000). Pierre Rosanvallon (2006a, 232–233) has argued that Europe should develop its own original forms of democratic practice and become “one of the laboratories of contemporary democracy—allowing itself to give new forms to deliberation, to representation, to regulation, to authority, to publicity”. The EfC programme and the projects funded by it can be seen as a way of creating spaces for new forms of democracy.

Citizenship is currently being transformed through multilevel and complex governance and many other international and sub-national transformation processes—such as globalisation, regionalism, European integration, migration and the changing significance of nation states. We talk about local citizenship, global citizenship and multi-level citizenship, for instance. Even though the state has been an influential scale defining citizenship, ideas of transnational and global citizenship have been suggested throughout history. Citizenship of the European Union, established in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, is part of these transformation processes.

Currently polarisation of societies poses serious challenges to citizenship and the functioning of the democracy. Citizenship does not guarantee equality of all citizens: various social categories, such as class, ethnicity, gender and age can influence citizens’ ability to participate as citizens. Therefore questions about diversity, difference and recognition should always be integrated in debates on citizenship (Bauböck 2008; Kraus 2008; Parekh 2006; Taylor 1994; Tully 1995). Diversified identifications may serve as a base for political action (Connolly 1992; Isin and Wood 1999; Parekh 2008). Also persons without the legal status of citizenship, such as immigrants, can act as citizens, for instance when making claims for rights and equality (Clarke et al. 2014; Isin and Nielsen 2008). In the EfC programme – due to its combination of remembrance and participation – citizenship and participation can be approached in the framework of culture, identities and diversity, which is an asset when tackling the inequalities related to citizenship.

The challenges and promises related to the shifting forms of citizens’ participation are actively discussed in the academic research (e.g. Cain et al., 2003; Dalton 2008; Franklin 2004; Gest 2015; Giugni and Grasso 2016; Norris 2011). There are concerns about declining numbers in traditional forms of participation. Populism, extremism, fake news and lack of critical judgement also present challenges to citizenship and democracy. Simultaneously new less-institutionalised forms of participation are seen as promising signs of democratisation.

In addition, participatory practices organised by different levels of administration as part of participatory governance change the ideas of citizenship and citizens’ participation. Participatory practices may offer opportunities for more direct democracy, but they may also mean participation under the conditions defined by the administration (Cruikshank 1999; Michels 2011; Moini 2011; Newman 2005; Newman and Clarke 2009; Papadopoulos and Warn 2007). There is a risk that participation in the practices organized by administration may become a de-politicised instrument for legitimising the goals of the authorities. Participatory governance may aim at producing consensus and social integration rather than democracy (Newman 2005, 131–132). Simultaneously, however, practices of participatory governance can be seen as political participation to the extent that they offer the potential for the participants to use power and change power structures.

The ideas of participatory governance have become a widely shared norm in the EU system, but they have not been homogeneously implemented and they are still subject to differential interpretations (Saurugger 2010). Programmes such as Europe for Citizens are part of the participatory governance of the EU. According to the academic research on participation and participatory governance in the EU regime (Bevir 2006; García and Greenwood 2012; García and Del Rio Villar 2012; Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013; Lindgren and Persson 2011; Magnette 2003; Nousiainen and Mäkinen 2015; Wolff 2013; Szeligowska and Mincheva 2012), participation in the context of the EU programmes shares the promises and risks attached to the participatory governance discussed above. The relationship of participatory practices with democracy is contested also in the EU context. The persistent development of programmes such as Europe for Citizens is therefore necessary. It is crucial that EfC continues to offer more arenas of participation for more citizens. Moreover, it needs to fight against the risk of narrowing the political space of citizens, embedded in participatory governance. Hence the projects funded through the programme must enable citizens' concrete impact in decision-making and make space for debate and controversy rather than consensus (see Recommendations 1 & 2).

Despite the wealth of the research addressing different forms of participation and participatory governance, there are not many studies that focus directly on the Europe for Citizens programme (however see Mäkinen 2014a; Mäkinen 2014b; Mäkinen 2015; Mäkinen 2018). There is hence a need for research focusing on citizenship and participation directly in the framework of the EU programmes. Particularly ethnographic research investigating participants' experiences would bring new knowledge to the existing discussions.

Due to the significant cluster of remembrance and participation, the framework of the EfC programme allows addressing the complex questions of diversity, which is a crucial condition of citizenship and democracy. What aspects of the past are chosen to be remembered and re-told and what are left in silence and oblivion is a complex political process (Hodgin and Radstone 2003; Passerini 2003; Stråth 2000), and in this process, competing narratives and interpretations of the past need to be heard (Delanty 2010). The term remembrance – the key word of the EfC programme – emphasizes processes and practices of remembering and links with the ideas of participation in the discussions about the past. It draws attention to the articulations of individual and collective remembering instead of assuming a "collective memory necessarily shared by individuals". (Winter and Sivan 1999, cited in Macdonald 2013, 13.) As such, it refers to multiperspectivist approach towards the past, which can help to prevent oversimplifying and unequal bias to interpretations of the past and strengthen the potential for a more understanding society (Stanković 2016, 6-9). To allow multiperspectivism, it is crucial to increase different actors' participation in the processes in which the pasts are remembered and interpreted. This kind of "inclusive heritage discourse" (Kisić 2016) can make space for remembering diverse things by diverse actors in diverse ways and hence make diversity more visible, promote equal participation, and contribute to well-functioning democracy.

The EfC offers an arena to remember pasts in order to shape the present and the future. Reconciliation is part of these processes. In fact, "[t]he question of how we govern heritage dissonance is inseparable from the question of how we prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts", Kisić (2016, 271) claims in her study about heritage, conflict and peace-building in the South East Europe. The projects funded through the Remembrance strand of EfC provide a space for different memories to encounter and entangle with each other. The EfC programme can thus improve critical judgment and help to combat fake news and populist accounts, and thereby prevent and mitigate conflicts and promote reconciliation.

Cultural heritage is a key manifestation of remembrance. In the context of the EU integration, heritage has been discussed already since the 1970s (Lähdesmäki et al., forthcoming). Participation of individuals and groups in management and meaning-making of heritage has been increasingly emphasised in several EU documents as well as by the Council of Europe (2005) and in academic discussions (Adell et al. 2015; Waterton et al. 2010). For example, one of the specific objectives of the European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH 2018) is to “promote innovative models of participatory governance and management of cultural heritage, involving all stakeholders, including public authorities, the cultural heritage sector, private actors and civil society organisations” (European Parliament and the Council 2017, 5). Citizen-driven participation in governance and policies related to cultural heritage is emphasised also by the Council of the European Union (2014) in its conclusions on participatory governance of cultural heritage. In its report regarding the integrated approach to cultural heritage, the European Parliament (2015, 12) highlights the importance of multiperspective, democratic and participative approach to the past. The Remembrance strand of the Europe for Citizens programme is a way to promote this kind of participatory approach since participation lies at the core of the programme. Indeed, in the communication *Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe*, the EfC programme is mentioned as an attempt “to promote tolerance, mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue and reconciliation as a means of moving beyond the past and building the future” (European Commission 2014).

When remembering the “difficult past”, it is important to bring up the concrete consequences: what kind of both long-lasting and less long-lasting problems were caused by the wars, the totalitarian systems, and other past events – such as those remembered in the framework of the EfC programme – and how was the situation of all those affected at the time and afterwards. All this has to be remembered not to repeat same mistakes. To remember how democracy has been challenged in the past enables learning how to solve problems in a democratic way, through strengthening participation and citizenship. Equally important is to bring up the “fragile goodness” – to use the term by Todorov – related to the difficult situations in the past. There are always people who choose to do something good even in the harshest situations. Who were they, what did they do, how were the consequences of their action? The Remembrance strand of the EfC can remind us about these experiences of civic action. Themes such as “civil society and civic participation under totalitarian regimes” and “democratic transition” included in the priorities defined for the programme period 2016-2020 exemplify this.

## 2. EUROPE FOR CITIZENS – OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

### KEY FINDINGS

- Democracy, diversity and citizenship are the common denominators of the programme. Activities related to remembrance (Strand 1) and participation (Strand 2) can be seen as contributions to them.
- In the key documents concerning the programme, activities related to remembrance are linked with diverse interpretations of the past, tolerance, mutual understanding, reconciliation and the potential to learn from the past.
- Activities related to participation are connected with the idea of enabling citizens to use their rights and to participate in decision making and policy debates of the European Union.
- As such, the EfC programme can have an impact in the struggle against polarisation, populism and other current challenges of democracy, citizenship and participation.
- While carrying positive connotations with democracy, the name of the programme, due to the preposition “for”, may create an impression of citizens as passive receivers, whereas “Europe of Citizens” would highlight the central role and ownership of citizens.
- There is a growing potential of fostering synergy between the EfC programme and other EU programmes and policy instruments tackling similar questions. However, the EfC programme differs from the others as it emphasises citizens’ participation in decision making, combines remembrance and participation, and brings together civil society actors and local authorities.

Very useful overviews about the EfC programme have been made in the documents related to the mid-term evaluation (Deloitte and Coffey 2017; European Commission 2018a; European Commission 2018b) and several other previous analyses (e.g. Eisele 2016; European Parliament 2017a; Jefferies and Rohmer 2016; Prutsch 2012). In these documents, several aspects related to the programme have been addressed, such as implementation, types of funding and effects of the programme from the perspectives of different actors.

Drawing on these documents as well as on academic research on the topics related to the programme, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the objectives and the structure of the EfC programme. The programme will be also reflected against other EU activities in the field.

### 2.1 Objectives of the EfC programme

The goals of the EfC programme are defined in the Council Regulation (2014), in which the programme was established for the period of 2014-2020. It has an overall aim, two general objectives and two specific objectives, as follows:

“(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. [---]

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.” (Council Regulation 2014, Articles 1-2.)

The overall aim of the programme is to “bring the Union closer to citizens”. EU programmes admittedly can function as bridges between the EU and the citizens, but this should be regarded as an implication rather than the “overall aim”. Solidarity between citizens is more important, and EfC and other EU programmes can indeed promote it through providing opportunities for citizens to meet fellow-citizens from other countries.

Similarly, the strengthening of the legitimacy of the EU and EU integration should be seen as a side effect of democratic participation and not as the objective of the EfC programme as such. Promotion of citizenship and participation do not need any other justifications, such as constructing identity, promoting integration or legitimising the EU, even though practices manifesting Union citizenship, such as the Europe for Citizens programme, admittedly can contribute to create a democratic image of the EU and thus strengthen its legitimacy.

Instead of the current formulation, strengthening democracy can be seen as the overall aim of the programme – based on how much the importance of democracy is emphasized in several documents related to the EfC programme (e.g. Council Regulation 2014; European Parliament 2017a; Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 88). For democracy to function properly, space for diversity is needed. The purpose of the Strand 1 is to create space for diversity (general objective a), while citizens’ participation, which is the topic of the Strand 2 (general and specific objectives b), is a way to make the diverse voices heard in the democratic system. Hence, democracy could be used as an umbrella term bringing together the several elements of the programme and guiding all the activities, including those related to remembrance, town twinning and the networks of the towns (see Recommendation 1; see also European Commission 2018a, 41). The name of the programme, Europe for Citizens, connotes democracy and a central position of citizens, and these connotations could be still strengthened through re-naming the programme Europe *of* Citizens. The preposition “for” may have a connotation that gives the citizens the role of passive receivers, while the preposition “of” emphasises citizens’ ownership.

If democracy seems too broad as a goal, the overall aim could include also diversity and citizenship as attempts to give more specific content to democracy. Diversity is discussed

particularly in the context of the Strand 1 in the programme documents, but it entangles closely also with the Strand 2. Citizenship, in turn, is mentioned as the common denominator for both strands in the decision of the current programme (Council Regulation 2014, Article 3).

Many of the projects funded through the programme have the potential of increasing the understanding of the history and diversity of Europe and the current EU societies. Hence they can contribute to the first general objective (a) of the programme "to contribute to citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity" (Council Regulation 2014, Article 1). According to the Council Regulation (2014, 11), The Strand 1 on Remembrance "will support activities that encourage reflection on European cultural diversity and on common values in the broadest sense [and] give preference to actions which encourage tolerance, mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue and reconciliation as a means of moving beyond the past and building the future". All this is highly relevant for democracy, and this connection between remembrance and democracy could be made more visible in the formulation of the aims and throughout the programme (see Recommendation 3). According to Deloitte and Coffey (2017, 47), some of the beneficiaries emphasized activities that indeed link remembrance with civic participation and democracy. An example is an organization focusing on the public use of memories and citizens' right to remember (ibid.).

The first general objective (a) can be combined with the first specific objective (a). Currently, the first specific objective is formulated as follows: "Raise awareness of remembrance, the common history and values of the Union and the Union's aim" (Council Regulation 2014, Articles 1-2), but I would suggest a small rewording. By replacing 'awareness' with 'debate' the objective can be articulated within the framework of democracy more clearly. Such a change in the wording can support the objective of "stimulating debate" (ibid.) mentioned in this context. It also contributes to prevent the impression that there is a pre-defined understanding of the past and the values, which needs to be promoted among citizens. In addition, it helps to avoid a fix idea of Europe but instead manifests such an idea of Europe that is "plural, transcultural and open to migration [---] and influences from the rest of the world" (European Parliament 2017b, 7; 2). Similarly, throughout the programme, the wordings can be revised so that the programme enables debate and critical reflection about – both past and present – identities, values, etc. This would support the aim to develop citizens' skills in critical judgement.

It is important to remember the darkest moments of history with all their implications for all those affected by them both in the short and long run. The 'dark history' can be remembered as lessons from the past to tackle the current challenges (Council Regulation 2014, 4; Eisele 2016, 11; Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 32-33, 95). For instance, peace appears more vital when reflected against war. In the framework of the EfC programme, those moments can also be remembered as challenges of democracy: when a war starts or a totalitarian system is established, the democratic means have failed. Therefore the projects funded through the Remembrance strand can discuss why and how it became possible to suppress democracy and how risks against democracy have been overcome before and what we can learn for today and tomorrow.

The European Parliament (2017b, 8) "stresses the need to ensure that history is not used as a divisive tool, but as an opportunity to address contemporary challenges through sensitive interpretation". Conditions for democracy and democracy education can indeed be fostered through emphasising multiperspectivity, complexity and contradictoriness of the past, and the activities such as those funded through EfC can enable this kind of encounter

and exchange. In fact, the European Commission (2015, 9) contends that the funding for remembrance through the EfC programme enables “free exchange and the consideration of others’ points of view” – a key principle of parliamentary democracy.

The second general objective (b) is “to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level” (Council Regulation 2014, Article 1). To simplify the aims of the programme, it can be combined with the second specific objective (b), which brings in ideas of citizens’ understanding of the policy-making process, societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering. Both citizenship and participation are vague concepts which can be used and understood in several ways. In many documents discussing the programme, it is not specified, what is meant by participation and in what are citizens encouraged to participate. To some extent it is admittedly important not to define it too carefully in order to leave space for the beneficiaries themselves to interpret it.

On the other hand, since the programme aims to foster “**civic and democratic participation**” (Article 1, Council Regulation 2014; emphasis added) and to involve citizens in policy debates and decision making (Council Regulation 2014, 11; Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 35-36; European Parliament 2017b, 6; European Commission 2018a, 30; Pasikowska-Schnass 2017; Sgueo 2015), the concepts of citizenship and participation must be formulated in the context of the programme so that they refer to democracy and political activity of the citizens. They should – because citizenship means both ruling and being ruled (Aristotle) – refer to citizens’ active involvement in decision making at every phase from agenda setting to the final decision and citizens’ influence in shaping policies and defining the questions instead of reacting to pre-defined questions. For instance, the European Parliament (2017b, 6, 8) stresses the idea of participatory democracy and the “the need to enrich the programme with proposals on citizens’ participation in the democratic process and in EU decision making, in a way that contributes to empowering citizens to make use of their rights”. According to Deloitte and Coffey (2017, 88), “[p]romoting and enhancing citizens’ participation in the democratic life of the EU is at the heart of the EfCP”. The programme is successfully fulfilling this objective: In a survey included in the mid-term evaluation of the programme, the strongest effect attached to the programme was that participants wanted to get more involved in civil society activities after having participated in the EfC programme (European Commission 2018a, 17, 23-24).

Based on these observations, the objectives of the programme could be re-formulated as follows:

Under the overall aim of enhancing democracy, diversity and citizenship, the objectives of the Programme are the following:

- (a) to raise debate about remembrance, history and diversity as well as the Union's aim, namely to promote peace, the values of the Union and the well-being of its peoples, by stimulating reflection and the development of networks
- (b) to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation, by developing citizens' understanding of the Union policy making-process and promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at Union level.



## 2.2 Structure of the EfC Programme

The programme is divided in two strands: “European remembrance” and “Democratic engagement and civic participation”.

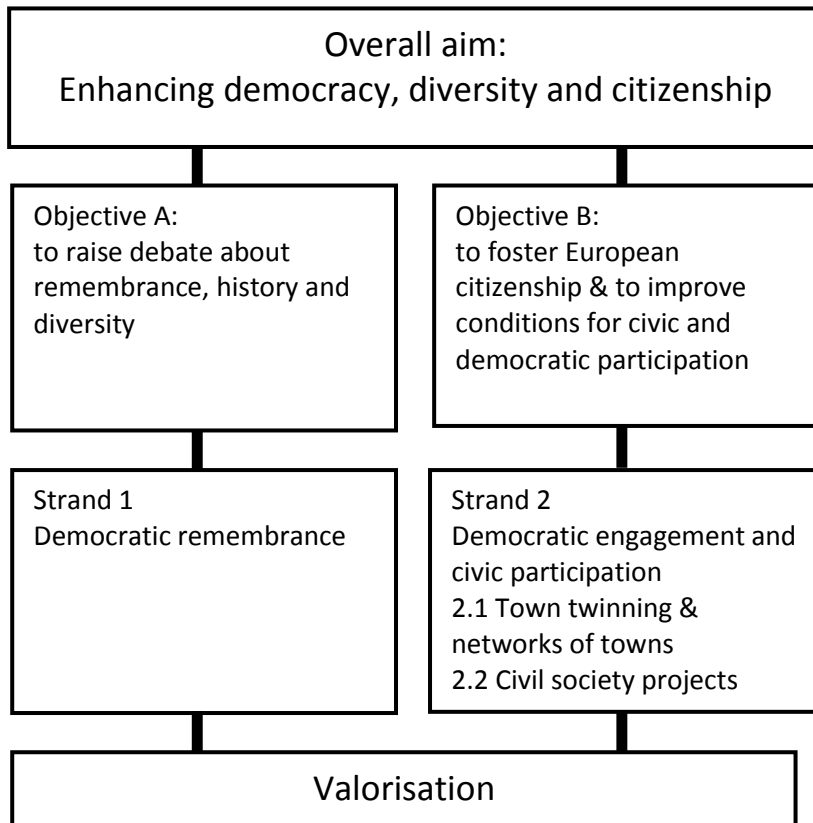
“1. The Programme, while fostering European citizenship in accordance with the general objectives as set out in Article 1(2), shall be divided into the following two strands:

- (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).” (Council Regulation 2014, Article 3.)

Three categories of activities supported under the Strand 2 are: 1) town-twinning, 2) networks of towns, and 3) civil society projects. To streamline the structure of the programme, activities related to town twinning and networks of towns could be merged into one subcategory within the Strand 2 (see Recommendation 7). The names of the strands could be unified: “Democratic Remembrance” as the title of the Strand 1 would make democracy visible as an overarching objective of the programme.

**Image 1: The aims and structure of the programme – a suggestion**



In what follows, I will briefly discuss the types of participation to be funded through the programme, focusing in particular on learning activities as well as town twinning and networks of towns.

Participation takes several forms (see Annex). Also the EfC programme aims to support several kinds of activities, such as "citizens' meetings (---) projects implemented by transnational partnerships including different types of stakeholders (---) exchanges based, inter alia, on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) an/or social media (---) bodies pursuing an aim of general Union interest (---) studies focusing on issues relating to the objectives of the Programme; (---) Union level events including conferences, commemoration and award ceremonies; peer reviews, expert meetings and seminars" (Council Regulation 2014, Article 3). In the increasingly polarizing societies, it is important that everyone has a chance to make his/her voice heard. Therefore different type of channels and forms of participation are needed. The EfC programme should support also very low-threshold forms of participation. The Mid-term evaluation of the programme (Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 33) brought up some doubts "whether some activities [funded through the programme] (i.e. visits to local attractions, social events) improved the conditions for citizens to go from being "spectators" to being "actors" in the EU". This crucial question echoes the problems connected to participatory practices in general, as discussed in Chapter 1. Often in administrative participatory practices participants may have a narrow role in a pre-defined framework. The EfC programme should attempt to avoid this by giving support to citizen-centred activities, such as citizens' small-scale organisations (See Recommendations 5 & 6.)

To tackle the challenges that democracy, citizenship and participation are currently facing, indicated in Chapter 1, citizenship education is needed. The European Parliament (2017b, 8, 2; European Parliament 2017a, 12) emphasises the need to "strengthen transferable, critical and creative thinking skills as well as digital and media literacy, the inclusion of their citizens and stimulate curiosity, especially amongst children and young people, so that they will be able to take informed decisions and make a positive contribution to democratic processes". The projects funded through the EfC programme can indeed act as channels of citizenship education and strengthen this type of civic competences, such as critical judgement à la Hannah Arendt. They may help participants to recognize populist argumentation and fake news. Thus they can indirectly also help to strengthen the legitimacy of the EU and to abate the unjustifiable Euroscepticism.

Towns and municipalities are meaningful partners in the programme, as they have more permanent structure and they can bring stability to the activities. According to Deloitte and Coffey (2017, 63), some town-twinning projects and many projects in the context of Networks of Towns indeed create lasting links between the participating organisations and communities and may continue their activities after the project. This should be encouraged already in the application and selection phase.

According to Deloitte and Coffey (2017, 34), there are some doubts about the relevance of town-twinning under the programme among some of the beneficiaries, particularly about its appropriateness for enhancing citizenship. In addition, the interviews with the National Contact Points brought up the wish of focusing more on other types of projects, especially Civil Society Projects (ibid.). Deloitte and Coffey (ibid.) conclude that despite some unclarity, town twinning is relevant for the programme as it involves citizens in local communities and hence has the potential of bringing "a 'grassroots' approach to citizenship" to the programme. (See Recommendation 4.)

The idea of multi-level citizenship can be helpful here: citizens act at various levels from local, regional and national to European and global. In some Member States, local or regional levels are central arenas of democracy. Towns and local communities are thus important frameworks of citizenship, and cooperation between towns across the state borders deserves support. The levels of citizenship are overlapping and the borders between them are porous, and democratic activity at one scale may produce democratic activity at others.

### **2.3 Europe for Citizens and other EU actions**

Citizens' membership in a political community is constructed through dynamic and complex processes and multiple kinds of relations between citizens and the community. The EU programmes such as the Europe for Citizens seek to create vertical interaction between the citizens and the EU and horizontal interaction between citizens from different member states through funding for citizens' co-operation across the member states in different fields. Citizens' participation is emphasised also in the White Paper on European governance (European Commission 2001), the Lisbon Treaty (2007) and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). There is a growing potential of fostering synergy between the EfC programme and other EU programmes and policy instruments tackling similar questions (see Recommendation 16). However, the EfC programme differs from the others as it emphasises citizens' participation in decision making, combines remembrance and participation, and brings together the civil society actors and local authorities (European Commission 2018a, 28, 32, 40; European Parliament 2017b, 6; see Recommendation 17).

A special channel for citizens' direct participation in the EU decision making and agenda setting is the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) launched in the Lisbon Treaty (2007, Article 8b). While it shares with the EfC the ethos of increasing democracy and citizens' participation in decision making, the two activities do not overlap due to the rather specific focus of the ECI.

The EfC shares with the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme the goal to promote the exercise of rights deriving from citizenship of the Union. The REC programme focuses on the principle of non-discrimination and seeks to promote and protect rights and the equality related to rights and the usage of them. (European Parliament and the Council 2013a, 67.) These principles are important also in the EfC programme, but the practices in the two programmes are different.

The Erasmus+ programme focuses on education, training, youth and sport (European Commission 2018c). It shares with the EfC programme the goal to encourage young people to take part in EU democracy. The channel available for this in Erasmus+ is "Structured Dialogue", which is a consultative process implemented by the European Commission (European Commission 2018d). Hence it does not overlap with EfC which focuses on more citizen-centred activity. The volunteering activities included in the Erasmus+ programme may take place in the non-governmental organisations, and hence they relate to the projects funded by EfC, which are often organised by civil society actors. Even though similar actors may be involved in both programmes, both have their distinct profiles. Erasmus+ does not include a particular focus on decision making and policy processes. In addition, the participants in the Erasmus+ programme are young people, whereas in EfC, they can be from different age groups.

Remembrance (Strand 1) and the Civil Society Projects (Strand 2) included in the EfC programme relate to the Creative Europe programme. The Creative Europe programme funds organisations operating in the sphere of culture, which may be relevant civil society actors. Moreover, the Creative Europe programme includes the European Heritage Label action, which awards labels for selected heritage sites. (European Parliament and the Council 2013b.) Creative Europe and EfC thus mutually support each other in the fields of civil society activities and cultural heritage, but EfC complements Creative Europe with its focus on citizens' participation in decision making.

### 3. EXPERIENCES OF THE BENEFICIARIES

#### KEY FINDINGS

- The beneficiaries' experiences of the EfC are very positive and indicate that the programme provides significant support for the activities in the civil society and towns.
- The beneficiaries valued the EfC as a unique funding opportunity for getting a direct contact with citizens and promoting their goals through the projects.
- The beneficiaries appreciated easy communication with different actors, flexible practices related to application and funding as well as smooth cooperation with the partners and other actors involved in their projects.
- Technical problems, financial requirements and insufficiency of funding caused difficulties for the beneficiaries.
- The beneficiaries would develop the EfC programme by increasing the funding, giving more attention to the impacts of the programme and distributing the results to wider audiences. They would also diversify the range of beneficiaries.

An email interview was conducted with some of the beneficiaries of the Europe for Citizens programme in 14 countries. The selected countries were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden, including both successful/active and less successful/active receivers of funding. The beneficiaries were approached via the National Contact Points and directly by the researcher. Nineteen responses were received from six countries (see Table 1). The beneficiaries were asked to describe what has worked well and what has not worked well in the programme and how they would develop the programme. The questions were written in English, and the respondents had the option to give their answers also in Finnish, French, German, Italian and Swedish. Sixteen responses were given in English, two in Finnish and one in German (translated into English by me).

**Table 1: Beneficiaries' responses by country**

Country	Number of responses
Austria	5
Denmark	1
Finland	2
Hungary	7
Italy	1
Poland	3
Total	19

The beneficiaries' experiences of the EfC programme are predominantly very positive and indicate that the programme provides significant support for the activities in the civil society and towns. The most frequent topics of the responses by the beneficiaries are the content of the programme, communication with different actors involved in the programme,

application process, funding, elements of the programme, flexibility, reporting, impact, aspects in the project itself and partners.

### ***Content of the programme***

The idea that EfC is a programme through which it is possible to get a direct contact with citizens was appreciated by the respondents. The uniqueness of EfC as a programme financing citizens' involvement in the field of remembrance and civil society was recognised by them (see Recommendation 17). According to one response, the programme objectives reflect the needs of local authorities and associations representing them.

### ***Communication***

Several beneficiaries valued high easy communication with different actors involved in the programme, such as the National Contact Points, EACEA and the Commission. They emphasised the cooperation with partners and other actors involved in their projects. Help from the EACEA and national contact persons was mentioned in several responses, and trainings in one. The multilingual website of the program was remarked positively, but another respondent pointed out that all project documentation should be available in all languages. It was suggested that a more specific platform with more detailed rules about financing and documentation would help newcomers.

In terms of general awareness about the programme, according to one respondent, the programme is well received by EU citizens and the need for its continuation is emphasized. On the contrary, in the country of one respondent, the EU programmes are not well known, which means that her international project has not had any funding from the national level. Therefore: "Raising awareness of EU-projects, EU-policies, and encouraging national institutions to take part, be ally, help disseminating at least, would be vital for our projects to go on".

### ***Application process***

Application process was the most popular topic in the responses. According to most of the respondents, application process was easy, even for those with less experience of the EU programmes. This is important, as indicated by these responses:

"The low bureaucratic burden for the procedures represents a great opportunity for 'small' actors (such as local authorities) to get closer to EU and its programmes."

"The EfC programme is quite easily accessible for also small and different civil society and cultural organisations. The application is quite easy and doable."

The respondents recommended simplifying the application procedures further in order to allow actors with less experience of EU programmes, such as local authorities, to participate in the programme. According to one suggestion, multilevel submission procedures would make the application process less resource-consuming for the applicants in the situation in which the chances for the application to get approved are low. It was also proposed that the application form should be available in all the Member State languages.

The instructions for the applicants are clear, according to the respondents' experiences. The application form is easy to fill in and includes meaningful questions fitting to the

programme. However, some of the respondents experienced technical problems with the application form. The beneficiaries also appreciated that they were asked to give lump sums instead of exact costs per partner country, although one respondent perceived the budget tables too detailed. They also found it useful for the project management that the tasks of each partner need to be specified in the application. On the other hand, giving a detailed plan of an activity well beforehand was experienced difficult. According to some beneficiaries, the evaluation criteria are clear, while another perceived weighting of the priorities in the call unclear. The beneficiaries mentioned that the results of the selections come quickly, but the feedback given in the evaluation letters could be more detailed.

### ***Funding***

Funding was also among the most popular topics in the responses, and the crucial importance of the EfC funding for the activities of the beneficiaries was acknowledged. The respondents would develop the EfC programme by funding more projects and increasing the amount of funding per project (see Recommendation 8). One of the respondents mentioned that without a substantial contribution from all the partners themselves they would not have been able to implement the project in the way they preferred. Another, on the contrary, told that the project has been implemented to some extent on a volunteer basis since the EU funding covers only part of the costs and it has not received any national funding. The respondents see it as a problem that the EfC funding does not provide enough funding for travel costs. When the distances are long, it is often more efficient to use plane instead of train, and this requires more funding (see Recommendation 10.).

Several respondents mentioned that receiving the funding as a lump sum brings flexibility to the project implementation and the usage of the funding. This echoes the results of the Mid-term evaluation (European Commission 2018a, 26, 39). They appreciated that they did not need to indicate the funding shares for each activity and each partner in advance.

“This flexibility even allows us to finance surveys in the five participating countries, in which we can now ask a representative number of citizens about their opinions regarding our topic.”

However, the financing logic and its flexibility should be communicated more clearly in the application documents, according to one respondent. According to some responses, the account of the bills is strict rather than flexible, and the accounting of the bills should be simplified.

According to several respondents, the requirement of pre-funding was difficult, as indicated by this response: “The retrospective funding share of 60 % is challenging. In this kind of project activity, the organisation cannot take a loan for realising the project, it is too risky.” The beneficiaries made suggestions to decrease the amount of it.

### ***Elements of the programme***

Respondents were satisfied with several elements and practices of the programme, such as the project implementation. Clear rules of the programme are mentioned by several respondents. The administrative arrangements related to proposal, project implementation and the whole procedure are experienced as clear and applicable. According to one beneficiary: “the program is well developed, serves the proper purpose, and it is easy to follow the rules”. However, the Programme Guide and Participant Portal sometimes create problems for the beneficiaries. A respondent suggested to extend the project lifetime from

1.5 years to 2 years. Beneficiaries suggested to strengthen the cooperation between different countries and also with the third countries. Legal difficulties related to cross-border cooperation should therefore be eliminated. They would also include a broader variety of applicants from the NGOs and local authorities to schools, local choirs and the individual administrative units of towns, in order to make the programme more diverse and effective (see Recommendation 6).

Some respondents found the priorities helpful for planning upcoming application, but one of them hoped that the priorities should not be changed yearly. The priorities are sometimes experienced limiting for applicants: "I would make the list of themes that are to be addressed by the projects less prescriptive, in order to allow more creativity on behalf of the applicants". A potential solution, suggested by a beneficiary, is to expand the priorities to cover a wide range of needs at local level. To this end, the beneficiary recommended to define the priorities through consultations with potential applicants/candidates. (Recommendation 13).

### ***Flexibility***

The beneficiaries appreciated the smooth and flexible practices related to application, use of the funding, reporting and the entire programme. They felt that this flexibility gives them plenty of opportunities in the project. For example, it has been possible to make changes relatively fast, change dates and change partners in the project. In sum: "We value highly the non-bureaucratic approach of the Europe for Citizens Programme in general. It enables the so needed flexibility on the part of the NGOs."

### ***Reporting***

The reporting after the project was experienced as a light process by the beneficiaries, and the report submission was easy. A respondent found it meaningful to document the project on a website rather than writing a report for a small committee. Another perceived the assessment based on the results of the project positive.

### ***Impact***

Some of the respondents would enhance the impact of the programme by making the results of the projects visible for wider audiences for example through a website. To improve the quality and the impact of the projects and of the programme, intellectual output and dissemination could be strengthened and also valued in the budget. Funding should be added for preparatory activities (producing deliverables and other outputs) and dissemination activities at the end of the project to cover activities after the meetings and events (see Recommendation 15).

### ***The projects***

The respondents truly appreciated their projects as arenas bringing together people from different spheres – from civil society actors, political analysts and intellectuals to refugees, libraries, schools and youth organisations. They were proud of their projects as organisers of workshops, meetings, conferences and cultural events – "involving participants and organising proper programmes for events". The projects were seen as platforms for research and debate and as channels for involving participants and enhancing citizens' democratic awareness. The projects also provided a framework for developing guidelines



about successful methods and techniques of communicating of the project outcomes and ideas of different countries.

“In this project, we relied on research, domestic and foreign conferences and cultural events to study the European society’s attitude toward the EU, the strengthening of extremes, and we also sought to enhance citizens’ democratic awareness and commitment to fundamental European values.”

“We managed to bring science and civil actors and political analysts closer to ordinary citizens during scientific workshops of five member states”.

In one project, differences between the school systems of the partner countries caused problems in scheduling the project activities. In another, the number of volunteers remained lower than planned because recruiting them took more time than expected. The lack of common language caused problems in one project (especially among the youngest participants), and prompted the idea of using interpretation services in the future.

### **Partners**

The projects provided the beneficiaries with the opportunity to develop good relations with their partners. They were happy about the possibility to aim at common goals with their project partners and to learn about the selected topics in the partner countries. Some of them knew their partners already before the project: “there is a lot of trust, and I think this aspect is the most important. Questions, answers, help from the lead partner always arrive fast, and we can rely on them in every aspect”. Some respondents appreciated the help of a partner with previous experience of EU projects. The changes related to partners’ and project teams’ staff situations included also some troubles.



## 4. DECISION MAKING VIA DELEGATED AND IMPLEMENTING ACTS

### KEY FINDINGS

- It is up to the co-legislators to decide case by case if any power will be granted to the Commission and if it will be done through delegated acts or through implementing acts (within the Treaty legal framework).
- It is not always clear how to delineate between basic act, delegated and implementing acts and how to keep the balance between ensuring the consistency of action and simultaneously enhancing the flexibility and efficiency of decision making.
- Expected results, eligibility criteria for action grants and award and selection criteria relate to the policy orientation as the programme is shaped and citizens' activity is guided and regulated through them. As such, they should be decided via basic act or, for more flexibility, via delegated acts.
- Decision making is never a purely technical procedure, and it is necessary to approach the decision making process from the perspective of democratic legitimacy, legal soundness and coherence.

In the Lisbon treaty, a new approach to decision making was introduced. Two separate systems of decision making were adopted: delegated acts (art. 290 TFEU) and implementing acts (art. 291 TFEU). The delegated acts deal with questions involving secondary policy choices in order to amend or supplement the legislative framework laid down in the basic act, whereas the implementing acts typically concern practical aspects which do not modify the substance of the rights or obligations stemming from the basic act. In other words, while the purpose of a delegated act is to *'achieve the adoption of rules coming within the regulatory framework of the basic act, that of implementing acts is to provide further details in relation to the content of a legislative act, in order to ensure it is implemented under uniform conditions in all Member States'* (see the Biocides case C-427/12).

It is up to the co-legislators (Parliament and Council) to decide case by case during the negotiations on the basic act if any power will be granted to the Commission and if so, according to which of the two systems it will be done, provided that the Treaty criteria under which delegated and implementing acts can be used are met. The objectives, content, scope and duration of the delegation have to be clearly determined in the original legislative act and the Commission can only legislate within those boundaries.

However in practice, the division between delegated and implementing acts is not clear. In order to clarify to some extent this situation, the European Parliament adopted a resolution (2014, 4), the so-called Szajer report, which detailed a number of criteria in order to provide the co-legislators with some practical guidelines when faced with a choice during legislative negotiations. As stated in the Szajer report, the delegation of power to the Commission is not merely a technical issue but it "can involve questions of considerable political importance for Union citizens and consumers, enterprises and entire sectors, on account of their possible socio-economic, environmental and health impacts". In any case,

the core issue is to guarantee democratic legitimacy, legal soundness, workability, efficiency and coherence of decision-making.

Delegated acts are considered closer to actual law-making – they may supplement or amend non-essential elements of the original legislation. In delegated acts there are no formal committees of national experts. Instead, the Commission alone takes a decision but there is an informal consultation with national experts. After that, the measure goes back to the Parliament and the Council who have to decide within a certain timeframe whether they want to veto it. They cannot change or amend it.

As concluded in the Szajer report, the delegated acts should be used where the basic act leaves a considerable space of discretion to the Commission to amend or supplement the legislative framework laid down in the basic act. For example, questions concerning priorities, objectives or expected results should be adopted by means of delegated acts, if the co-legislators decide not to include them in the legislative act itself. Also the creation of further rules or criteria for the fulfilment of the legislation may be accomplished only by means of a delegated act, because they alter the content of the legislation and add new rules of general application. Further questions concerning specific technical matters, strategic interests, objectives, expected results could be adopted by delegated acts to the extent that they are not included in the basic act (European Parliament 2014, 4-5.).

The purpose of the implementing acts is to provide uniform conditions for implementing the law. They are meant to be more procedural (templates, procedures, deadlines), practical implementation of rules that already exist in the original legislation. They deal with the questions regarding the ways in which the legislation should be implemented. Since the implementing EU law is considered to be a task for Member States, oversight by Member States rather than by Council and Parliament has been chosen as the primary method for framing the Commission's activities in this context. Therefore, the decision-making via implementing acts includes formal committees of national experts, and the Commission needs to take the utmost account of the committee's opinion (advisory procedure in case of EfC). EP or Council may adopt a resolution indicating that an implementing act exceeds the implementing powers provided for in the legislative act, but such a resolution is non-binding on the Commission, which can still adopt, amend or withdraw the implementing act. (European Parliamentary Research Service 2012; European Training Academy 2012.)

As said above, the implementing acts deal with measures establishing details of procedures in order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of an obligation laid down in the basic act. Hence, implementation of the rules or criteria already established in the basic act can take place through implementing acts. Only elements that do not reflect any further political or policy orientation may be decided via implementing acts (European Parliament 2014, 4-5.).

However, and as already stated above, the delineation between delegated and implementing acts is unclear. Also implementing acts may supplement legislation and result in drawing policy lines. Moreover, it is not always clear how to balance between ensuring the consistency of action through deciding as many issues as possible through the basic act and enhancing flexibility and efficiency of decision making through delegated and implementing acts. On one hand, decisions should to some extent reflect changes in the political and social contexts but on the other hand, they should steadily follow the internal logic of the matter at hand – in this case the EfC programme – without changing according to circumstances.

The key elements related to the design of the EfC programme are defined in the Council Regulation (2014), the basic act of the programme. They include subject matter and scope of the programme (Article 1), specific objectives (Article 2), structure and supported actions (Article 3) as well as Union measures (Article 4). Also the countries participating in the programme (Article 5) and the access of the different actors to the programme (Article 7) are defined in the Council Regulation. Furthermore, cooperation with international organisations (Article 7), implementation of the programme (Article 8) as well as monitoring and evaluation (Article 15) are defined in the basic act.

Many of these elements have central policy importance as they touch upon the guidelines of the programme. The objectives of the EfC are crucial for strengthening citizenship and democracy in the European Union and therefore it is important that the decision-making regarding these core elements of the programme is conducted in the basic act to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making. Particularly the European Parliament – the only EU institution elected by the citizens – should be included in the decision making.

Expected results of the programme, eligibility criteria for action grants, award criteria and selection criteria are defined in the yearly work programmes about the implementation of EfC. These work programmes are adopted by the Commission “by way of implementing acts in accordance with the advisory procedure referred to in Article 9(2)”, according to the Council Regulation (2014, 7). However, these elements relate to the policy orientation rather than only to aspects concerning the uniform implementation of the programme. For instance, expected results include an interpretation of the objectives of the programme, and selection criteria define what kind of activity is desirable and worth supporting. They are not only technical aspects, but through them, the programme is shaped. Hence also citizens’ activity is guided and regulated through them. The democratic legitimacy, legal soundness and coherence of the decision-making about these core questions of the programme can be strengthened if they are made already in the basic act or, if needed, via delegated acts (see Recommendation 12).

In the work programmes, a list of eligible commemorations to be funded each year through the EfC programme is presented. Such a list is very useful as inspiration to draw applicants’ attention to topical anniversaries but it should not be used to define the eligibility of the applications and not be fixed to certain application years. In the future, it may not be necessary to define special priorities for the programme (see Recommendation 13), but if they still will be defined, they should continue to be multiannual and broad enough and decided via delegated act. Such lists are tools for drawing the guidelines of the programme, and they may have an impact on citizens’ opinions on what is important to remember. As such, these lists are not just technical instruments concerning the implementation of the programme and, if defined, should be dealt with via delegated act.

Instead, details of programme practicalities can be decided via implementing act, aiming at ensuring uniform conditions for the implementation without altering anything in the basic act and without drawing policy lines. An example is the grants awarded without call for proposals to certain bodies already defined in the basic act. Also practical details concerning the ways of conducting monitoring and evaluation can be decided via implementing act.

In the next programme period, some of the modes of decision making laid down in the basic act of 2014 can be followed while others may need changes to better ensure the democratic legitimacy, legal soundness, coherence and workability of the decisions regarding the programme (see Recommendation 12).



## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Democracy is the key idea in the programme, and it should be adopted as an overall goal that brings together the several elements of the programme.
- Citizenship and participation are the core topics of the programme, and the programme should be streamlined around them in a more consistent way. They must be formulated so that they refer to democracy and political activity of the citizens.
- Diversity as one of the core topics of the programme should be made concrete by funding a wide range of beneficiaries to ensure pluralism of the perspectives in the funded projects.
- The budget of the programme should be increased substantially.
- Remembrance, Town Twinning and Networks of Towns need to be framed with democracy, citizenship and participation, which are the core topics of the programme.
- Activities of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups should be increasingly funded to help tackle polarisation and marginalisation of societies. Projects funded by EfC may act as channels of citizenship education, providing skills for those not as experienced in political activity, thereby strengthening their resistance against populism and extremism.

The recommendations suggested here are based on analysis of academic research focusing on citizenship, participation and remembrance, beneficiaries' experiences and exploration of decision-making regarding the EfC programme. The recommendations aim to increase the thematic cohesion and simplicity of the programme, so that its different elements and topics would link to each other seamlessly and consistently. They concern a) streamlining the programme around democracy, citizenship and participation, b) the role of the beneficiaries, c) the structure of the programme, d) the budget, e) the decision-making, f) practicalities and g) relationships of EfC to other EU activities.

### **A Streamlining the programme around democracy, diversity and citizenship<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Recommendation 1:**

Democracy should be adopted as an overall goal that brings together several elements of the programme.

In the current structure of the programme, the idea of democracy seems to be most clearly present in Strand 2 (Democratic Engagement and Civic Participation), and particularly in its third measure (Civil Society Projects). To make the programme more coherent and balanced, it would be important to incorporate the democratic aspect also in the activities related to Remembrance (see Recommendation 3) as well as Town Twinning and Networks

<sup>1</sup> Nb. as currently there is no relevant legal basis, a Treaty revision might be necessary in order to follow these recommendations.

of Towns (see Recommendation 4). Accordingly, the objectives of the programme could be slightly reformulated in a simpler way (see Chapter 2.1).

When selecting the beneficiaries, priority should be given to projects which enable democratic participation and sharing of information and experiences and promotion of awareness about democracy. Democracy requires plurality, and public debate on controversies lies at the heart of democracy (see Annex). Therefore, projects that do not seek consensus but instead provide space for debate and contestation by a variety of actors should be preferred.

### **Recommendation 2:**

The programme should be streamlined around the idea of citizenship and citizens' participation.

One of the general objectives of the programme is "to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at the Union level" (Article 1, Council Regulation 2014), and this objective should be the focus in all parts of the programme.

The powerful role of citizens could be reflected also in the name of the programme. Renaming the programme "Europe of Citizens" would emphasise citizens' ownership and democracy as the core idea of the programme.

### **Recommendation 3**

Remembrance needs to be framed with democracy, citizenship and participation, which are the core topics of the programme.

Since the importance of democracy and civic participation is emphasised in several documents related to the EfC programme, I recommend that Strand 1 should also be thematically articulated clearly in the framework of democracy and civic participation, thus increasing the cohesion and balance between the two strands of the programme. It is worth emphasising Strand 1 as a channel for creating space for diversity, which is a crucial condition of democracy. The focus on remembrance and diversity allows citizenship to be addressed as a complex agency—beyond the narrow understanding of citizenship as a legal status or an entitlement to electoral rights.

Although the past is often appealed to in official EU discourses, the difficult pasts in Europe, such as colonialism, are usually not discussed (Pakier and Stråth 2010), with the exceptions of the Second World War and the totalitarian regimes. The Remembrance strand of the EfC programme indeed deals with memories related to the totalitarian regimes, but it can provide space for remembering also other cases of the controversial pasts (see also Prutsch 2012, 7).

### **Recommendation 4**

Activities included in Town Twinning and Networks of Towns need to be framed with democracy, citizenship and participation, which are the core topics of the programme.

Because of the large amount of Town Twinning projects and Networks of Towns funded through the programme, it is important that these activities fully meet the objectives of the programme. The topics of these projects must resonate with citizens' concerns and local realities, simultaneously relating to democratic engagement and civic participation. The



connection between the local level and citizenship should be made more explicit in the programme.

## **B The role of the beneficiaries**

### **Recommendation 5**

Funding should promote citizen-driven bottom-up activity.

To consistently follow the objectives of the programme, it is important to enable active and citizen-driven bottom-up participation. This helps to avoid the risk—typical for participatory governance (see Chapter 1)—of involving participants in a pre-designed framework as receivers of pre-designed activities. The European Commission (2018a, 10) also emphasises giving funding for more citizen-centric projects. Based on the mid-term evaluation, the bottom-up approach and the involvement of individual citizens is one of the strengths of the programme (European Commission 2018a, 22, 31). Established civil society organisations and think tanks also deserve funding, but they should not be funded at the cost of more citizen-driven, bottom-up activity (see also European Commission 2018a, 44). Instead of using the term civil society organisations (unless they are specifically discussed), the term civil society actors could be preferred in the programme documents, to highlight the diversity of the potential beneficiaries, including not only well-established organisations but also more informal groups. I hence agree with the suggestion made in the mid-term evaluation (Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 105) that “preference is given to projects in which citizens are active and engaged participants rather than passive beneficiaries of an activity”.

### **Recommendation 6**

The programme should encourage engagement of a wider range of participants.

In increasingly polarised societies it is important to enable participation by a broad range of individuals and groups. Many forms of participation, particularly the participatory practices organised by administrations, may favour those with the most resources for participation and those already active in the society. Including underrepresented and disadvantaged groups may help tackle polarisation and marginalisation in the societies. To this end, I recommend increasing the diversity of projects funded by the programme and providing funding for the activities of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, such as smaller organisations, people with special needs, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Council Regulation 2014, 11; European Parliament 2017b, 5, 7). Including an indicator of “the percentage of first-time applicants” (Council Regulation 2014, 12) for monitoring of the programme is a welcome step in this direction. According to the European Commission (2018a, 24), the proportion of new beneficiaries is increasing.

Projects funded by the EfC programme may act as a channel of citizenship education, providing citizenship skills for those not as experienced in political activity, thus strengthening their resistance against populism and extremism. A diversity of projects supports the objective of the programme to increase understanding of the diversity of the EU (Council Regulation 2014, 5). It also contributes to making space for politics and democracy, which need a diversity of actors and perspectives.

## C Structure

### Recommendation 7

The activities related to Town Twinning and Networks of Towns could be merged to simplify the programme.

The structure of the programme could be simplified to highlight the two strands about remembrance and participation and their contribution to the overall aim of enhancing democracy, diversity and citizenship (see Image 1 in Chapter 2.2). If the activities related to Town Twinning and Networks of Towns were merged (see also Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 107), there would be two distinct subcategories included in Strand 2. The first one—comprised of the former Town Twinning and Networks of Towns—focusing on actors mostly in the public sector and the second one—Civil Society Projects—focusing on actors mostly in the so-called third sector. In practice, the activities related to both Town Twinning and Networks of Towns would continue within the new subcategory.

## D Budget

### Recommendation 8

The budget of the programme should be increased substantially.

The budget of the programme in the period of 2014–2020 is 185 468 000 EUR (Council Regulation 2014, Article 12). Based on several previous analyses and the beneficiaries' experiences it can be stated that the budget of the programme is clearly too small and should be increased substantially.

Due to the small budget of the programme, it is extremely difficult to get funding from it and only a small minority of projects succeed (Deloitte and Coffey 2017). Many of the core actors of the programme, such as civil society organisations and municipalities, may have very limited funds and other resources for activities on the European scale. Moreover, there are no other EU programmes that distribute funding for activities in this field. Therefore, the funding through the EfC programme is highly necessary if citizens' transnational participation is to be supported. Convincing evidence of the relevance of the EfC programme and the great need for its funding is presented in the mid-term evaluation (Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 96-100; see also European Parliament 2017b, 5).

### Recommendation 9

Funding for Civil Society Projects should be increased.

Civil Society Projects are the core actors of democracy and they are in a key position in terms of the objectives of the programme. The goals of the Civil Society Projects in the EfC programme are to "involve citizens in activities directly linked to Union policies" (Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 35). These projects are crucial for the programme's objectives "directly involving citizens in civic and democratic participation" (ibid., 36). According to the European Commission (2018a, 20, 38, 42), the importance of the Civil Society Projects was underlined also by the respondents to a public consultation as well as representatives of the Europe for Citizens Contact Points.

In 2014, 252 Town Twinning citizens' meetings and 35 Networks of Towns received funding, whereas only 65 Civil Society or Remembrance projects were funded. The numbers were very similar in 2015 (Eisele 2016, 27-28.). In 2014–2016 only 5–6 % of the applications of the Civil Society Projects were approved for funding (European Commission

2018b, 5). The funding for Civil Society Projects seems disproportionately low, and I suggest balancing the funding to strengthen the credibility of the programme as an instrument of promoting citizenship and participation.

**Recommendation 10**

High travel and living costs should be compensated.

Special measures should be considered to support activities in remote areas, areas with a low population density and areas with high living costs, as funding for them is often insufficient (see also European Commission 2018a, 26, 43). For example, some extra funding could be granted for travel costs. Similarly, extra funding could be granted to compensate the cost of arranging activities in areas with high living costs.

**E Decision-making****Recommendation 11**

In the legal base of the programme, the Parliament should have co-decision-making power together with the Council.

Because the legal base of the EfC programme currently is Article 352 of the TFEU, the Parliament did not have the co-decisive power together with the Council. Due to the democratic nature of the programme, it is worth considering changing it for the next programme period so that the Parliament has the co-decision-making power together with the Council (see European Parliament 2017b, 3, 4; Eisele 2016, 26). The objectives of EfC crucially contribute to strengthening citizenship and democracy in the European Union, and therefore it is important that different EU institutions are involved in decision-making regarding the programme, thus increasing the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making. In particular, the European Parliament—the only EU institution elected by the citizens—should be included in the decision-making.

**Recommendation 12**

Questions related to the budget as well as the main design of the programme should be decided in the basic act.

The subject matter and scope of the programme, objectives, structure and supported actions and Union measures should be defined in the basic act, following the current practice. Questions related to the budget of the programme also should always be decided in the basic act. Because the objectives are defined in the basic act, it makes sense to also continue deciding about the guidelines of monitoring and evaluation in the basic act to ensure the consistency of the programme in the next programme period. All these elements have central policy importance as they touch upon the guidelines of the programme, and therefore it is necessary that they are decided via the basic act, thereby allowing different EU institutions to have a say and ensuring the democratic legitimacy of the decisions.

In the yearly work programmes regarding the implementation of the EfC, there are several central elements of the programme that should be decided either in the basic act or via delegated acts in the next programme period. These include expected results of the programme, eligibility criteria for action grants, award criteria and selection criteria. They are not only technical aspects, but through them the programme is shaped and thus they concern choices about policy orientation.

Currently the work programmes of the EFC follow a rather similar model from one year to another. It may not be necessary to create them anew every year if special priorities for the programme are no longer defined yearly (see Recommendation 13) and if most of the general guidelines are decided in the basic act (or in some cases via delegated acts).

## **F Practicalities**

### **Recommendation 13**

It is not necessary to define special priorities for the programme.

Priorities defined for the programme are no longer defined annually but are currently multiannual (European Parliament 2017b, 4). I recommend continuing this practice (see also *ibid.*, 7; European Commission 2018b, 7) or entirely giving up defining special priorities. If priorities are defined also in the future, they should be decided upon for the whole programme period already in the basic act or for a couple of years at a time via delegated acts, since questions related to the priorities would have an important role in shaping the programme (see Chapter 4). Changing priorities disturb long-term activity and planning of the projects by the applicants (see also Eisele 2016, 20).

Special priorities may not be necessary at all if the programme goals clearly emphasise that the objective of enhancing citizens' participation concerns all elements of the programme. Furthermore, programme guides explicate what types of activities can be funded (such as the themes included in the priorities for 2016–2020), and the website of the EACEA provides real-life examples of previously funded projects. Inviting citizens to discuss predefined topics narrows the space of citizens' activity and increases the risk of participation becoming too regulated, which is characteristic of participatory governance (see Chapter 1).

### **Recommendation 14**

Administrative practicalities should be smooth.

Making an application may be a heavy and time-consuming process, particularly for smaller organisations and first-time applicants. Rejected applications should receive sufficient feedback about the reasons for the rejection (European Parliament 2017b, 6; Deloitte and Coffey 2017, 59, 73); this would support the long-term planning of their activities and re-application. Administrative practicalities should be smooth for all applicants and beneficiaries so that no actor is discriminated against for bureaucratic reasons (European Parliament 2017b, 7).

### **Recommendation 15**

Cooperation between projects funded through the programme should be encouraged.

The horizontal dimension of the programme should be strengthened through practical cooperation between the projects. Cooperation may help the projects continue their activities after the funding period in slightly new constellations and facilitate applying for new funding from both the EU and other sources. Cooperation allows results to be communicated to broader audiences and with stronger messages. Cooperation also enables the exchange of best practices and follow-up activities. One way of enhancing cooperation between projects may be an online platform, suggested in the EP Resolution (European Parliament 2017b, 6). It should be interactive and user-friendly to allow dialogue between projects (European Commission 2018a, 23, 41). Events and activities such as those mentioned by the European Commission (2018a, 18, 24; 2018b, 10), including the annual

Holocaust Remembrance Day and European Remembrance Networking Meetings, can be used to bring together current and former beneficiaries and to create continuity in the activities. Cooperation among the beneficiaries as well as between the beneficiaries and EU institutions could be strengthened through the Civil Dialogue instrument, thereby ensuring that citizens' ideas are transmitted to the policy process.

## **G Relationships to other EU activities**

### **Recommendation 16**

The EfC programme can foster and profit from synergies with other EU initiatives in the field of citizenship and participation.

The EfC programme has synergies with several other EU programmes such as Rights, Equality and Citizenship. It shares with them the idea of cooperation and exchange across state borders, but through different channels defined mostly by the actors themselves. Dialogues and synergies between different programmes and their beneficiaries can be fostered through the VALOR platform, for instance (European Commission 2018a, 28). At the national level, connections can be established via national contact points.

### **Recommendation 17**

The uniqueness of the EfC programme should be emphasised.

The EfC programme is unique and therefore absolutely necessary. According to the European Parliament (2017b, 3), "the ex-post evaluation conducted by the Commission confirmed the relevance of the programme's objectives and the fact that, as it is distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups, it has enabled initiatives that could not have been funded elsewhere" (see also European Commission 2018a, 29-30). According to Deloitte and Coffey (2017, 84), the programme involves members of hard-to-reach groups and hence reaches beyond the target audiences of other programmes (see also European Commission 2018a, 27-28). Against this unique relevance, the current budget of the programme is truly tiny (see also European Parliament 2017b, 3). It is worth highlighting the uniqueness of the EfC programme further by underlining and developing the citizen-drivenness of the EfC projects and the objective to foster "**civic** and **democratic** participation" (Article 1, Council Regulation 2014; emphasis added).



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## ANNEX: CITIZENSHIP – THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

### *Dimensions of citizenship<sup>2</sup>*

Citizenship is a concept that is constantly changing. During the centuries, definitions and criteria of citizenship have been contested both in political theory, and in political and social practice (e.g., Clarke et al. 2014). However, most of the interpretations of citizenship share the idea that citizenship defines the relation between a citizen and a polity: It defines the demos (or the democratic subject, or the sovereign) in a polity. Most of them also agree that there are four dimensions that shape citizenship: access to citizenship, rights, duties and participation. The EfC programme mainly focuses on participation.

Through *access* to citizenship, the membership in a polity is regulated, drawing a border with regard to who is a citizen and who is not. The definitions of who should be considered a full citizen have changed over the centuries in the history of democratisation and democratic theory: in antiquity, only a small group of wealthy men were entitled to citizenship. Women and unfree men were excluded until the 20th century in most Western representative democracies.

*Rights* linked to citizenship have been developing—mainly due to conflicts and struggles over an extension of democratic and citizenship rights—in relation to and during the processes of democratisation, and especially the establishment of representative democracy. A classical distinction made by T. H. Marshall (1950) differentiates between three types of rights: freedom rights, political rights such as the right to elect and to be elected, and social rights. The list can be expanded to include rights that belong to the next generation after Marshall, cultural rights (see, e.g., Kymlicka 2002; Young 1990) and also a right to protection through the state (internal security), which can be regarded as one of the oldest rights of citizenship, although omitted by Marshall. Citizenship rights are not uniform and they refer to different domains of an individual's relation to a polity. Over the course of centuries and up until the present day, therefore, the widening of citizenship rights has been related to significant political controversy, exemplified among others by the fight for women's suffrage and the feminist movement, as well as in the civil rights movement. Current debates on these issues include the claim to rights by non-citizens, or the recognition of particular rights.

Citizen's *duties*, such as the duty to go to school, to do military service, or to pay taxes, are the third dimension classically associated with citizenship (Brubaker 1994; Weber 1979). Both military service and schooling have been important for developing the figure of the loyal citizen, decisive for the ideal of nation states (Brubaker 1994; Weber 1979), and taxation constitutes the basis for modern welfare systems.

*Participation* can be seen as a core dimension of citizenship: “[p]articipation in the practice of public power seems [---] to be the heart of this status [i.e. citizenship]” (Magnet 2005, 7) across times. Participation as a dimension of citizenship underlines that citizens' membership in and relationship to a polity is not only a legal status: Citizenship should also be seen as an agency, as “the participatory dimension of membership in all political

<sup>2</sup> This section relies upon Wiesner et al. (2018) “Introduction: Shaping Citizenship as a Political Concept” published in Wiesner et al. 2018.

communities” (Yuval-Davis 2011, 9). Participation in the public sphere and in decision making is that dimension of citizenship which makes it active and political. In addition, participation is relevant for the legitimacy of the political system: through their own participation, citizens may feel that the decision making in the political system is legitimate and give their consent to the use of power in the system (see e.g. Macedo 2005, 4; Michels 2011, 277–279).

Participation has been classified in various ways (Arnstein 1969; Verba and Nie 1972; Westholm et al. 2007). Participation is a way for a variety of actors – citizens, non-citizens, civil society organizations, activists, etc. – to make “acts of citizenship” and to constitute themselves as subjects of politics, regardless of their formal, legal status or political substance in the traditional, nation-state political arena (Isin and Nielsen 2008; Isin and Nyers 2014, 3).

Participation has been seen as a solution for a variety of problems, and participatory practices and experiments are increasingly arranged at various levels of administration for encouraging active engagement. These practices include the involvement of citizens in auditions, projects, partnerships or other activities organised by the administration at different levels. Participatory practices are anything but new, but they have been generated increasingly within so called new governance or multilevel governance. In some of them, citizens are involved in decision making, for instance through participatory budgeting. In others, the main aim is rather to ‘hear’ citizens’ views. In the participatory governance, technocratic and administrative workings may emphasise consensus and thus shrink the space for democratic and pluralist modes of action and public discussion on political differences. Participatory practices may include elements from grass-roots activities, and civil society actors may be involved in them either as organizers or participants. In that sense, despite their contested position at the borderline between administration and citizens, such practices can be seen as civil society activity and thus central components of a democratic polity.

### ***The triad of participation, citizenship and democracy<sup>3</sup>***

According to Pierre Rosanvallon (2006b), democracy is not only a system but includes various types of acts that vary from one context to another. The ideas of Rosanvallon (ibid.) intertwine participation, democracy, citizenship and politics: he sees participation as an instance through which citizens interact with politics, and both citizenship and democracy are articulated around forms of participation. Citizenship is an essential element for democracy (Dahl 2000, 83–99; Tilly 1995), and participation as a dimension of citizenship refers to the question of what the demos does: citizens’ participation in decision making is required if democracy means that people rule (Almond and Verba 1965; Easton 1965).

Participation is a chance to influence the polity of which citizens are members and the institutions and issues that have effects on the lives of citizens. Common to different forms of participation is that they bring citizens’ voices into the public sphere and decision making and place new issues on the agenda. This is the relevance of participation for democracy because in democratic systems difference and equal opportunities to use power must be secured (Bauböck 2008). Plurality and diversity are essential for democracy (Kraus 2008; Mouffe 2005). The diversity of perspectives – “including, in particular, those of marginalised

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<sup>3</sup> This section relies upon Mäkinen (2018) “All about doing democracy? Participation and citizenship in EU Projects” published in Wiesner et al. 2018.



groups” – strengthens democracy (Lister 2002). The core of democracy is to handle with controversies (Urbinati 2006), and therefore plural and diverse voices must be heard. If there are no open controversies, there is no space for political agency – and thus no need for citizenship and participation. The illusion of consensus and unanimity is dangerous for democracy, claims Chantal Mouffe (2005, 6): “Where there is a lack of democratic political struggles with which to identify, their place is taken by other forms of identification, of ethnic, nationalist or religious nature, and the opponent is defined in these terms, too.” Democracy has to protect itself against such a situation by recognising the nature of the political instead of denying it (ibid.).

If plurality and equality are important for a functioning democracy, then they must be taken into consideration also when defining citizenship, as it is one of the criteria of democracy. “Radical democratic citizenship” suggested by Chantal Mouffe (2005, 6) “could provide a form of identification that enables the establishment of a common political identity among diverse democratic struggles”. According to Mouffe (ibid., 7), instead of aiming at “a neutral conception of citizenship applicable to all members of the political community”, there must be “room for competing conceptions of our identities as citizens” (ibid.).

How much and what type of participation is sufficient and suitable for realising democracy in practice is an old question and relates to ideals of citizenship and to understandings of politics (e.g. Martín and van Deth 2007, 305–311; Rosanvallon 2006b, 26). Answers vary from representative democracy to direct democracy and from bottom-up civic activity to participatory practices organised by administration, as well as different combinations of all of these. Participation is understood as a central dimension of citizenship especially in the republican theories of democracy, as well as in the ideas of radical or participatory democracy (Arendt 1998; Aristotle 1991; Barber 1984; Mouffe 1992; Pateman 1972; Pocock 1975; Rousseau 1988). Participation can be seen as a necessary element of so called input democracy, whereas in the conceptions of output type democracy, the role of citizens may be less active (about input and output democracy, see Scharpf 1999).





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Citizenship is a key element of democracy, and citizens' participation is needed for democracy to function. As interests and challenges touching citizens do not follow state borders, it is important that citizens' activity also crosses borders. The funding distributed through the Europe for Citizens programme is therefore crucial. Due to its combination of participation and remembrance, the programme allows addressing the complex challenges and promises related to democracy, citizenship and diversity, the core topics of the programme.

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