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Report on the ex-post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013

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**REPORT ON THE EX POST EVALUATION OF THE EUROPE FOR CITIZENS
PROGRAMME 2007-2013**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this staff working document is to present the results of the ex-post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 carried out under the responsibility of the European Commission, by an external evaluator (Coffey International and Deloitte), in accordance with the provisions of Article 14.3 (c) of the Decision N° 1904/2006/EC¹ The staff working document complements the report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall achievements of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013.

2. BACKGROUND: DESCRIPTION OF THE EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME

Since the adoption of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 introducing the concept of European citizenship, the EU has recognized on many occasions the need to bring the European Union and its institutions closer to the citizens of the Member States and to enable them to participate fully in the construction of an ever closer Europe, while emphasising the essential values that are shared by the European citizens.

One of the instruments to achieve this political goal is the Europe for Citizens Programme. A first Community Action Programme to promote active European citizenship (civic participation) was established for a period of three years from 2004 to 2006 to award grants in the field of active European citizenship. Based on the experience with this programme, the EU decided to continue promoting civic participation through a second programme.

The Europe for Citizens programme was established in December 2006 for a period of seven years (from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013).

2.1. Objectives of the Europe for Citizens programme

2.1.1. General objectives

The Europe for Citizens programme (hereinafter referred to as EFCP or the programme) aimed at supporting a wide range of activities and organisations promoting active European citizenship through the involvement of individual citizens, local authorities and civil society organisations in the process of European integration. The objectives of the programme were as follows:

- giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union;

¹ Decision N° 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme 'Europe for Citizens' to promote active European citizenship, OJ L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 32-40.

- developing a sense of European identity based on common values, history and culture;
- fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens;
- enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

2.1.2. Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the programme were as follows:

- bringing together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future;
- fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture through cooperation within civil society organisations at European level;
- bringing Europe closer to its citizens by promoting Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past;
- encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society organisations from all participating countries, contributing to intercultural dialogue and bringing to the fore both Europe's diversity and unity, with particular attention to activities aimed at developing closer ties between citizens from Member States of the European Union as constituted on 30 April 2004 and those from Member States which have acceded since that day.

Given the fact that the general and specific objectives as well as the actions of the programme were defined by the Decision establishing the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013, the Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency did not dispose of great margins of discretion in the implementation of the programme.

2.2 Structure of the Europe for Citizens programme

The objectives of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 were pursued through four main actions which were divided into specific measures:

Action 1: Active citizens for Europe

Measure 1.1: Town twinning citizens' meetings

Town twinning citizens' meetings consisted in bringing together a wide range of citizens from twinned towns, taking benefit of the partnership between the municipalities for strengthening mutual knowledge and understanding between citizens and between cultures.

Measure 1.2: Networks of twinned towns

The programme supported the development of networks between twinned towns to ensure structured cooperation in a long-term perspective, therefore contributing to maximizing the impact of the programme. Promoters were expected to present projects integrating a series of activities (such as citizens' meetings, conferences or seminars within the network) around the same subject. They were also expected to produce communication tools in the context of these events with the aim of promoting structured and sustainable thematic networking and disseminating the results of the actions.

For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, the *Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)* was designated for structural support within this measure.

Measure 2.1: Citizens' projects

A variety of projects of a transnational and cross-sectorial dimension, directly involving citizens were supported under this measure. The projects gathered citizens from different horizons acting together or debating on common European issues at local and European level. The use of innovative methods enabling citizens' participation was encouraged.

Measure 2.2.: Support measures

Support measures were aimed at improving the quality of town-twinning and citizens' projects through exchanging best practice, pooling experiences between stakeholders and developing new skills through training.

Action 2: Active civil society in Europe

Measure 1: Structural support for European public policy research organisations (think-tanks)

This measure supported public policy research organisations as interlocutors able to provide independent strategic, cross-sectorial recommendations to the EU institutions and to feed the debate on EU citizenship and European values and cultures. The measure was aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of those organisations through annual and multi-annual operating grants.

For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, the organisations '*Groupement d'études et de recherche Notre Europe*' and '*Institut für Europäische Politik*' were designated for receiving structural support.

Measure 2: Structural support for civil society organisations at European level

Civil society organisations were seen as important stakeholders to encourage civic, educational, cultural and political participation of citizens in society. This measure was aimed at strengthening their capacity to operate and cooperate at European level through annual or multi-annual operating grants.

For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, the organisations *Platform of European Social NGOs*, the *European Movement* and the *European Council of Refugees and Exiles* were designated for structural support.

Measure 3: Support to projects initiated by civil society organisations

The aim of this measure was to support concrete projects of civil society organisations from different participating countries involving organisations established at local, regional, national or at European level. The projects funded under this measure were expected to raise awareness on issues of European interest.

Action 3 - Together for Europe

High-visibility events

This measure supported events organised by the European Commission, sometimes in cooperation with Member States or other relevant partners, with the aim to make European citizens aware of European history and of the achievements and values of the European Union and to contribute to the development of a stronger European identity.

Studies

In order to get a better understanding of active citizenship at European level, the European Commission carried out the following studies:

- Volunteering in the European Union (2010)
- Study on Maximising the Potential of Mobility in Building European Identity and Promoting Civic Participation (2011)
- Participatory Citizenship in the European Union (2012)
- Measuring the impact of the Europe for Citizens programme (2013)

Information and dissemination tools

Information on the various activities of the programme and on other European activities related to citizenship was provided through an Internet website and other communication tools (brochures, leaflets, DVDs).

For the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, the organisations '*Association Jean Monnet*', the '*Centre Européen Robert Schuman*' and the '*Maisons d'Europe*' were designated for structural support within this sub-action.

Europe for Citizens Contact Points

Europe for Citizens Contact Points were gradually established since 2008 to ensure dissemination of practical information on the implementation of programme, its activities and funding possibilities and to provide assistance to applicants and programme beneficiaries.

In 2013, a total of 28 Europe for Citizens Contact Points were operational in participating countries out of which 22 received operating grants from the European Commission.

Action 4 – Active European Remembrance

Under this action projects of the following type were supported:

- projects aiming at preserving the main sites and memorials associated with the mass deportations, the former concentration camps as well as the archives documenting these events and for keeping alive the memory of the victims, as well as the memory of those who rescued people from the Holocaust;
- projects aiming at the commemoration of the victims of mass exterminations and mass deportations associated with Stalinism as well as the preservation of the memorials and archives documenting these events.

2.3. Budget of the programme

The financial envelope for the implementation of the EFCP over seven years from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013 was EUR 215 million (with the annual amount increasing gradually from EUR 24 900 000 in 2007 to EUR 26 330 000 in 2013).

According to the programme decision, the overall breakdown between the different actions during the entire programme period was the following:

- Action 1: at least 45 %
- Action 2: approximately 31%
- Action 3: approximately 10%
- Action 4: approximately 4 %.

Approximately 10 % of the overall budget was used for the programme administration.

2.4. Eligible countries

The programme was open to the Member States of the European Union and to other European countries, namely the EFTA countries having signed the EEA Agreement, the candidate countries and countries from the Western Balkans provided that they signed a Memorandum of Understanding laying down details of their respective participation in the programme.

In 2013, the EFCP was implemented all together in 33 participating countries: 28 Member States and 5 other participating countries, i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

2.5. Implementation of the Programme

The European Commission was responsible for the efficient running of the EFCP. It managed the budget and set priorities, targets and criteria for the programme after consultation of the Programme Committee. Furthermore, it guided and monitored the general implementation, follow-up and evaluation of the Programme at European level.

The European Commission relied on an Executive Agency. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) established by decision 2005/56/EC of the European Commission of 14 January 2005 was responsible for the implementation of most of the actions of the Europe for Citizens programme with the exception of Action 3 "High

visibility events" managed directly by the European Commission. The EACEA was also in charge of the management of the Europe for Citizens Contact Points.

The EU Member States were involved in the implementation of the Europe for Citizens programme through the Programme Committee, to which they appointed representatives. The Programme Committee was formally consulted on different aspects of the implementation of the programme, in particular the proposed annual work plans, the annual reports of activities and the selection results. Participating countries which were not EU Member States took part in the Programme Committee as observers without voting right.

3. EVALUATIONS AND MONITORING PROVISIONS OF THE EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME

3.1. Ex ante evaluation

In preparation of the Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013, an ex-ante evaluation including an impact assessment was carried out. It was based on an online-consultation and a Consultative Forum which took place in February 2005. The evaluation report was annexed as staff document to the Commission proposal for the Europe for Citizens Programme².

3.2. Interim evaluation and studies

As requested by Article 14(3) of the Decision establishing the Europe for Citizens Programme, an interim evaluation was done to assess the results obtained by the programme between 2007 and 2009³.

As a result of the recommendations of the interim evaluation of the Europe for Citizens programme, a permanent monitoring system was developed combining the ongoing monitoring of the projects based on the information obtained from beneficiaries with approximately 30 monitoring visits of projects per year. A synthesis report based on the results of the monitoring visits was produced once per year by the Executive Agency.

In addition, in the context of its reporting obligations towards the programme committee, the Commission presented every year an annual report on the activities of the EFCP.

Furthermore, the following surveys and studies linked to evaluation were realised:

² Commission staff working document, annex to the Commission proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme "*Citizens for Europe*" to promote active European citizenship of 6.04.2005, doc. COM (2005) 116 final.

³ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the mid-term evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 of 1.03.2011, doc. COM (2011) 83 final.

- Survey to contribute to the development of a system of measuring the annual impact of activities supported by the Europe for Citizens programme (2008);
- Europe for Citizens Survey 2009 - Developing impact indicators for the Europe for Citizens programme and adapting them to the 2009 Annual Management Plan (2009);
- Study on measuring the impact of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 (2013)⁴

3.3. Ex post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013

As set out in Article 14 of the Decision establishing the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 the European Commission has to submit to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a report on the implementation, results and the overall assessment of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 by 31 December 2015. An external ex post evaluation has been carried out to prepare this report. This staff working document presents the results of the external ex post evaluation.

Scope of the ex post evaluation

Given the fact that a number of surveys and studies on the measurement of the programme's impact and the development of impact indicators had already taken place between 2007 and 2013 (see above), the scope of the ex post evaluation was limited. It was needed to revise, verify and complement the existing reports with the view of elaborating an external evaluation report synthesizing and assessing the results and the implementation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013.

In addition, a quantitative report on the activities of the Europe for Citizens Programme was prepared by the Executive Agency in 2014 providing data collection that was used within the ex post evaluation.

The purpose of the ex post evaluation was defined as follows:

- To assess the results and measures of the Europe for Citizens programme compared to its objectives;
- To assess qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme;
- To provide examples of good practice and successful model projects under each action of the programme.
- To provide recommendations on how to further develop the Europe for Citizens Programme as an instrument for the development of a European Citizenship Policy.

⁴ Study by Eureval: Measuring the impact of the Europe for Citizens Programme, May 2013

4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Under the ex post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme, the following evaluation questions had to be addressed:

Relevance

- To what extent the programme's objectives and activities have been relevant to give citizens the opportunity to interact and to participate in constructing an ever closer Europe and to develop their sense of European identity? To which extent the objectives and activities of the programme correspond to the needs of the target groups?
- To what extent has the Programme proved complementarity to other EU funding programmes, in particular in the area of citizens' rights, education, youth and culture and to other EU initiatives such as the European Years?
- What is the European added value of the programme?

Effectiveness

- To what extent the activities undertaken in the framework of the actions and measures of the EFCP have been effective in achieving the programme's general and specific objectives? Where objectives are not fulfilled in a satisfactory way, which factors have hindered the programme to be effective?
- In how far has the programme contributed to the objectives of the European citizenship policy, in particular to increase civic participation and to bring citizens closer to EU institutions? In how far has the programme influenced citizenship policy at the national level in the participating countries?
- How does the programme influence the town twinning movement, European civil society organisations, think-tanks and remembrance organisations directly participating in the programme?
- Does participation in the programme appear satisfactory in terms of the balance between new organisations and those which have received support previously?

Efficiency

- How efficient were the activities undertaken in the framework of the actions and measures of the EFCP to reach the results at European and at national level?
- Was the size of budget for the programme appropriate and proportional to what the programme was set out to achieve?
- To what extent did the Europe for Citizens Contact Points contribute to the efficient implementation of the programme?

- To what extent did the Structured Dialogue contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme?

Sustainability

- To what extent the EFCP has been successful in delivering sustainable outcome in relation to its objectives?
- To what extent has the EFCP influenced EU policy in general and EU citizenship policy aiming at increasing civic participation and bringing citizens closer to EU institutions in particular? In how far has the programme influenced citizenship policy at the national level in the participating countries?
- To what extent have the results of the programme been properly disseminated to stakeholders and the general public?

5. ORGANISATION, BUDGET AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EX POST EVALUATION

The ex-post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 was carried out in 2015 by an independent external evaluator (Coffey International and Deloitte), in accordance with the provisions of Article 14.3 (c) of the Decision N° 1904/2006/EC and under the close supervision of a steering group set up for this evaluation.

A budget of € **106,200** was committed as the budget ceiling for the performance of the resulting contract over a period of a maximum of 11 months.

The independent external evaluator was requested to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme. The evaluation methodology chosen by the external evaluator relied on a series of methodological tools including desk-based research, interviews and a focus group with key stakeholders, a survey of unsuccessful applicants, case studies of a selection of projects and a benchmarking exercise to allow comparison with other EU spending programmes.

Desk-based research

This element of the evaluation was comprised of two parts. Firstly, various documents and monitoring data related to the Europe for Citizens Programme were analysed. Secondly, the evaluator conducted a systematic review of literature aimed at scrutinising the programme's intervention logic, and its underlying assumptions, in relation to existing knowledge about participatory citizenship. The purpose of this aspect of the research was to understand how participatory citizenship works and to identify explanatory factors behind the perceived success of interventions aimed at fostering participation. This was based on sources suggested by the evaluation's expert panel.

Interviews and focus group with key stakeholders

Interviews with several types of stakeholders allowed to gather data on various aspects of the programme. The table below gives an overview of the interviews conducted and main issues discussed. The interviews were complemented by a focus group bringing together

representatives of Europe for Citizens Contact Points to examine all aspects related to the national level.

Summary of interviews

Stakeholder group	No of interviews	Topics discussed
Familiarisation interviews with DG COMM / HOME and EACEA	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme structure and design - Implementation and administration - Monitoring and evaluation provisions - Impact
Designated beneficiaries	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiary profile - Impressions of the EFCP and its objectives - Funding mechanisms - Implementation - Accountability and monitoring - Results of programme funding - Expectations of the evaluation
Structured Dialogue and Programme Committee members	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role within the EFCP - Impressions of the programme and its objectives - Suitability of the programme budget - Programme implementation
European Contact Points	N/A (focus group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Profiles and roles of the European Contact Points - General views of the programme - Programme implementation - Programme impact

Source: Ex post evaluation Europe for Citizens Programme, Coffey International and Deloitte, 2015

Survey of unsuccessful applicants

A survey of unsuccessful applicants was conducted to collect and analyse external perspectives on the EFCP and to determine how it was perceived by non-selected applicants. The purpose was to understand several issues, such as:

- Rationale of given organisations for applying for funding;
- Transparency of the selection process;
- Existence of alternative sources of funding to the EFCP and
- Data on what happened to organisations that were unable to benefit from the programme.

Issues treated in the survey included profile information, views on the EU and the application process. The survey was promoted online.

Case studies

The evaluation included 16 case studies of projects funded through the Europe for Citizens programme. The purpose of the exercise was to provide insight into the success of the programme as a whole by looking at individual projects in detail. Each case study entailed an analysis of project documentation according to a standard set of criteria developed for a

reporting template agreed with the steering committee that allowed to assess the evidence-base systematically and transparently.

Benchmarking exercise

The ex post evaluation included a systematic comparison between EU actions and programmes that aimed to promote civic engagement. The aim of this benchmarking exercise was to identify the extent to which the EFCP was complementary to the other EU actions and initiatives in the area of citizenship. The methods used for this analysis were the comparison of objectives set out in legal texts establishing those programmes, calls for proposals and programmes guides. In addition, interviews were organised with the relevant Commission services. The following EU programmes and actions were explored:

- Youth in Action programme
- Jean Monnet programme
- Fundamental rights and Citizenship programme
- European Year of Citizens 2013 and
- European Year of Voluntary Activities promoting active citizenship 2011

The report of the ex-post evaluation was accepted by the Commission in the beginning of September 2015. The Commission considers the evaluation's findings and conclusions presented below credible and coherent.

The evaluation report will be published on the citizenship portal of the Commission's website at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/programme-2007-2013/index_en.htm

6. RESULTS OF THE EX POST EVALUATION AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

6.1. Quantitative analysis

Over the 2007-2013 period, almost 20 000 grant applications were submitted under the EFCP. The programme saw a steady growth in the number of applications of more than 45 % between 2007 and 2013. Germany was the Member State introducing the greatest number of projects (2 791), followed by France (2 537), Hungary (2 434), Italy (2 265) and Poland (1 219).

Over the years, the projects submitted involved a growing number of participants. Overall, the total number of direct project participants increased from 700 000 in 2007 to 1 175 000 in 2013.

From 2007 to 2013, the EFCP had approximately 7 million direct participants. The programme reached almost 25 000 towns and cities in Europe and created 350 networks of towns and cities around common issues. 4 250 civil society organisations received grants of the EFCP and more than 500 organisations were involved in remembrance activities vis-à-vis citizens.

A detailed quantitative analysis can be found in the activity report "Results 2007-2013" of the Executive Agency EACEA.

6.2. Relevance

Under the ex post evaluation of the EFCP 2007-2013 against the criterion of relevance (see evaluation questions regarding relevance in chapter 4), it was assessed to what extent the objectives and the activities of the programme were relevant for the target groups and responded to their needs.

While answering to this question, the evaluators were asked to assess in how far the programme had been complementary to other existing EU programmes and initiatives and which had been its specific role and added value in the European context.

The ex post evaluation confirmed the relevance of the Europe for Citizens' programme's objectives and activities. The EFCP Programme aimed to engage citizens with the EU, develop a sense of European identity, foster a sense of ownership of the EU and enhance mutual tolerance and understanding. Prevailing conditions (e.g. declining favourability towards the EU and increased Euroscepticism, diversion of resources towards initiatives focused on the economy) created a need for a platform for civic participation related to the EU that the EFCP could potentially fulfil. That the level of interest in the programme, as well as the quality of applications for participation, progressively increased indicated a good match between the programme and target groups.

In terms of complementarity with other initiatives, the EFCP was sufficiently distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups to provide a complementary offering. Even those initiatives that were the closest to the EFCP, such as the Youth in Action programme, focused on different audiences, while the EFCP was unique in bringing together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities, and in supporting town twinning and remembrance activities. At the same time, the evaluation also uncovered the potential for further synergies and scope to reduce overlap. This highlighted the importance of improved communication between DGs. Where there was evidence of good communication (e.g. the European Years and Fundamental Rights programme), then value was demonstrated through institutional learning and the sharing of good practices. Where discussion was more limited (e.g. between the EFCP and Youth in Action and Jean Monnet programmes), such opportunities were missed.

Example: Complementarity between EFCP and the Youth in Action Programme

The closest programme to the EFCP is Youth in Action programme, which is funded by DG Education and Culture (DG EAC). In many ways, the EFCP can be conceptualised as an adult version of Youth in Action programme, allowing adults to participate and learn from exchanges across Europe and supporting the structures for European civil society as a whole. As with the EFCP, the Youth in Action targets funding at civil society organisations. The EFCP activities are aimed at ordinary citizens in their local communities, whereas the distinct

feature of the Youth in Action programme is that it focuses on young people aged 13-25 and allows young people informally as a group to apply for funding. The bench-marking analysis undertaken within the external evaluation analysis uncovered further synergies that could be exploited between both programmes. For example, non- and informal learning is likely to be taking place in EFCP activities and more could be gained from the Youth in Action programme's use of these methods.

The examination of the EU added value of the programme showed that the EFCP enabled activities that could not have been funded elsewhere, in addition to promoting the spread of best practices. In some cases, the evaluation found evidence of such practices actually being implemented, and of being scaled up across wider groups of countries and stakeholders.

EFCP had the potential to add value in numerous areas, among them the sharing and implementation of best practices through projects. Some of the projects that had been examined in the ex post evaluation also demonstrated that sometimes simple initiatives can be easily replicated and scaled up, thereby maximising the effect of EU funds on civil society.

For instance, the Crocus Project funded within Action 4 Active European Remembrance of the EFCP showed that inexpensive activities, such as the planting of flowers, could generate substantial impacts. Others highlighted that the chances of a potential policy impact can be enhanced through straightforward actions such as the dissemination of a statement to the right authorities.

Civil Society project example: The Crocus Project

The project was intended for pupils aged 11 years and over and provided schools with yellow crocus bulbs to plant in memory of the 1.5 million Jewish children and thousands of other children who died during the Holocaust. The yellow flowers represented the yellow Star of David that all Jews were forced to wear under Nazi rule.

The project introduced youngsters to the study of the Holocaust, promoted awareness and stimulated discussion about discrimination. The Crocus Project is perpetual and operates every year since its launch in 2005. Every year over 51 000 European students are involved.

6.3. Effectiveness

Under the ex post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 against the criterion of effectiveness (see evaluation questions regarding effectiveness in chapter 4), the evaluators had to assess to what extent each action and measure of the programme was appropriate to reach the programme's general and specific objectives. At the same time, they were asked to verify if and how the programme had influenced its target groups. In addition, they examined the question if in the area of citizenship policy the programme had triggered effects at EU level and in the participating countries. Another question linked to the effectiveness of the EFCP aimed at finding out to which extent the balance between new organisations and organisations having previously been supported by the programme had contributed to effectively reaching the programme's objectives.

The ex post evaluation found that the types of projects funded through the EFCP could potentially make an impact in numerous ways, depending on their particular mechanisms, target groups and methods. High potential impact tended to draw on factors such as involving children and hard to reach groups, establishing sustainable networks and linking to policy-making. However, even though most projects had been implemented and delivered successfully, the presence of these factors varied significantly among individual projects.

In general, meaningful results were achieved for projects that were grounded in a clear rationale. Also crucial were a well-delineated scope and set of objectives, a plausible intervention logic and the involvement of relevant partners. Given the short timeframe for EFCP projects in comparison to the sustained engagement needed for to effect change in a complex area like civic engagement, wider applicability of project outputs and credible plans for follow-up efforts (including funding) were of vital importance.

Town-twinning project example: The European Charter of Rural Communities

Since 1989, EFCP town-twinning projects developed within the European Charter of Rural Communities brought together 28 rural communities from all 28 EU Member States. This extensive network has chosen to focus on ‘liveability in European communities’ and to examine its various aspects including education, employment, integration of people with disabilities, participation in democracy at local level and involving young people in community life. A major network meeting is organised every year, accompanied by specialised thematic meetings for specific target groups.

The ex post evaluation concluded that for the programme to maximise its impact at a wider level, it would need to leverage its relatively small budget, identifying specific areas where it could add the most value and complementing larger initiatives. The programme’s relatively small budget was spread across a vast spectrum of subject areas and funding mechanisms, creating a risk that the programme’s achievements would be diluted. The benchmarking analysis conducted for the ex post evaluation showed that the EFCP’s offer was unique in some areas, namely where it provided a first entry point for ordinary citizens to discuss and engage with the EU and where it brought together civil society organisations and local authorities to develop citizenship activities. Town twinning and remembrance activities were also found to be areas of focus specific to the EFCP. Similarly, as the only EU programme that targeted citizens directly, the EFCP 2007-2013 involved ordinary citizens in the EU through a bottom-up approach. Since around 45% of the programme budget were also devoted to civil society organisations, which could plausibly benefit from EU funding from other sources, the ex post evaluation suggested in view of the preparation of future EU programmes or initiatives to concentrate on citizen-centric projects and to ensure that projects led by civil society organisations were comprised of strong citizen-centric components.

6.4. Efficiency

Under the evaluation of the EFCP against the criterion of efficiency (see evaluation questions regarding efficiency in chapter 4), the efficiency of each action and measure of the Europe for Citizens programme had to be assessed. In addition, the evaluators had to answer the question whether the budget of the programme was sufficient to reach a critical mass and to have the necessary impact to reach its objectives. They had to evaluate the contribution of the Europe for Citizens Contact Points and the Structured Dialogue to the efficiency of the programme.

The ex post evaluation came to the conclusion that diversity and complexity of the EFCP did not allow for simple comparisons between the cost-effectiveness of the various actions and measures. Costs per participant varied considerably between actions and measures, with civil society projects and remembrance projects reaching greater numbers of people for less funding than town twinning meetings or in particular networks of twinned towns.

The efficiency of individual projects varied. In general, good quality projects provided better value for money. The evaluation also noted the potential for a greater proportion of the budget to be allocated towards citizen-led projects, in particular in the area of town-twinning and Active European Remembrance and by taking steps to ensure that funding aimed at civil society organisations involves citizens directly.

Turning to the achievements at European and national levels, the scale of the issues falling within the programme's scope was immense, particularly in light of its relatively small budget (215 million EUR for seven years) and the diverse social and cultural factors affecting citizenship and civic engagement. These factors range from those that are completely outside the EFCP's control, such as the demographic and social conditions influencing an individual's patterns of civic and political engagement and participation, to family, education, media and the discourse at work and other social fora. In addition, the political and societal context under which the programme operated between 2007 and 2013 was complex. The evaluation identified two main factors that had a strong impact on civic participation and perceptions of the EU during the programme period 2007-2013, namely the Member State accession process and the increase in Euroscepticism in recent years.

- First, the accession of 12 Member States, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, between 2004 and 2007 presented new challenges to European integration. The EU enlargement also implied the inclusion of additional cultures, traditions and heritage. This brought to the fore the need to ascertain a shared understanding of European culture and values across the 28 countries of the enlarged EU.
- Secondly, during the period of the 2007-2013 EFCP, the EU underwent an economic crisis that influenced citizens' perception of the European Institutions and at the same time moved the European and national policy agenda towards measures to foster economic recovery, growth and tackling unemployment while offering limited opportunities for citizens to participate in the construction of Europe.

In this context the EFCP was one of the few programmes that offered opportunities for ordinary European citizens of all backgrounds to exchange and to learn about and experience the common values, history and culture of the European Union.

Leading from this, the ex post evaluation suggested to put a greater strategic focus on citizens as target audience and on specific types of actions for which the EFCP is the only programme offering funding opportunities, in particular town-twinning projects and Active European remembrance projects. In addition, it recommended to increase guidance for applicants and beneficiaries to increase the ability of the EFCP to provide value for money.

6.5. Sustainability

Under the ex post evaluation of the EFCP Programme against the criterion of sustainability (see evaluation questions regarding sustainability in chapter 4), it had to be assessed to what

extent the various actions and measures of the Europe for Citizens Programme have been successful in creating lasting effects with regard to its objectives. In addition, the question had to be explored to which extent the Europe for Citizens Programme had an impact on EU policies and on national policy or had triggered policy initiatives.

The ex post evaluation showed that the EFCP 2007-2013 made a real, but unquantifiable contribution to its objectives. In the presence of key success factors, particularly credible plans for follow-up action, individual projects led to sustainable outcomes at the local and organisational levels.

With regard to the higher-level objectives, successful projects were able to foster lasting cooperation among civil society organisations and helped preserving the memory of Europe's past.

Town-Twinning project example: Volunteerig for Europe EUR-VOL

During the European Year of Volunteering 2011, the city of Trogir (Croatia) welcomed delegates from seven European partner towns for a four-day event addressing the value of voluntary activities with the aim to raise public awareness, involvement and understanding of the contribution that volunteering organisations make to society. This conference paved the way for the creation of new cooperation networks and common volunteering actions in the areas of environment, art and language learning. At the end of the conference, the representatives of the towns signed an official cooperation memorandum.

Active European Remembrance project example: Train of Remembrance

The Train of Remembrance was a project commemorating children and young people from many European countries deported to concentration and extermination camps during the Second World War. The exhibition, held within real train carriages drawn by a steam engine, displayed the biographies of young victims from eight European countries. It paid tribute to the aid provided by allied anti-Nazi forces saving the life of thousands of children and young people. The train visited over 100 railway stations attracting 380 000 visitors. The exhibition drew attention to a particular aspect of the Holocaust, i.e. the deportation and extermination of children and young people and brought it to the attention of large numbers of European citizens of today.

The EFCP was able to influence the town twinning movement, European civil society organisations and remembrance organisations in various ways. Regarding town twinning, the programme has encouraged potential beneficiaries to think in more thematic, policy-related ways, with a focus on annual programming priorities and important contextual issues that go beyond cultural exchange. Networks of twinned towns have increased the long-term cooperation between beneficiaries due to the relatively large grants and long duration of projects. With regard to civil society, operating grants helped keep attention on particularly relevant issues, ensure independent voices for EU-level debates and cultivate expertise, though the long-term nature of the funding also created considerable dependence among beneficiaries. Civil society projects were completely different and encouraged organisations to form partnerships with counterparts in other Member States, building their capacity and

international experience and, in some cases, forming sustainable networks. Remembrance organisations benefited from the impartial nature of a funder such as the Commission, which facilitated the free exchange of ideas on sensitive topics and encouraged innovative practices to unite Europeans around potentially difficult subjects.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The ex post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 confirmed the importance of the EFCP for the promotion of civic participation, strengthening the sense of belonging together and mutual understanding. The programme gave approximately 7 million European citizens and their organisations the opportunity to interact and participate in the process of European construction, to express their opinions and to feed into the political process. It connected people and local communities from different countries.

The evaluation showed that the demand for the programme was strong and that the programme budget was below levels of demand. The evaluation also highlighted the scope for further development.

Overall, the instrument played a positive role in fostering civic participation and democratic engagement of citizens reaching out to a large number of citizens who without the EFCP would not have been engaged with the European project. The EFCP was relevant to the identified needs and efficient and effective in achieving its objectives even though the efficiency varied depending of the quality of individual projects. The programme clearly had an impact, its sustainability however was undermined in some areas by the low level of funding.

The interim evaluation of the successor programme Europe for Citizens 2014-2020 due in December 2017 will be used to verify in how far the evaluation recommendations of this ex post evaluation report have been followed.

Annex 1: Procedural information concerning the process to prepare the evaluation

Legal basis:

- Article 14(3) (c) of Decision N° 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme 'Europe for Citizens' to promote active European citizenship, OJ L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 32.

Purpose:

The purpose of the ex post evaluation was:

- To assess the results and measures of the Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013 compared to its objectives;
- To assess qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme;
- To provide examples of good practice and successful model projects under each action of the programme.
- To provide recommendations on how to further develop the Europe for Citizens Programme as an instrument for the development of a European Citizenship Policy.

Scope of the evaluation:

The scope of the ex post evaluation was limited given the fact that a number of surveys and studies on the measurement of the programme's impact and the development of impact indicators had taken place under EFCP 2007-2013. A quantitative report on the activities of the Europe for Citizens Programme was prepared by the Executive Agency in 2014.

Lead DGs:

- **DG COMM (2014):** preparation of terms of references for external ex post evaluation, request of services within an existing framework contract of DG Communication, signature of contract with external company (Coffey International and Deloitte)
- **DG HOME (2015):**
 - supervision of the external ex post evaluation carried out by Coffey International, inception phase, interim report and final report,
 - preparation of the report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013,
 - preparation of the present staff working document: Report on the ex post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013.

Organisation and timing of the ex post evaluation:

Important steps of the ex post evaluation EFCP 2007-2013	
Steering Group set up	17/07/2014
Validation of ToR	September 2014
Signature of external contract	17/10/2014
Kick off meeting with Coffey International	07/11/2014
Inception report approved	18/01/2015
Interim report approved	17/04/2015
Final Report approved	28/09/2015
Dissemination plan	<i>Not applicable</i>
Draft Communication finalised	22/10/2015
ISC launched (for draft Communication)	<i>Objective: 16/10/2015</i>
Deadline for report to Parliament/Council	31/12/2015

Previous evaluations:

- An ex ante evaluation including an impact assessment was carried out. The evaluation report was annexed as staff document to the Commission proposal for the Europe for Citizens Programme⁵.
- An interim evaluation was done to assess the results obtained by the programme between 2007 and 2009⁶.

Reports and studies:

The following surveys and studies linked to evaluation were realised under the Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013:

- Survey to contribute to the development of a system of measuring the annual impact of activities supported by the Europe for Citizens programme (2008);
- Europe for Citizens Survey 2009 - Developing impact indicators for the Europe for Citizens programme and adapting them to the 2009 Annual Management Plan (2009);

⁵ Commission staff working document, annex to the Commission proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme "Citizens for Europe" to promote active European citizenship of 6.04.2005, doc. COM (2005) 116 final.

⁶ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the mid-term evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 of 1.03.2011, doc. COM (2011) 83 final.

- Study on measuring the impact of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013 (2013)⁷;
- Activity Report Europe for Citizens 2007-2013: "Results 2007-2013" provided by the Executive Agency EACEA (2014).

In order to provide a better understanding of active citizenship at European level, the European Commission carried out the following studies under Europe for Citizens 2007-2013:

- Volunteering in the European Union, GHK (2010)⁸;
- Study on Maximising the Potential of Mobility in Building European Identity and Promoting Civic Participation, Ecorys (2011)⁹;
- Participatory Citizenship in the European Union, Bryony Hoskins and David Kerr, University of Southampton, (2012)¹⁰;
- Measuring the Impact of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme, Public Policy and Management Institute and Euréval (2013).

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/news-events/news/11072013_studyefc_en.htm

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/studies/index_en.htm

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/studies/index_en.htm