

DECLARATION BY THE BOARD OF THE ECIT FOUNDATION FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY

On 1 November 1993, the Maastricht Treaty came into force and created European citizenship. 25 years on in 2018, what is there to celebrate? When it was first introduced on a proposal by Spain, EU citizenship was seen by many as public relations confirming the existing European cross-border rights, but adding only a thin set of new ones, which can be found in articles 18 to 25 of the [Treaty](#) of the European Union. Over a generation, this invention has acquired legal substance as a “real citizenship”, described as a “fundamental status” by the European Court of Justice. The expansion of Schengen and updated European laws to guarantee European rights to free movement, access to social security entitlements and recognition of professional qualifications have created a comprehensive framework.

The Lisbon Treaty added the right whereby 1 million citizens, coming from at least seven Member States, can demand a new European law—a European citizens’ initiative (ECI). ECIT [guidelines](#) show that many other aspects of a citizenship of rights, participation and belonging are scattered across EU policies.

Since Maastricht, EU citizenship has been placed in the broader framework of the Charter on fundamental rights. This first transnational citizenship of the modern era has become a way of life, particularly for the younger generation. The freedom to live, love, work or study anywhere on the continent is taken for granted. Awareness of European rights, and public support for European citizenship has grown as Eurobarometer opinion surveys show. This citizenship is one of expanding practice searching for a clear concept and political support.

Why have there not been any major new political initiatives by the EU Institutions or governments to develop European citizenship even though it was conceived at Maastricht as an evolutionary process? Why is there not more pressure from citizens and civil society? To raise the questions and seek answers, ECIT has prepared a [10-point manifesto](#) for the European elections, which contains three main messages.

European citizenship needs to become:

- **Practical.** Even after a generation it is still “mind the gap” between the fine principles of European law and the detail buried in exceptions to European rights. The exceptions are used increasingly by national authorities to create barriers to freedom of movement. A European citizenship which does not work properly has little credibility. Violations of European rights fall disproportionately on low-income groups, minorities, family members from outside the EU and anyone who doesn’t tick the boxes. ECIT proposes better enforcement and the introduction of a free movement solidarity fund including a minimum income scheme for jobseekers. A European citizens’ card can cut costs and red tape.
- **Political.** Why is it that European citizens are able to vote and stand as candidates in local and European elections in another EU country where they live, but not in regional or national elections and are usually excluded from referenda? If EU citizens resident in the UK and British citizens who had been outside the UK for over 15 years had been able to vote in the June 2016 referendum, Brexit might well have been avoided. Political rights are the touchstone of any citizenship and there

should be no taxation without representation. ECIT and partner organisations are preparing an ECI. European elections should be genuinely European.

- **Popular.** European citizenship should be for all. This means starting at a young age and adding a European dimension to citizenship education both in and out of school. Rights to information and education are not enough – Europe is learning by doing. Everyone should be able to study or work for a period of time in another European country, an entitlement which is especially popular with those who would not otherwise have the opportunity. Such an objective is a call for expanding the ERASMUS programme as the Commission is already proposing to do in the future multi-annual framework of the EU budget.

Finally, ECIT proposes that the European elections should bring in a citizenship legislature and the creation of a European citizens' agora so that citizens themselves shape such reforms and the future of the EU.

To show your support there is one thing you and every European citizen over the age of 18 can do on the anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty: sign and get others to sign the ECI on permanent European citizenship [here](#).