



OUR IDEA OF EUROPE

Thoughts, proposals and wishes on the eve of the European elections 2014

by Cittadinanzattiva

"Our idea of Europe" is the manifesto/appeal that Cittadinanzattiva wishes to submit to the attention of the candidates to the European Parliament Elections which will take place in May 2014.

Cittadinanzattiva is a movement of civic participation which embraced the European perspective over 10 years ago when it decided to establish a civic network at Community level to assert through practice an active European citizenship and help position it at the centre the political agenda.

Asserting an active European citizenship means pursuing and sharing the objectives and the values established in the Treaties, from which Cittadinanzattiva has drawn strength for several of its most significant activities undertaken at Community level.

Cittadinanzattiva believes in Europe and contributes to it through its activities since Europe represents an essential reference point for a civic organisation engaged for over 35 years in promoting civic participation in the protection of rights.

In the current climate of nationalist claims, improbable populist solutions and temptations to revert to the past, Cittadinanzattiva on the one hand invites citizens to go and vote and on the other proudly claims having operated for years - alongside the European and national institutions - in the long process of introduction of and education in the common currency, more and more convinced that today, without the Euro, our destiny would be even bleaker than how the heavy economic crisis gripping Europe appears to depict it.

Therefore, in order to overcome the crisis and avoid a drift which might turn the dream of a united Europe into a nightmare it is necessary that all parties involved endeavour to reach a balance between a European Union which requires to keep public finances in order through antisocial policies, apparently more attentive to concerns of a financial nature than to the worries regarding the real economy, and a society requiring that adequate levels of protection of rights be guaranteed together with social justice, development and promotion of active citizenship.

The five priority areas described in this paper show in the following two recommendations their link and premise:

- ✓ Implementing "Citizen first" as the inspiring principle to guide the decisions of the European institutions. These are in fact called to give evidence of their actions throughout their mandate on the basis of this principle, the only one able to overturn the current European pyramidal structure, place citizens at the top and restore a European sense of belonging both in its true meaning and as an opportunity for higher and more sustainable standards of life;
- ✓ A constant interweaving and assimilation between European, national, regional and local levels in order to allow European citizens to develop a common understanding of the European

context as a privileged arena of citizenship rights and participation, and introducing a reflection on the sense of belonging to a common European future.

"Our idea of Europe" is a common line of thought campaigned by Cittadinanzattiva both at national level – within its own organization and in coalitions– and at European level together with partner associations belonging to the European network Active Citizenship Network.

We hope that this work may be considered as a constructive contribution presented by Cittadinanzattiva to the candidates and to the European institutional decision-makers, as well as to the stakeholders who are committed to work for an ever more democratic Europe in line with the expectations of its citizens.

WE ENVISAGE A EUROPE

A. Built on the work of citizens, families and young people

1. By strengthening the social, economic and monetary context of the Union and adding value to the social economy and to all subjects belonging to the Third Sector*
2. By introducing a European tax on financial transactions to fund social investments*****
3. By supporting home ownership through "bridging loan" projects on the model of the Italian Fund to access to financing as first buyers (young couples or one-parent families****)
4. By actively focusing on education and training since these are key steps towards increased awareness by the European active citizens of tomorrow. All this also through a further strengthening of the already existing mobility programmes within the EU*****

B. Able to prevent, protect and care

5. By safeguarding protection rights and strengthening those of European citizens as patients, consumers, tax payers, money savers, passengers, workers, students ect.
6. By working alongside the Member States in the full implementation of the Directive on transnational health care which has defined the guarantees offered to all citizens within the EU in this field
7. By implementing the rights ratified in the "European Charter of Patients Rights"¹, with special mention to:
 - *The right to preventive measures*, setting up structured and multi-year programmes in which every aspect of prevention is dealt with: primary (promoting healthy lifestyles), secondary (prevention of infections - assistance and vaccinations), tertiary (care of complications for not self-sufficient patients or people suffering from chronic diseases)
 - *The right to avoid pain and unnecessary suffering*, by including pain therapy and palliative treatment as a priority in European healthcare and research programmes; supporting information campaigns to make citizens aware of the invisible aspects of everyday life; supporting the Member States in stressing the importance of chronic pain in university and post-university education for healthcare operators**
8. By further strengthening consumers' rights in particular at transnational level dealing with the obstacles faced by consumers when claimants, and promoting the development of an effective online system for the solution to controversies

¹ European Charter of Patients Rights is the result of a joint effort between Cittadinanzattiva – Tribunal for Patients Rights and 15 civic organisations partners of the European network of Cittadinanzattiva, Active Citizenship Network. Drawn up in 2002, the European Charter lists the inalienable rights of patients which each EU Member State should protect and guarantee. Fourteen of those rights are at risk also owing to the financial crisis affecting the national healthcare systems: the right to preventive measures, the right of access, the right to be informed, the right of consensus, the right to free choice, the right to privacy and confidentiality, the right to patients' personal timetable, the right to quality standards, the right to security, the right to innovation, the right to avoid unnecessary suffering and pain, the right to personalized treatment, the right to complain and the right to claim damages. For further information: www.cittadinanzattiva.it/corporate/europa/1955-carta-europea.html

9. By ensuring in all EU countries effectiveness of access to justice and the right to defence, without discrimination, by implementing firstly the Directive on legal aid at state expense in criminal proceedings

C. Welcoming and open to participation

10. By re-launching, with the new European Parliament, the constitutional process through a participatory structure which includes citizens and civil society in order to reduce the democratic deficit plaguing the European Union ****
11. By implementing the rights enshrined in the "European Charter of Active Citizenship" which sets out the rights and duties of civic organizations participating in the decision making process related to public policies, as well as the obligations of public institutions²
12. By recognizing that the real practice of consultation needs to be better regulated from the point of view of the when and how and cannot be carried out only by the institutions at zero cost, but reimbursement of costs for all organizations participating must be guaranteed in order to avoid the inevitable discrimination and increase the number of participants *****
13. By standardizing the national electoral laws concerning the criteria for the allocation of seats at European level
14. By nearing Europe to the territories and the suburbs, and vice versa, promoting forms of involvement of civil society through activities - including circulating activities - as those organised at the time of the introduction of the single currency.
15. By combining the widespread use of online communication and the gradual reduction of the *digital divide* with information-based activities in order to meet the requirements for participation, access, information and protection of a wide range of European citizens
16. By requiring EUROSTAT to make the collection of data based on the Manual on the Measurement of voluntary work of the ILO mandatory in order to provide data on the economic contribution generated by volunteer work *****
17. By developing a legislative proposal at Community level to recommend the granting of voting rights - at least at local and European level - to third-country nationals who are long-term residents, as this action would be a responsible integration factor *****
18. By facilitating the Member States to insert within its own system the acquisition of citizenship for "people born in the territory and lawfully and habitually resident there" as laid down in the European Convention on Nationality
19. By developing a legislative proposal for legal recognition of different meanings and levels of nationalities in order to bring forward a model of inclusive and democratic citizenship which would include also the recognition of the right to be elected by the citizens from third countries *****
20. By reforming European policies on immigration and committing to a new culture of hospitality for migrants, respect for human rights and co-development, discarding the perspective of Europe "based on security"*
21. By establishing an ad hoc commission to study/update common EU migration policies*****
22. By providing programs at euro-Mediterranean and euro-African levels for humanitarian protection for refugees and asylum seekers who find themselves in transit countries, as well as plans for cooperation for the protection of human rights in the management of migration and asylum policies in those third countries most affected by the passage of migrants towards the EU*

² Promoted by Active Citizenship Network and the Foundation for Active Citizenship (FONDACA) in collaboration with civil society organizations from 10 European countries. The European Charter of Active Citizenship inspired, among other things by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and, in particular, Article 11 on the freedom of expression and information, Article 12 on the freedom of assembly and association, Article 21 on non-discrimination and Article 41 on the right to good administration. The 20 articles of the Charter are therefore an expression of fundamental rights and, as such, exist and must be respected even when European and national laws do not explicitly provide for their defense. For further information: www.cittadinanzattiva.it/progetti-e-campagne/europa/3429-carta-europea-della-cittadinanza-attiva.html

D. helping growth and overcoming poverty

23. By fighting poverty and inequality, giving equal employment opportunities to all European citizens regardless of gender: young people, women and the disabled*
24. By supporting Europe's commitment to the development and the fight against poverty worldwide, maintaining economic commitments of 0,7% of GDP, listening to the voices of the civil society dialogue on the post-2015 development agenda*
25. By identifying the most effective practices implemented at European level in order to better study and overcome early school dropout as well as the risk of poverty affecting children and adolescents
26. By the adoption by the Member States of a European Framework Directive on the adequacy and possible introduction of new schemes and instruments of guaranteed minimum income *****
27. By establishing a guarantee fund for non permanent workers through the granting of loans in times of falling income and harmonizing the systems of social protection and taxation of young citizens by identifying best practices and actions which would support income continuity, with particular attention to the entry into the labour market *****
28. By promoting a reform of the financial system more attentive to the needs of citizens and encouraging financial mobility
29. By revising the system of electronic payments in Europe in order to avoid negative effects both on consumers and on the domestic economy of European citizens*****

E. Which teaches sustainability, accessibility, compliance with existing resources and common goods

30. By placing the EU institutions at the forefront in the fight against waste to ban it from any sector and under whatsoever form it could present itself
31. By investing in information and therefore enabling citizens/consumers to easily compare the information on the use of both goods and services, in order to exercise all the fundamental consumer rights as provided by the European Programme for Consumer Protection 2014-2020. The key objective is to enable consumers to navigate in the complex dynamics of the market and guide their choices towards a greater focus on more sustainable consumption patterns
32. By encouraging improvements in the safety of products (food and non food) and investing in programmes to increase controls across the European Union
33. By favouring the affordability and reliability of services in the energy sector, with particular attention to vulnerable groups
34. By encouraging mobility policies - as well as housing - as sustainable as possible in terms of environmental, social and economic impact. In particular: promoting investment in accessible infrastructures which would enable a quick change for the benefit of less polluting public and private transport; supporting plans for urban mobility, promoting health and safety programmes in travelling on foot and by bike; promoting a progressive cultural change - with adequate information campaigns and with the involvement of civic associations - to influence the choices which guide citizens in meeting their mobility needs***
35. By further facilitating access to public transport for the most vulnerable groups from an economic/social or reduced mobility point of view ***
36. By defining procedures for prior consultation of the territories involved in projects with a high environmental impact *****
37. By adopting the "European Accessibility Act", a legislative initiative aimed at improving the accessibility of goods and services for people with disabilities and related to the sectors of the built environment, transport, information technology and communication *****

*excerpt from “*Verso un’Europa Solidale*”, appeal from the European and International Advisory Council of the National Forum of the Third Sector, in which also Cittadinanzattiva participates.

** excerpt from “*European Pain Patient Pathways Recommendations*”, manifesto promoted by Active Citizenship Network and Pain Alliance Europe, and signed by over 20 European patients associations. For further information: www.activecitizenship.net/files/develop-eu-pain-patient-pathways-recommendations-pamphlet.pdf.

*** excerpt from “*EU Civic Recommendations on Mobility*” manifesto promoted by Active Citizenship Network with consumer associations from 8 EU countries. For further information: www.activecitizenship.net/files/MoveinEurope-other-documents/pamphlet/pamphlet_mobility_it.pdf.

**** in line with the European campaign “*Democratic Europe Now*” to which Cittadinanzattiva-Active Citizenship Network has also joined. For further information: www.democraticeuropenow.eu/index.php.

***** excerpt from “*Documento finale di proposta ed azione*” by Italian Alliance for the European Year of Citizens 2013, an initiative which has fostered a debate among 61 civil society organizations - including Cittadinanzattiva - from which a shared platform of proposals has emerged.

***** excerpt from “*European Consumers Manifesto about European Commission proposal to regulate payment cards*” signed by six consumer groups-including Cittadinanzattiva – from 5 EU countries.