

EUROPEAN IDENTITY – SUPRANATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

The present article aims to advance a reflexion on the construction of the European Union citizenship/identity and identify the main challenges behind the consolidation of the citizenship bond and the difficulties in making EU citizens becoming more involved in the integration process and in bringing European institutions closer to normal citizens. .

Keywords

European citizenship; Treaty of Lisbon; supranationality; fundamental rights; democratic citizenship; challenges

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Paula Marques Santos e Mónica Silva

Context

In the last few years, European citizenship has assumed increased significance in the debate on the importance of its efficient strengthening to ensure the consolidation of European integration and to bring institutions closer to citizens.

In fact, although Monet did refer to the construction of the community as a union of people and not just states, it was only in the 1990s¹, with the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty of the European Community (TEC), that article 17 clearly defined a citizen of the EU – this quality was to be recognized in any national of a Member State (MS), whose nationality was that stated in the national laws of the Member State in question.

This citizenship concept immediately took up a supranational nature complementary to that of national citizenship. In other words, EU citizenship was to complement national citizenship, not replace it, and encompassed a set of rights and duties in addition to those stemming from the quality of being a citizen of a MS².

The statute of EU citizenship implied, up to now and for all EU citizens, just a list of rights, of which the following stand out: **right to free movement** and the **right of residence in the territory of any MS**; **active and passive electoral acts** in the elections into the European Parliament and in municipal elections in the MS of residence, in the same conditions as nationals of the MS in question; right to **diplomatic protection** in a third country (non-EU state) by the diplomatic or consular authorities of another Member State, if their own country does not have diplomatic representation there, to the same extent as that provided for nationals of that Member State; the right to **petition the European Parliament** and the right to **appeal to an Ombudsman** appointed by the European Parliament concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of Community institutions or bodies (procedures governed by Articles 194 and 195 of the TEC; the right to **write to any Community institution or body** in one of the languages of the Member States and to receive a response in the same language (Article 21, third paragraph, TEC); the right to **access**

¹ Before the signing of the TEU and TEC, joint work was carried out to make the community area more cohesive. During the 1990s, there were significant developments to conceptualize and implement citizenship and education for citizenship in Europe, a process that involved several institutions and entities, including the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The Council of Europe has been involved in human rights and citizenship education since the 1980s. The Erasmus mobility programme, through which the European Commission started promoting educational transnational projects, is an example of that effort. The common denominator in these initiatives was to encourage a feeling of European identity and citizenship.

² The listed duties are those that stem from the nationality of each citizen, and there is no added duty resulting from EU citizenship, other than the duty to respect European citizenship and the duty to protect that same citizenship.



European Parliament, Council³ and Commission documents, subject to certain conditions (Article 255, TEC).

However, all these duties associated with European citizenship have always had obvious restrictions: according to article 18, paragraph 1 of the TEC, "every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by the measures adopted to give it effect". This reservation refers in particular to the legitimate interest of Member States in requesting social and financial backing before guaranteeing residence permits, in order to protect their public funds. In similar fashion, as Besson points out (2007), these reservations and constraints apply to all European citizenship rights, which are guaranteed and bound by the Treaties. This has been object of concern, since these reservations are acceptable with regard to economic fundamental freedoms, but not in social and political matters. The difficulty increased from the moment EU jurisprudence became more generous in guaranteeing national limits for European citizenship rights than it should have, and allowed these rights to be evoked as one of the four fundamental freedoms. And if it is true that the Court of Justice started an unheard-of and much needed initiative to expand EU citizenship rights in material and personal terms, unfortunately this development has been counteracted by over-broad justifications to limit those rights.

The Treaty of Lisbon denotes the same intention to reinforce citizenship in the Union by increasingly involving citizens in the construction of the EU and in its policy-making using several mechanisms and tools (maintenance or reinforcement of those mentioned above, and creation of others which we shall refer to and which informed our analysis). To this effect, we believe it is of the utmost importance to understand the scope of the concept of European citizenship and how it can truly become operational, so that the dichotomy institutions-citizens can become a real tool for deepening interaction in the construction of the Union, given its unique specificities. In other words, if citizenship is a legal bond between an individual and corresponding Member State in a strict sense, which translates into a set of rights and duties, then we need to provide a frame for this new supranational bond between citizens and the Union, always bearing in mind the absence of duties directly allocated to this supranational relationship, even with the entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the binding/compulsory nature of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Indeed, this concept has been given considerable reflection: on the one hand, there have been attempts to identify existing issues preventing the consolidation of European citizenship. On the other, a sufficiently broad definition has been put forward in order to clarify this new type of bond that overflows national borders. Nyers (cf. 2007) offers a summary of some authors' approaches and contributions. Gerard Delanty examines European citizenship policy and notes some concerns related with lack of solidarity and social justice in this citizenship emerging model. For other authors, such as Aihwa Ong, the concern lies on knowing if the territorial notions of citizenship are still current and relevant or if, nowadays, the concept ought to find other meanings in accordance with the global movements that determine contemporary politics⁴. For Figueroa, in turn,

³ In accordance with the wording of the Treaty of Lisbon, this means the Council of Ministers.

⁴ Ong stresses the importance of the large urban metropolises that take on global migration flows and theorises how these centres can become a "mutation in citizenship zone" where punishments and rewards are distributed according with the assets that contribute to the urban economy Cf. Nyers (2007).



citizenship involves the following: a commitment to society taking into account its diversity; openness to and solidarity with other individuals and their differences: acceptance of all people; rejection of any form of exploitation, discriminatory treatment or racism (Figueroa, 2000: 57).

Faced with all these uncertainties, we must not forget, as defended by Yeatman (*op. cit.*), that any debate on future European citizenship must always take into account the complex and long-lasting relationship between sovereignty and subjectivity, between the search for individual self-preservation and the States and other entities that aim to legitimize their authority (where we place the EU). In other words, the concept of citizenship will need to be reformulated, since, as Preuss pointed out, "citizenship does not presuppose the community of which the citizen is a member, but creates this very community" (*apud* Osler: 2006).

So far, the level of citizenship attainment in the Union has mostly been due (with the exception of electoral capacity) to a mere systematization of existing rights (particularly in what concerns freedom of movement, right to stay and right to petition). Citizenship is now being enshrined in primary law in the name of a political project.

Contrary to what we have seen with regard to the existing concept of constitution in European states since the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), there are no specific guarantees with regard to fundamental rights associated with EU citizenship⁵. Although paragraph 2 of article 6 of the TEU states that the "Union shall respect" fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as "the constitutional traditions common" to Member States as general principles of Community law, the article does not mention the legal statute of citizenship of the Union (with regard to the fundamental rights of the Union)⁶. Accordingly, despite what is laid down in paragraph 2 of article 17 of the TEC, EU citizenship does not imply any duties for the Union's citizens, which is a major difference with regard to citizenship of Member States, except the respect for Fundamental Rights and respect for citizenship and defence of the EU, as seen earlier.

With the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, we need to understand how the Charter of Fundamental Rights, with the binding nature it has attained, and the various forms of citizens' direct participation in the policy-making process (especially with the setting up of the European Citizens' Initiative) may favour increasing engagement of citizens in European integration. In other words, how can these mechanisms effectively potentiate the defence of citizens and active citizenship which, according to Hoskins' definition, implies involvement in civil society, in the community and/or political life characterised by mutual respect and non-violence, in accordance with human rights and democracy (Hoskins *et al.*, 2006). This author also aims to demonstrate the existing heterogeneity among EU Member States, in terms of active citizenship, according to the construction of the composite indicator⁷.

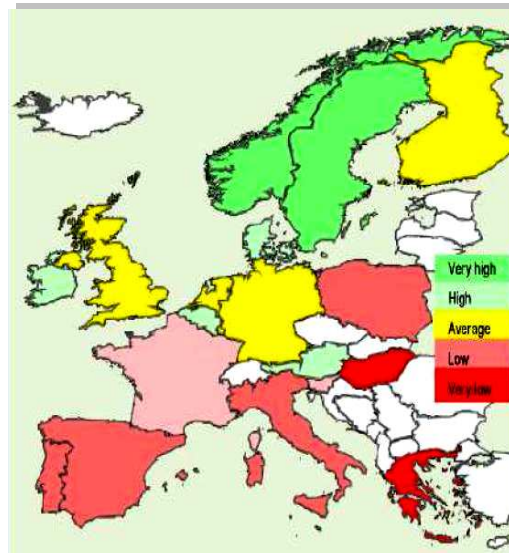
⁵ The TL changed this, as the Charter of Fundamental Rights became binding.

⁶ Cf. "The Citizens of the Union and Their Rights". *Fact Sheets on the European Union*. [CD-ROM] European Parliament: 2009.

⁷ The Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (Hoskins *et al.*) covers 19 European countries and is based on 63 indicators using data collected in the European Social Survey of 2002. The theoretical framework used to construct the active citizenship composite indicator was developed – in cooperation with the Council of Europe – by a team of European experts and presented at an international conference in Ispra in



Figure 1 – Active Citizenship Composite Indicator



Source: Hoskins *et al.* (2006)

In addition, evaluating the capacity and will of each Member State to participate in advancing this ongoing political experimentation project will also be important, as it requires a much shared interdependence and the establishment of institutional agreements in the face of contestation and conflicts within a community made up of communities. Due to their adhesion to the EU, the actual Member States are forced to question the concepts of sovereignty and citizenship, and accept the impact of Europe on their own organization, institutions and policies, and the fact that community political decisions will not necessarily reflect their national interests.

1. European citizenship in the Treaty of Lisbon

The concept of citizenship, based on the definition of former treaties, is explicitly laid down in article 9 of the Treaty of Lisbon (TL), which states that “in all its activities, the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention from its institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies. Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship and shall not replace it” (our underlining)

September 2006. The authors established several items organized around four major dimensions, namely: political life, civil society, community life, and values. As the constructed indicator shows, we see a heterogeneous Europe where Nordic countries lead and Southern countries have positive performances with regard to values and political life, and negatives ones concerning civil society and community life. According to this indicator, the top five countries are: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, and Belgium. At the bottom of the list are Italy, Portugal, Greece, Hungary, and Poland. However, the five best positioned countries do not have the highest points in the 4 dimensions. The same applies to the least well-placed. For instance, Poland has one of the highest performances in the values dimension, while Portugal is halfway the table in the same dimension.



The TL also consecrates the fundamental principles of democratic equality, of representative democracy (article 10)⁸ and of participatory democracy. As an example of the intention to promote participatory democracy, the Treaty proposes a new interaction mechanism – in fact, article 11, paragraph 4, introduces a new right for citizens of the Union: "Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties".

Accordingly, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) becomes one of the most important innovations brought about by the TL in terms of citizenship. In addition to the previously proposed interaction mechanisms with institutions and bodies, of which the European Parliament and the Ombudsman stand out, respectively, it aims to strengthen citizens' capacities to pro-actively participate in the Union's policy-making process. Apart from the ECI novelty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights became binding in 2009, which attests the aim to make Europe a more uniform union in social terms. The ECI and the binding nature of the Charter are two examples we shall now analyze in greater depth in terms of building a European identity.

2. The Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights

In order to enshrine civil, political, economic, and social rights, the Treaty of Lisbon also made the Charter of Fundamental Rights binding⁹, conferring it the same legal standing as that of the Treaties, listing rights, freedoms and guarantees. As Isabel Camisã explained "... it is an advance in the protection of the rights of European citizens..." and has the "advantage of enabling European citizens to have a better understanding of the guarantees that stem from their status as citizens of the Union." (www.ieei.pt, 22.12.09). It confirms the Union's adhesion to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, whose fundamental rights become part of the legal system.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR) was not directly incorporated into the Treaty of Lisbon, but became legally binding under the terms of paragraph 1 of article 6 of the Treaty on the European Union, which confers the Charter the same legal value as the Treaties. As stated in the Charter, it does not increase the competences of the Union as set out in the Treaties. The Charter has a protocol announcing specific measures for the United Kingdom and Poland, listing exceptions to the Charter's legal binding nature in the national courts of those countries.

The EU shall adhere to the European Convention as soon as the 14th protocol of the ECPHR comes into force, which will enable both states and international organisations to become signatories of the ECPHR. However, the adhesion act must be ratified by all EU Member States.

⁸ According to article 10, paragraph 3 "every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen".

⁹ The Member States had already signed the Charter in 2000.



The CFR¹⁰ consecrates all the civil, political, economic and social rights of all Union citizens. It is a set of rights, freedoms and guarantees that decisively contributes to the consolidation of the concept of European Citizenship, representing a synopsis of common values of Member States of the Union. The Charter aims to promote human dignity, illustrate the fundamental rights of European citizens, show the intellectual and legal foundations of the Union and present it as a rule of law community of values. This document ensures that all European institutions shall respect those fundamental rights and guarantee they will be respected by all.

The Cologne European Council, which met in June 1999, deemed it convenient to bring together the panoply of rights of all EU citizens in a single document, in order to clarify them. For the first time in the entire judicial history of the European project, a document encompassing all fundamental rights granted to citizens, which hitherto were dispersed in many legal texts, was prepared, which was a real innovation. In this fashion, the Council of Europe mandated a Convention to write a Charter project. The EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights was enforced in December of that same year, presided by Roman Herzog, and included representatives¹¹ from national parliaments and governments of the Member States, Euro MPs and the European Commissioner responsible for that area. The Convention's¹² meetings were open and all the documentation produced as a result was made available online, so that citizens could access and follow up on the work. The method chosen to write the Charter led to a widened debate and, subsequently, to an agreed document that was approved by a large majority on 2 October 2000. The Biarritz European Council that met on 13-14 October unanimously approved the Charter and sent it to the European Parliament and the European Commission, which approved it on 14 November and on 6 December, respectively. On 7 December and at the Nice European Council, the Presidents of the European Council, Nicole Fontaine, of the Council, Jacques Chirac, and of the Commission, Romano Prodi, signed the Charter on behalf of their corresponding institutions, and, accordingly, its political value was recognized. The Constitutional Treaty¹³ envisaged its integral inclusion in Part II, thus making it legally binding.

The Charter is drawn from several judicial sources and is the result of existing legislation stemming from the Treaty that established the European Union, the Treaty on the European Union, the constitutional traditions of the 15 Member States, the 1950 Council of Europe European Convention on Human Rights and additional protocols, the body of laws of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the body of laws of the Court of Justice of the European Communities, the 1961 European Social Charter of the Council of Europe, the 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Statute of the International Criminal Court, among others. The Charter has 54 articles divided into 6 chapters: dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizenship, and justice.

¹⁰ This is the most recent declaration on fundamental rights worldwide, and the first of the new millennium.

¹¹ The Portuguese government was represented by Euro MP Teresa Almeida Garrett, by MP Maria Eduarda Azevedo, and by Pedro Bacelar de Vasconcelos and Miguel de Serpa Soares (substitutes).

¹² There were public audiences with representatives of the civil society, and this generated over 1500 proposals on the contents of the Charter. National parliaments also started consultation processes, parliamentary debates and collected opinions on the wording of the Charter.

¹³ It was signed on 29 October 2004, but has not yet come into force.



The intention was not to write a European Constitution nor formulate a new set of rights, let alone transfer responsibilities from the Member States to the Union¹⁴. The aim was to clarify existing legislation. The objective of the Charter is to certify individual fundamental rights, explain that European Institutions and States are bound by citizens' fundamental rights when promoting and enforcing the law of the Union and in negotiations with candidate or third party countries, strengthen the idea that the European Union has always been an area for shared values and rights, and protect citizens from power abuse on the part of the state. There was equally a concern for current challenges, and importance was paid to bioethics, data protection and the environment, and consumer protection. Attention was drawn to the importance of putting an end to racial, sexual, skin colour, and religious discrimination. The Charter is a major interpretation instrument that assists the European Court of Justice in its work.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was solemnly proclaimed on 12 December 2007 in Strasbourg by the Presidents of European institutions. It was not directly incorporated into the Treaty of Lisbon, but became legally binding under the terms of paragraph 1 of article 8 of the TEU, which confers the Charter the same legal value as the Treaties. As stated in this document, it does not expand the competences of the Union established in the Treaties. The Charter comes with a protocol that introduces specific procedures for the United Kingdom and Poland, which anticipate exceptions to the legally binding nature of the Charter with regard to the national courts in those countries. The Treaty of Lisbon confirmed the support of the Union for the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, whose fundamental rights became part of the legal body of laws. The EU shall adhere to the European Convention as soon as the 14th protocol of the ECHR comes into force, allowing both states and international organizations to be signatories of the ECHR. However, the accession act must be ratified by all EU Member States.

With this Charter, European politics aimed to pass on a message of their commitment to citizens' rights and values to EU candidate countries, neighbouring countries and the international community at large. The Charter of Fundamental Rights does not give the Union new responsibilities, nor does it force Member States to change their constitutions. Its aim is to emphasize respect for democratic values, human rights and fundamental reasons. Accordingly, we are pleased to state that it is an inspiring document of reference that mirrors the freedom and respect for the fundamental rights enjoyed in the Union. As

Isabel Camisã explains, "... it has the advantage of enabling European citizens to have a better understanding of the guarantees that stem from their status as citizens of the Union." (www.ieei.pt, 22.12.09). This document is a sign that the European integration project of the last 50 years has been anchored on fundamental rights right from the onset.

¹⁴ Change of responsibilities is a right and a function of the exclusive competence of Member States, in the form of amendment of the Treaties.



3. The European Citizens Initiative (EIC) – article 11, paragraph 4¹⁵

The introduction of the EIC attests the decision expressed in the TL to encourage citizens' engagement with institutions and, in this case, specifically with the European Commission, since the practice of publically consulting the civil society no longer produced effective results¹⁶. Article 11, paragraph 4, introduced a new mechanism for the promotion of active citizenship in the Union, stating that at least one million of EU citizens and nationals from a significant number of Member States could take the initiative to invite the European Commission, in the context of its competences, to present a proposal on matters the citizens believed a legal act from the Union was necessary to enforce the Treaties. The procedures and conditions for taking the initiative are set out in the first paragraph of article 24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, but they still await regulation¹⁷.

However, and despite this mechanism, several practical issues remain open, and answers need to be given rapidly to make it effective and not become a wasted opportunity rendering the wording on the treaty meaningless. For instance, what is meant by a "significant number of countries"? How many signatures are necessary from each country? What is the minimum age of participants and who is in charge of checking their signatures? Who should submit the initiative in the end? Is the Commission obliged to reply or take the initiative? Alternatively, if it agrees with the relevance of the matter it was presented with, can it make any changes to the citizens' request? In short, what is the citizens' real capacity to carry out an ECI?

As the above shows, some practical aspects of the citizens' initiative still need to be defined, and the European Commission has tried to collect the necessary information in order to regulate the initiative, so as to establish the minimum rules and procedures. To that effect, and as the ECI should be regulated by the end of 2010, the Commission launched a public consultation¹⁸ to gather opinions from the citizens before concluding works on the matter.

The Green Book and the public consultation posed key questions that aimed to define the practical issues before carrying out the ECI:

- minimum number of Member States from which citizens must come;
- minimum number of signatures per Member State;
- minimum age of signatories;

¹⁵ For purposes of clarification and standardisation, we have used the numbering shown in the consolidated versions of the Treaties published in the Official Journal of the EU C115, on 9 May 2008, since the version of the Treaty of Lisbon published on 17 December 2007 has a different numbering.

¹⁶ The European Commission has set up an electronic area exclusively for the consultation of topics under discussion in the European agenda by the civil society, with the aim of obtaining citizens' feedback on those matters, and involve them in decision-making processes. Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm.

Another example of good practice was the Commission's creation of several thematic *fora* (also online) where citizens can ask questions and debate issues common to all Member States, and try to influence decision-making processes, as well as negotiations with non-EU countries with regard certain partnerships, citizens' rights, etc. The **Citizens' Energy Forum** is an example of this. It was launched by the Commission in collaboration with national and European consumers' associations, representatives of Member States, and of the Energy Community, among others, and its main goal is to protect consumers' interests when drafting policies and ensure consumers' rights are respected when implemented.

¹⁷ The ECI is due to be regulated at the end of 2010 and to come into force in 2011.

¹⁸ Cf. Green Book on the ECI, of the European Commission– public consultation carried out until 31 January 2010.



- form and wording of a citizens' initiative;
- requirements for the collection, verification and authentication of signatures;
- time limit for the collection of signatures;
- registration of proposed initiatives;
- requirements for organisers - transparency and funding;
- time limit for the Commission's response;
- what to do should there be several initiatives on the same issue.

As seen, the scope and efficacy of the ECI cannot be accurately measured, given that it cannot be enforced yet, and we still do not know if this mechanism will actually translate into increased proximity and involvement of citizens in the policy making of the EU. In fact, the complexity of the requirements for carrying out and validating an ECI may have a counter effect and keep citizens further away, leaving the capacity for preparing these initiatives in the hands of associations and/or social movements that may, on occasions, be more focused on attaining their specific goals and relegate the common and community good to second place.

Final considerations

The renewed Lisbon Strategy (Strategy 2020) and the Treaty of Lisbon brought social cohesion into the centre of the European political agenda. European citizenship is a crucial aspect of the entire strategy, focusing on values, representative democracy and civil society. However, before being able to evaluate the importance of European citizenship and its real impact in the process of deepening integration, we need to know if citizens actually feel citizens of the Union and wish to be involved in that process. In other words, we need to ascertain if we can refer to a cohesion capacity that corresponds to a European identity.

It is obvious that divergences and opposing interests will persist for a long time in this Europe with 27 member states, as well as within national societies. Accordingly, the real Europe is a long and major learning and experimentation process at a continent's level, with all the difficulties and resistances that it implies (cf. Ribeiro, 2009).

Having access to the information made available by European institutions and entities does not mean a matching adhesion of citizens to that information, nor the existence of a better informed, proactive society concerned with European integration. Indeed, talking of European society implies talking of national citizenship first, and of the capacity each country has to train citizens more concerned and involved in the community.

To this effect, higher education entities play a crucial role in the training of young citizens who are interested about the decision-making process that will influence our presence in society. It is necessary to create areas where young people may find the answers to their queries and which offer them a better understanding of the European Union they belong to, which has become the area where their employment opportunities, competitiveness and natural competition naturally are. It will only be through investment in training anchored on values such as citizenship, volunteer work and accountability, that we will have citizens contributing more actively to the deepening of European integration. That is, bringing citizens closer to the integration



process is underpinned by active citizenship and the states' capacity to promote and strengthen the importance of their social capital.

Like Robert Putnam affirms, active citizenship is strongly related to "civic involvement", which plays a fundamental role in the formation of social capital. The search for common objectives offers a way for people to experience "reciprocity" and helps create networks anchored on shared values. The high levels resulting from social trust leads to increased cooperation among people and reduces the chances of anti-social behaviour (Putnam, 2000).

Any future debate on this topic will need to underline the importance of adopting a process based on a reflective approach to the study of European citizenship. This means that instead of attempting to establish the supremacy of a particular level of premeditated or unpremeditated standardised citizenship backed by ideological influences (cf. Kostakopoulou, 2007), the most important is to start with the presupposition that the EU and national citizenships are interdependent and examine their interaction and gradual transformation.

The Treaty of Lisbon attests the will to turn an economy-based Europe into a Europe of Citizens, a Social Europe that aims to transmit the sense of belonging to a supranational entity. In fact, European citizenship made us rethink the "impossible" and look for a new model that grants citizens ways to fight discrimination, exclusion and the inability to find a job, and achieve individual and collective stability. Perhaps this is the way to redefine the concept of citizenship and simultaneously answer current issues, making the EU more competitive and a leader in training and citizenship.

If the main objective of European citizenship, as a supranational concept, is to reinforce the protection of EU citizens' rights and interests, and also strengthen and consolidate the identity of Europe by creating a set of rights and duties enabling increased engagement of citizens in the integration process, such as the right to residence as a fundamental right, political participation, diplomatic and consular protection, petition right, among others, the need to initiate and disseminate that sense of belonging to the community becomes the key point of the debate. Accordingly, it is necessary to identify methodologies to fortify that supranational citizenship.

European citizenship can only be reinforced after national citizenship at each member state has been strengthened through the training of better informed citizens concerned about the community they belong to "... all young people acquire the competencies required for personal autonomy and for citizenship, to enter the world of work and social life, with a view to respecting their identity, openness to the world and social and cultural diversity. (UNESCO, 2004: 3).

To that effect, we need to implement the mechanisms set out in the Treaties. Following the voting at the European Parliament in December 2010, the Council adopted the regulations on the European Citizens' Initiative on 15 February 2010. Accordingly, the ECI will be enforced as from the end of March of 2012.



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