



# ecads

European Citizen Action Service



## **WORK PROGRAMME 2023**





**SERVICE  
CONTRACTS**

**2**



**PROJECTS**

**7**

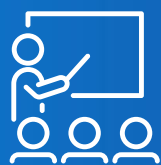
**PROJECTS  
OF ECAS MEMBERS  
IN THE EU FUNDED**

**12**



**EVENTS**

**34**



**TRAININGS**

**19**



**FOCUS GROUPS**

**2**



**POLICY EVENTS**

**5**

# About ECAS

The European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) is an international, Brussels-based non-profit organisation with a pan-European membership and more than 30 years of experience in empowering citizens in order to create a more inclusive and stronger European Union by:

- Promoting and defending citizens' rights, and
- Developing and supporting mechanisms to increase citizens and citizen organisations' democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU.

ECAS believes in an inclusive, transparent, citizen-centric and democratic European Union in which citizens' rights are at the heart of decision-making at all levels and in which citizens are informed, consulted and active participants.

ECAS delivers its mission by implementing projects, services to citizens, training, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, research and high-level events in two focus areas:  
EU RIGHTS and EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY.

## **ECAS in Central and Eastern Europe: from the Region for the Region**

Cautious of specific regional challenges, at the end of 2021, ECAS established its first branch office in Bulgaria with the aim of implementing tailored initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to tackle negative tendencies related to democratic deficiencies, such as spread of disinformation and populist narratives, backsliding of the rule of law and narrowing of civic space.

The branch is also developing technical expertise in innovative online tools for citizen engagement, such as crowdsourcing through digital platforms and digital dashboards for ethical social listening.

### **Anti-disinformation alliances in CEE**

In the period 2022 – 2024, ECAS is supporting civil society organisations (CSOs) in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Poland to form anti-disinformation alliances to combat false narratives and implement impactful campaigns. Thus, CSOs in CEE would be able to react to disinformation attacks and build resilience among their target groups with effective and proactive communication. The knowledge accumulated will feed into the creation of an operational framework for civil society actors to counteract the phenomenon. After the first year of implementation, three pilot campaigns were carried out against disinformation narratives of national importance:



## **BULGARIA**

Members of the Citizen Participation Forum (CPF) network addressed the portrayal of Ukrainian refugees in the country as burdening the economy and living off the back of working citizens. By telling the personal stories of refugees who have successfully integrated in the society and labor market, the alliance successfully reached a wide audience and elicited mostly positive reactions in social media. Still, the volume of negative comments and reactions is a clear indicator of existing divisions and further action must be taken to firmly reverse the narrative and build acceptance towards refugees of all origins.

Under the coordination of the Youth Trade Union (Sindikát Mladi Plus), organisations from the network Voice of the People (Glas Ljudstva) addressed election-related disinformation, false promises and populist speech during the presidential and local elections in the country in 2022. They achieved this by the creation and dissemination of a digital tool that ensures transparency of candidates' stances and helps voters "match" with them based on convergent priorities. The wide adoption of the tool, both by citizens and politicians, is a sign that it will be an important instrument for ensuring accountability before, during and after future elections as well.

## **SLOVENIA**

## **HUNGARY**

Civil College Foundation, together with CSOs active in the education, media and anti-disinformation sectors, made use of the public attention towards the ongoing teachers' strikes to demand an end to Roma segregation in Hungarian schools. Through videos, articles and an interactive game, they reached thousands of citizens, young people and people from minorities to raise awareness not only on the state propaganda on the topic of segregation, but on the disinformation phenomenon as a whole.

## Promoting EU Values in Bulgaria

During 2023 – 2025, ECAS will be implementing as part of a partnership led by the Open Society Institute – Sofia the ProEUvaluesBG project in order to raise public awareness on EU values at national, regional and local level in Bulgaria, and to provide capacity building and financial support to Bulgarian CSOs in order to enhance their role as key messengers in promoting these values.

ECAS's branch in Bulgaria will provide targeted capacity building support to CSOs to promote and uphold EU values. National-level CSOs will be strategic allies in reaching out to citizens, while grassroots CSOs will learn by doing how to promote EU values in their work. All project activities cater to the creation of a community of practice for the promotion of the Union Values among citizens across Bulgaria.



# PROJECTS 2023

## EURECA (European Citizenship Accelerator) 2023

The EURECA 2023 project will further develop the capacities of ECAS and its members to empower citizens and promote EU citizenship rights and will give citizens the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the European Democracy Action Plan and the EU Citizenship Report 2020. EURECA will strengthen European citizenship and identity through support to the post-COVID restoration of freedom of movement in the EU and fostering EU mobile citizens' rights, including their voting rights in the host countries. This will be achieved through capacity building of rights advice organisations and public authorities in Germany, Sweden and Ireland, awareness raising of about 370 000 EU mobile citizens on the EC Communication and their EU rights and practical ideas on how to improve registration rates of mobile citizens prior to the local elections in Spain and Luxembourg.



The EURECA European Democracy activities will contribute to developing mechanisms to increase citizens' democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU based on EU values. This impact will be achieved through capacity building of 20 CSOs and other stakeholders from Poland and the Czech Republic to counter disinformation and other forms of interference in the democratic debate, by creating synergies and fostering exchange among 15 CSOs from 11 EU countries within the Civil Society Hub addressing populist movements and by soliciting the input of 1,500 CSOs on a civic agenda for a democratic and sustainable digital transformation that leaves no one behind.



Further, ECAS will engage citizens directly through a pan-European crowdsourcing with the aim of identifying and preventing the most undesired outcomes of the 2024 European Parliament elections. ECAS will re-grant to its members in the EU to increase their capacity to develop coherent and coordinated activities in the areas of Citizenship Rights and European Democracy. Three ECAS awards will promote European citizenship through soliciting citizens' ideas of new EU Rights and the Citizen Activation Mentoring Scheme will provide tailored advice to at least 75 small CSOs or civic movements in the EU.

**Funder:** CERV operating grant (part of 4-year framework contract)

**Timeframe:** 2023





## Your Europe Advice

Your Europe Advice is an online EU advice service provided by legal experts from ECAS operating under contract with the European Commission. It consists of a team of about 60 lawyers who cover all 24 official EU languages and are familiar both with EU law and national laws in all EU countries. Your Europe Advice replies to questions from citizens or businesses on their personal EU rights. The experts respond to the questions within 72 hours, free of charge and in the language chosen by the user. Enquiries can be submitted either via an online form or by phone (00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11).

**Funder:** DG GROW, European Commission

**Timeframe:** multiannual, till end of March 2024





## PROMISE (Post-pandemic Reinvention Of Mobility for Inclusive and Sustainable Europe)

PROMISE vision is to increase awareness of mobile EU citizens, civil society, and local administrations on current obstacles to freedom of movement, by helping them to interpret and implement Directive 2004/38 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely in the EU. The project will raise awareness on the new structured Guidelines (a new Communication is supposed to be issued in the first half of 2023) of the European Commission to the Member States on the Freedom of Movement Directive through awareness-raising campaigns, tailored training to public administration and rights advice organisations in the countries hosting the higher number of EU mobile citizens.

**Funder:** EPIM (European Programme of Integration and Migration)/Network of European Foundations

**Timeframe:** June 2022 – December 2023



# PROMISE

**Your rights on the move**



## A European Positive Sum Approach towards AI tools in support of Law Enforcement and safeguarding privacy and fundamental rights (popAI)

A European Positive Sum Approach towards AI tools in support of Law Enforcement and safeguarding privacy and fundamental rights (pop AI) brings together security practitioners, AI scientists, ethics and privacy researchers, civil society organisations as well as social sciences and humanities experts with the purpose to foster trust in AI for the security domain. The objective will be achieved via increased awareness, ongoing social engagement, consolidating distinct spheres of knowledge and offering a unified European view, and specialised knowledge outputs, while creating an ecosystem that will form the structural basis for a sustainable and inclusive European AI hub for Law Enforcement.



**Funder:** Horizon 2020 research programme

**Timeframe:** multiannual, October 2021 – end of September 2023





## European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Forum

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Forum is an online collaborative platform that offers support to citizens when organising a European citizens' initiative. The Forum allows citizens to learn more about the European Citizens' Initiative through best practices and enables them to discuss EU policies and European Citizens' Initiative proposals, to find partners in other countries, to ask for legal, campaigning and fundraising advice from experts, and to exchange experiences. The Forum is operated by ECAS on behalf of and under contract with the European Commission.



**Funder:** Secretariat-General of the European Commission

**Timeframe:** multiannual, till the end of November 2025





## **BOLSTER project (Bridging Organizations and marginalised communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in Europe)**

BOLSTER project is designed to understand how marginalized communities are affected by the European Green Deal (EGD)-related policies and to see if involving these communities in decision-making processes increases the support for transition plans. The project has 13 partners from 12 different countries that are working together on seven Work Packages (WPs) in order to make the BOLSTER project achieve its objectives, to actually succeed in helping marginalised communities and to become an example to other Horizon Europe related projects to come.

**Funder:** Horizon Europe framework programme

**Timeframe:** multiannual, till the end of August 2025

# BOLSTER



## Co-Deciding Europe (CODE Europe)

Co-Deciding Europe (CODE Europe) project pilots the collaborative method of crowdsourcing legislation in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia and Portugal on the subject of 'air quality' – a topic chosen because of its transnational nature and the problems associated with it (estimated 400.000 premature deaths in Europe each year). The consortium developed a universally applicable methodology - the E-Participation Assessment Framework - to allow objective comparison of the results of e-participation projects across time and geographical space and use it for evaluating the crowdsourcing pilots. The consortium also tests a 'social listening' method through a Digital Dashboard to include citizens' opinions on 'air quality' beyond the actively engaged citizens participating in the crowdsourcing pilot. The project will deliver guidelines for ethical 'social listening' to benefit from the availability of big data while protecting individual privacy and safeguarding citizens against inappropriate access and use of data.



**Funder:** EEA and Norway Grants for Regional Cooperation

**Timeframe:** multiannual, till the end of 2023



## Digital Democratic Empowerment and Mobilisation for a Stronger EU (DigiDEM)

DigiDEM applies collaborative methods of crowdsourcing legislation and 'social listening' in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Montenegro on the subject of 'air quality' and ensures that the collected citizens' contributions on the topic feed into and impact EU policy-making. By piloting crowdsourcing and social listening exercises across four EU countries, the project contributes to providing a blueprint for innovative methods of citizen engagement that are implemented as complementary to representative democracy. Through its activities, DigiDEM also aims to establish a transnational community of policy makers, academics, businesses, NGOs and citizens which will continue to apply and advocate for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure inclusive and collaborative decision-making process at all levels.

*The project is designed to go hand in hand with CODE Europe – a 3-year project funded by the EEA regional cooperation grants, piloting the collaborative method of crowdsourcing legislation in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia and Portugal.*



**Funder:** EACEA, Europe for Citizens programme

**Timeframe:** multiannual, September 2021 – February 2023



## EVENTS 2023

### January

- PROMISE workshop on destitution on EU mobile citizens experiencing homelessness

- Webinar – Call for proposals for ECAS members – launch
- DigiDem event on “Crowdsourcing citizens’ solutions to improving Air Quality in Europe” (February 14th)
- PopAI Policy Lab in Spain

### February

### March

- PROMISE network workshop
- Workshop “**CSO resilience against shrinking democratic space in CEE**” in Civil Society Days 2023 (March 2nd)
- Workshop with 100 students on youth engagement and sustainable democracy (March 24th)
- State of the Union Citizens’ Rights conference

- Voting Rights focus groups in Spain (April 25th)
- PopAI Policy Lab in Italy
- Training events on Freedom of movement in Ireland, Germany and Sweden
- Information days for potential applicants under ProEUValuesBG

### April

### May

- Digital Transformation event in the Netherlands
- Voting Rights focus group in Luxembourg (May 10th)
- Digital Transformation event in Greece
- Webinars on EU Rights and Values for Bulgarian Civil Society Organisations
- ECI Forum Webinar



- ECAS retreat – Brussels
- ECI Day – Brussels
- Kick-off meeting of the grantees – ECAS members – in Brussels
- PROMISE workshop on Communication of the EC on Directive 2004/38

**June**

**July**

- Digital Transformation event in Croatia

- PopAI Policy Lab in Brussels (physical event)
- Digital Transformation event in Italy
- ECI Forum Webinar
- BOLSTER 1st Regional Policy Dialogue

**September**

**October**

- BOLSTER 2nd Regional Policy Dialogue
- CODE Europe Stakeholder event in Brussels
- Training for Bulgarian CSOs for practical implementation of promotion of EU Rights and Values in projects

- Digital Transformation event in Germany
- Masterclasses for large Bulgarian CSOs implementing pro-EU Rights and Values projects

**November**

**December**

- ECAS retreat – Brussels
- ECI Day – Brussels
- PROMISE workshop on Communication of the EC on Directive 2004/38



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