

State of the Union Citizens' Rights

Towards a **stronger democracy** that leaves no one behind

TUESDAY, MARCH 19th 2024

9.30 am - 13.00 pm The Hotel
Boulevard de Waterloo 38, 1000 Bruxelles

C O N F E R E N C E



Co-funded by
the European Union

Agenda

ECAS is happy to announce that the 2024 edition of its annual State of the Union Citizens' Rights conference will take place on March 19th, 2024.

As every year, the conference will take stock of recent developments in the EU citizens' rights domain and will provide a forum for discussion between civil society, decision-makers and relevant stakeholders on how to raise awareness on citizens' rights, improve and innovate the European citizenship and make it more inclusive.

Given that 2024 is a special year, where the European Parliament elections will take place, this State of the Union Citizens' Rights conference will focus on how to foster political participation and improve the voting rights of EU citizens. Our keynote speaker will set the scene by elaborating on the current state of democracy in the EU.

As both the outcomes and the turnout of the 2024 European elections are difficult to foresee, we will ask the audience to share their hopes and expectations. We will also present EU citizens' thoughts and wishes about the elections.

As the health of democracy strongly relies on a high and inclusive turnout, our first panel will discuss ways to boost the participation of under-represented citizens. Potential legislative changes and existing initiatives will be presented to the audience by experts in the domain.

This year, for the first time, citizens at the age of 16 will be able to vote at the European elections in four Member States. Thus, our second panel will engage stakeholders working on youth participation to share best practices in supporting young people to exercise their political rights and encouraging them to get more involved.

Finally, as every year, we will close the State of the Union Citizens' Rights Conference by announcing the winners of the ECAS Citizenship Awards. Participants who cannot attend in person are welcome to join remotely.

9:30 – 9:50

Keynote speech: State of Democracy

Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission

10:00 – 10:20

Engaging citizens through crowdsourcing

Elisa Lironi, Programme Director - European Democracy
& Savannah Schuurbiers, European Democracy Coordinator,
European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

**Presentation of solutions provided by citizens
on fostering political participation**

Claire Morot-Sir, EU Rights Manager, European Citizen Action
Service (ECAS)

10:20 – 10:30

Q&A

10:30 – 11:10

**Panel discussion: Shaping an inclusive European Union
by engaging all citizens (Moderation by Florence Ranson)**

Encouraging political participation of homeless people

Simona Barbu, European Federation of National Organisations
Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)

Engaging Roma people in the EU political landscape

Gabriela Hrabanova, European Roma Grassroots
Organisations Network (ERGO Network)

Improving voting access of citizens with disabilities

Cristian Leahu, Directorate General for Justice
and Consumers of the European Commission (DG JUST)

Revamp gender balance in political representation

Ionel Zamfir, European Parliament

11:10 – 11:20

Q&A

Programme

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C O N F E R E N C E

11:20 – 11:35

Coffee Break

11:35 – 12:15

**Panel discussion: Towards a youth-centered European Union
(Moderation by Florence Ranson)**

Democracy and Young people

Kristof Papp, European Youth Forum (YFJ)

The future of youth democracy

Rita Dias, Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

Presentation of the EurHope campaign

Christelle Savall, Young European Federalists (JEF)

Presentation of the Your Europe, Your Say initiative

Laurențiu Plosceanu, European Economic and Social
Committee (EESC)

12:15 – 12:30

Q&A

12:30 – 13:00

**ECAS Awards 2023 on fostering citizens' participation
in the 2024 European Parliament elections**

Jean Lambert, Chairperson, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

**Closing remarks by Assya Kavrakova, Executive Director, European
Citizen Action Service (ECAS)**

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch

