

#CitizensRoute73 – Kick-off event

Louvain-la-Neuve (BE), July 1-2, 2017

Synthetic draft

On July 1-2, 2017 on the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, thanks to the hosting and support of the municipality of Ottignies-Louvain la Neuve, the Franck Biancheri and iCAN networks, in partnership with a number of other organisations of the European civil society¹, gathered close to 150 people during 2 days dedicated to launching the citizen process of EU democratisation, #CitizensRoute73.

Why « Route 73 » ?

In the next European election in 2019, the 73 British seats in the European Parliament should be left vacant. Rather than suppressing or distributing them, the idea of opening them to European representatives elected on a trans-European – instead of national – basis, is being advocated. But some questions remain that could block this enthusiastic perspective: are citizens ready? will an adequate political offer be available?... The pro-democracy European civil society must respond proactively to the challenge of democratisation that it is now tangibly being offered:

- . by expressing clearly its full support to this transformation lead of the European election, and by setting up lobbying strategies towards Brussels, Strasbourg and the 27 EU capitals
- . by initiating actions of viral mobilisation aimed at showing that « yes, 30 years after the launching of the ERASMUS programme, a wide EU citizen hard-core is ready to ensure the success of a first experience of European democracy!”
- . by nurturing a common debate on the future of Europe prone to create the conditions of emergence of the trans-European ideas, figures and parties needed for the election of the 73 first representatives of EU citizens in the next European Parliament.

CitizensRoute73 is launched!

These two days were organised over two distinct half-days:

- . Saturday, July 1st : a half-day of plenary sessions
- . Sunday, July 2nd: a half-day of workshops

And following two complementary lines:

- . a « political » line aimed at showing how relevant the project of creating the conditions for a political offer at the European level to be available by the next 2019 election is; by means of

¹ Stand up for Europe, Eyes on Europe, POUR, AEGEE-Europe, Creatopia, Cambiamo Rotta all'Europa, Citoyennes pour l'Europe, Election-Europe, Le Comité, BBK/Door Vriendschap Sterker, Camnete, Europe Populaire, Maison du Développement Durable

« political debate » on Europe on the first day and of workshops to “play at creating” trans-European political parties the next day

. a « citizen » line aimed inventing tools to make visible the emerging common political debate ; by means of an « intellectuals and activists » panel on Saturday, and workshops to launch concrete projects on Sunday.

No doubt, the debates which took place on the tribune and in the workshops were highly inspiring, thus filling their objective: to make people long for a real trans-European political/public debate in 2019.

During the closing session on Sunday afternoon, all moderators presented their workshops' conclusions. Those of the “party-workshops” are beyond the responsibility of the Citizensroute73. But the synthesis of the “tool-workshops” provides the core of the “Road73Map” which this event hoped to result in. Here it is...

Road73Map

A Declaration of Common Engagement over the next two years (by the next European election in 2019) was signed by the partners, speakers and participants present in the closing session and eager to signal their mobilisation on #CitizensRoute73².

De facto, the signatories of this Declaration make for the list of this Route's first « agents ». Three of them already expressed their intention to contribute to the coordination team of Route73, or “Steering Committee ».

It was agreed that the # CitizensRoute73 structure should be as neutral and light as possible to express the idea that it is a convergence tool and not an integration label. The image of the container carrier imposed itself. At this stage, nobody has finally found it necessary to create a legal structure. Possible funding may be channeled to the organizations carrying out the projects financed. However the name # CitizensRoute73 will be registered in trademark.

In the "Platform" workshop, the partner project "Le Comité" committed itself to make available to the #CitizensRoute73 its digital collective intelligence platform, the many features of which have been convincingly presented. The platform will be ready for use in early October. The Loomio Platform set up for the launch event will make the link between now and October.

A team of European facilitators / journalists should be set up to facilitate exchanges between the various projects hosted by the platform and to provide an accessible interface with the outside. This team work in close connection with the trans-European media project.

The media aspect appeared to be central to the # CitizensRoute73 strategy. Recognizing that the national media cannot properly contribute to making visible in the 2019 European elections the common public debate *de facto* traversing European civil society, # CitizensRoute73 has the ambition to overcome this structural failure - main obstacle to the emergence of European citizenship.

To this end, #CitizensRoute73 is planning the following actions:

² See Declaration of Common Engagement in appendix.

. Create a team in charge of "covering" in an attractive and understandable way the debates crossing the digital platform

. report on it, namely on the website #CitizensRoute73'Mag (or event's website turned into a webzine)

. publish a calendar of the network of partners' events and beyond

. set up a Youtube channel where the rising figures of European political life can express themselves and respond to the citizens' questions/requests that the digital platform is meant to reveal; to this aim, a « marathon » method was considered where journalists will tour Europe to interview people and personalities. The model of this channel will follow the youngest and most modern of what Youtubers currently produce.

In addition to this virtual connection between European politicians and citizens, the "mobile Tribune" workshop discussed places where European publics are naturally to be found for European politicians to meet them. Festivals have emerged as an interesting lead to follow. A small group has thus formed which will approach the organizers of European festivals to propose the installation of #CitizensRoute73 tribunes where to host and confront the rising figures of the public debate on the future of Europe. The question of languages and the problem of translation have emerged as the main technical and financial constraints to be solved. A first stop of this CitizensRoute73 Mobile Tribune is already scheduled in Toulouse in early October as part of the Erasmus Student Festival which is to gather 10,000 students.

As regards the lobbying action which #CitizenRoute73 intends to contribute to, the strategy follows the following lines:

. focus the main effort on the few figures writing the Brexit report in the European parliament at present, who should include the proposal regarding transnational democracy into the report. If they do so, it will force national parties, governments and many others to take position on the issue.

. mobilising a number of prominent personalities – current and former politicians but also people from the arts and other walks of life, to campaign for transnational European elections

. go the established and emerging parties and make them understand the size of the revolution that is building, and help them understand they really should start developing trans-national platforms now, so as to be ready for the change when it happens

The iCAN network is a relevant platform to coordinate this component of #CitizensRoute73's converging actions.

The workshop on "the eurozone as a launchpad for the process of reinventing Europe" made it possible to identify a structuring content basis for the general project for the democratization of Europe. Strategic action could be based on the central idea of a "public inquiry" on the priority given by European citizens to the resolution of the euro crisis. The concerted action could begin with a special issue of the POUR magazine, inviting the great specialists of the subject (Guillaume Sacriste, Thomas Picketty, Yanis Varoufakis, Franck Biancheri (unpublished texts)) to highlight the link between democracy and the resolution of the euro crisis.

Among the “party-workshops” that could be part of the Road73Map is a youth and forward-looking Europe party. Because the EU is too complex an entity for relevant directions to be driven by parties focused on the next election, a youth party whose role would be to target elections in 15 to 20 years, could provide a solution to this problem of time in politics at the trans-European level.

Finally, the project of trans-European, online and citizen electoral experience has appeared relevant, including in workshops that were not intended to talk about it. "Elect George" is therefore a confirmed project; but now it could be scheduled in 2019 rather than in 2018, in order to benefit from the attention that the national media will naturally give to the European issue, in order to create a momentum increasing turnout in the official election, but also in order to ensure that, in the event that the institutions will fail organising a trans-European election, nevertheless in 2019, thanks to citizen action, a strong signal of change is sent regarding the connection of citizens to European decision-making system. The project "Elect George" is conceived as a "serious-game" of European citizenship. Gaming companies, innovative governments, online election operators ... are the targets of the strategy of setting up the game "Elect George".

Funding # CitizensRoute73 is an issue. But part of the process can be implemented on a voluntary basis, combined with in-kind contributions from the various partners, in terms of human resources in particular. The "Comité" platform is already a funded project. Some projects, on the other hand, will require access to additional funding. The search for such funding should be done on the basis of project-leading organizations, in a decentralized manner and by following the potential for access to grants from some organizations more than others.

Agenda

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| July 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Reporting the kick-off event and preparing for the September re-start . Transforming the event’s website into a webzine |
| August 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Launching the #CitizensRoute73 viral video competition |
| September 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Launching the various projects (Elect George, European Future’s Movement, Youtube channel, lobby group) . Making appointments to present #CitizensRoute73 projects to institutional, political, financial and economic decisions-makers |
| Sept/october 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Presenting the viral video and launching the Youtube channel |
| October 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Mobile Tribune in Toulouse (FR) . Launching the plaform « Le Comité » . Covering the first Mobile Tribune stop in Toulouse |
| November 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Launching the Route73 Youtube channel and setting up the media Marathon |
| June 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . European parliamentary election |

. « Elect George » game-election