



CALL: JOIN THE COALITION!

Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe

Initiated by "A Soul for Europe" and its partners

Europe cannot be a mere political framework for the convenience of governments. It must be made clear that the purpose of European integration is primarily to enhance the quality of life for its citizens. The active involvement of citizens is unthinkable without participation that is taken seriously.

A Citizens' Europe implies participation beyond the dry confines of bureaucratic regulation and job creation programmes. It involves all the activities necessary for real social justice and dialogue. It requires the political structures to provide citizens with the mobility, freedom and resources to make the most of the opportunities of our time.

At its very core, a Citizens' Europe is a cultural concept. It has to encompass the wealth of languages, traditions, cultural knowledge and experiences of people in Europe, regardless of where they are originally from. The Coalition believes in the catalyst role that culture – in all its diverse forms – can play in the development of society. Culture and the arts are a vital element of Europe's social and democratic fabric. Culture shapes our common value system and at the same time helps to establish a sense of self in an increasingly fast-paced and fragmented world. Culture and the arts can simultaneously strengthen social bonds, enable communication and stimulate out-of-the-box thinking across European borders in a unique and "avant-garde" way.

A Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe proposes this basic and activating role of culture to politics and business. It expresses a demand for supporting the development of Europe from the bottom up: as a coalition based on the creative force of culture and in continuous dialogue with all strands of society. The Cultural Coalition thus brings together those whom political institutions will need in order to deliver European integration that has real meaning for citizens. Without such a coalition the current level of indifference, hostility to and alienation from the European project will continue to undermine it, strengthening the hand of those who wish to revert to narrow nationalism.

Developing and implementing a **new understanding of the cultural component of citizenship** will give the Coalition its guiding line. Building Europe means integrating national histories, value systems and world views, and fostering intercultural dialogue. Citizenship includes the right to participate in diverse cultural life, not limited to the majority culture of any nation state or linguistic group. It also includes the willingness to learn about and be aware of the cultural traditions of the community within which citizens reside and draw conclusions for their own active responsibility for the development of society (the community). This should not just be a nation state, but also a region, city or community – and it should include all residents living in that common "Union" space.

European Year of Citizens 2013

The European Year of Citizens 2013 will give the "Cultural Coalition for a Citizen's Europe" its time frame. The Year is an opportunity to make European policy and European citizens aware of their rights and responsibilities as Europeans: we want to give the European Year of Citizens its urgency.

A Cultural Coalition is the expression of the hearts and minds of Europe's citizens: active in debate, innovative in thinking and creative in their activities. This Coalition provides the political and official institutions (whether local, regional, national, European or global) with the interlocutors they need to help them develop. That is what drives the Coalition's work: to develop a new understanding of cultural citizenship and cultural rights in order to create a democratic Europe from the bottom up.



Join, follow and contribute to the Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe!

The Berlin Conference 2012 is the first in a series of three events dedicated to a Europe from the bottom up under the title of "A Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe". Together they form "A Soul for Europe's" kick-off to the "European Year of Citizens" 2013. The series includes the Berlin Conference 2012 by "A Soul for Europe" on 10 November, the Brussels event by the partners of the European House for Culture on 16-18 November, and the Felix Meritis Foundation's activity on 30 November in Amsterdam.

A Soul for Europe

Since 2004, the civil-society initiative "A Soul for Europe" has been bringing together citizens, reputable NGOs and foundations, artists, high-level politicians, business representatives and public intellectuals from all over Europe in order to build a Europe from the bottom up. Heading towards 2014, the Year of European elections, and 10 years since its establishment, the main aim of "A Soul for Europe" is to strengthen its coalition, activate more citizens from all strands of society and shape a joint understanding of responsibilities: Europe: That's us!