

Short report

Project: “EU citizenship (bEU) – to be or not to be“ – 2nd event

Author: Carmen Descamps

Audience: general, Brussels-based public, approx. 50 people

Panel discussion:

“Promoting citizenship – (Re-)Connecting Europe to its citizens “

In the framework of its annual project “EU citizenship (bEU) – to be or not to be“, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom hosted the second event of bEU, a panel discussion, on July 10, 2019 in Brussels.

At the beginning of the event, FNF project leader **Carmen Descamps** welcomed the audience and presented several ELF publications on the topic of EU citizenship (bEU blog posts and a policy brief) that were also available for take-away for participants. On behalf of ELF, **Jeroen Dobber** presented the European Liberal and its role, highlighting the importance of cross-border cooperation between member organisations and particularly welcomed the present ELF project partners, Republikon Institute, LYMEC and NEOS Lab.

The moderator **Andrea Virág** (Republikon Institute) kicked-off the discussions by a question on the so-called “Spitzenkandidaten” (lead candidate)-process and the democratic assessment of the (by then) latest proposals for the EU top jobs. **Edgaras Mascinskas**, LYMEC Vice-President, showed serious concerns about the nomination process and expressed his regrets about the non-respect of the proposed *Spitzenkandidaten* who all campaigned in the run-up to the European elections. **Alessandro Giordani** however, Head of Unit at the European Commission’s DG Communication in charge of the networks in the Member States, supported the outcome of the negotiations and explained the EU Leader’s rationale behind the latest proposal. Asked about creative and innovative instruments to reconnect Europe to citizens and practical experiences from NEOS Lab, its director **Birgit Allerstorfer** highlighted the principles of trust, transparency and accountability. Questioned about active citizenship, she went further by pointing out that participation shall ideally be constructed through information, consultation, co-creation and co-decision and by always adapting the methods to the goal. In terms of information, Giordani highlighted the shift of the Commission’s external communication, from mere promotion of the EU’s benefits to showing the concrete impact on citizen’s daily life. Mascinskas further stressed that LYMEC targets youth as early as possible because youth engagement, from limited local communities to internationally active NGOs, leads to more active citizenship. He also regretted the decline of traditional media, shifting to more “on demand” consumption and reading of regional newspapers.

Overall, the timing of the event was well chosen just after the first session of the European Parliament and some weeks after the EP elections, also building on the first bEU event in May. The discussions were of high quality and included different, sometimes even diverging views thanks to the speakers’ backgrounds and featured a high degree of interaction among the speakers. Participants, organisers and ELF secretariat members were pleased with the overall result. The bEU project will continue with a workshop and a publication in autumn 2019.

Remark: The panel should initially also include Svenja Hahn, FDP MEP and LYMEC President, who could unfortunately not participate due to parallel commitments in the European Parliament. ALDE Group members as well as ALDE Party representatives were invited to come as well.

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Some social media impressions from the event:

FNF EU @fnfeurope Folge ich

🇪🇺 🗣️ „What can we do to bridge the gap between EU citizens and EU institutions?“ - Andrea Vírág (@Republikon)

Intriguing discussion with @BAllerstorfer (@neoslab_eu), @EdgarasMasc (@LYMEC) and @AleGiordani (DG COMM) - Thank you so much for being with us today!

#ELFevent



13:20 - 10. Juli 2019 aus Friedrich Naumann Foundation

4 Retweets 12 „Gefällt mir“-Angaben

FNF EU @fnfeurope Folge ich

We are ready to discuss active citizen **#participation!** Our European Affairs Manager @CarmenGers just opened today's #ELFevent „Promoting EU citizenship: (Re)connecting Europe to its citizens“ @EurLiberalForum



12:51 - 10. Juli 2019

2 Retweets 5 „Gefällt mir“-Angaben

European Liberal Forum @EurLiberalForum Folge ich

Today's #ELFevent is all about 🇪🇺 citizenship. How to bring European citizens closer to the institutions?

@BAllerstorfer, @EdgarasMasc and Alessandro Giordani start by commenting on the #EUelections2019 🗳️ results.



12:58 - 10. Juli 2019

3 Retweets 5 „Gefällt mir“-Angaben