Citizens For Europe e.V. – A democratic and participative Europe

Report 1st phase:

1. **Who we are:**

We are a group of Europeans that met within the activities of the association Citizens For Europe e.V. (Berlin) and the platform [www.citizensforeurope.eu](http://www.citizensforeurope.eu). Most of us are young professionals based in Berlin, Paris and Brussels. We met 2 times on the topic of democracy and participation and to create a network of young professionals coming from academia or civil society organisations and plan to do projects together in future.

1. **What we did during the 1st phase:**

Documentation of our meeting of January 2012 in Copenhagen: about 30 persons met for 3 days in Copenhagen. Until April we worked on the outcomes of that meeting.

We also prepared activities for 2012 because we would like to meet as a group (in Prague in September) and bring forward our ideas. We therefore need funds and further partners with whom we discussed about our topic. We are also preparing a next bigger meeting in Paris in early 2013.

Finally, we prepared a workshop we will co-organise within the Franco-German Dialogue on May 10-11 in Otzenhausen (Germany).

1. **What we plan to do:**

Meeting in Otzenhausen on May 10-11 where members of our discussion group and actors of the citizensforeurope.eu network will participate. That meeting coincides with the 11 May and the start of the 2nd phase.

1. **Questions for phase 1:**

**Who is affected by the problem?**

All European citizens, political decision makers, political institutions, civil society organisations, academia, private sector, … democracy affects everybody!

**Why is the topic selected a European matter of concern?**

One can notice a lack of political legitimacy on the EU-level: not only urgent decisions are taken on an intergovernmental level behind closed doors and often without parliamentarian or citizen control. The rapidity in that decisions are taken also make opinion making and positioning of civil society actors difficult. This is true for the different levels of decision making, especially the European and national level as decisions are often taken there and the “lower” levels are not consulted or implicated. It is a European concern because the topics of the decisions concern the European future and its citizens and because European institutions and actors are implicated.

**Which other aspects must be taken into consideration?**

What democracy for Europe is a very general question. It has to do with institutions but above all with society and the organization of living together today and in future. It is about how decisions are taken and will be taken in future. Our topic also asks the question of the state of the art of national democracies. Can we still speak about a nation-state democracy if the problems cross borders? Can we still speak about a functioning democracy if nearly 20% of the voters vote for extremist (right wing) parties in national elections (see France)?

**Which strategies for solutions are available today? Are they developed by** **region, state or by the European Union?**

There are solutions developed within the European institutions but above all in the Council, on an intergovernmental level between the member states. But there are voices of civil society claiming and lobbying for more democracy. For a reform of the EP-elections, for more participation of citizens in EU-decisions, for a treaty change via a Convention, etc. These voices are encouraged by Members of the European Parliament or umbrella organisations based in Brussels. Also the ECI (European citizens’ initiative) as agenda-setting tool might bring solutions forward.

**Can the challenges be met by individual states?**

If we consider as set the fact that the important questions (climate change, energy, natural resources, demographic change, peace, etc.) cannot be met at a national level, we rapidly come to the point that the European level is an intermediate level of governance: a strong region that might be heard in the world; a still democratically manageable region.