

Conference on the Future of Europe, WG Values (Jan 2022)

MEP's Daniel Freund and Maite Pagazaurtundua: Proposal for strengthening European citizenship:

To strengthen European citizenship and to add to a pillar of fundamental rights, citizens should have...

- ...the right to equal pay for work of equal value for men, women and all genders: The labour market is heavily dominated by a gender effect. Most sectors in the economy are predominantly occupied by women or by men, and only few sectors are effectively mixed. Work in sectors predominantly occupied by women is undervalued and therefore underpaid, including in the care sector. At the same time, the absence of gender-budgeting results in unbalanced investment in sectors that mostly benefit men, thus resulting in growing inequalities. The European economy in a post-Covid world has to be built on fair socio-economic foundations. In order to ensure that, the EU has to take a more ambitious role in the way to end pay discrimination by ensuring binding measures for equal pay for work of equal value, pay transparency and gendermainstreaming.
- ...the right to associate with other EU citizens across borders, guaranteed by a European legal status for such associations including equivalence of tax beneficial status of not for profit.
- ...the right to two votes in European elections, one for a national or regional constituency and one for a joint European constituency. As long as European governments have a role unknown to any other federal system to decide on Commissioner-candidates and the candidate for President of the Commission, EU citizens must be able to scrutinise such candidates and express themselves on such lead-candidates of political parties in a proportional system counting each EU citizen with the same weight. Thereby, European elections will have an element where the same candidates need to win all EU-citizens equally and thereby foster truly European debates and programmes by truly European political parties.
- ...the right to vote with guaranteed democratic standards for elections across the EU, including sufficient time to know candidates before election day and full representation of all votes across the EU by avoiding and eliminating parliamentary thresholds and hurdles.
- ... the right to know the Member State governments' positions on EU legislation in Council and its working groups by implementing the recommendations of the European Ombudsman in case OI/2/2017/TE on the Transparency of the Council legislative process and possibly by introducing deadlines until which the Council and its working groups have to hold a public debate on the current Council presidency's proposal in which all Member States disclose their position.

- ...the right to hold those in power accountable via a strong directly elected parliament with enforced oversight rights, the right to decide the EU budget in normal co-decision, the right to elect and dismiss the Commission president independent from Council and a Council as transparent as Parliament.
- ... the right to directly participate in EU politics with a strengthened European Citizens Initiative (ECI), citizens assemblies and referenda: To answer the will of many citizens for more participation we want to strengthen the European Citizens Initiative, allow them to initiate assemblies of randomly selected citizens on specific reform ideas, the result of which could be put to a European wide referendum as long as it respects European fundamental values.
- ...the right to similar living conditions in center and periphery: The EU must help address the stark contradictions between metropolitan and rural areas and pursue an inclusive internal development strategy.
- ...the right to guaranteed access to quality healthcare for all citizens: The pandemic has exposed Europe's vulnerabilities but also reminded us of our interdependence. Advantages for pharmaceutical producers in form of public subsidies and patent rights must be linked with obligations to disclose the costs of developments for new medicines and to provide medicine in sufficient and resilient manner. EU agencies for the supervision of pharmaceutical producers must be strengthened to coordinate publicly funded research in the public interest and fight monopoly misuse. Europe must work towards minimum standards to guarantee access to healthcare for everyone living in the EU.
- ...the right to spend a year in another Member State with adequate grant (Erasmus for all): Erasmus is one of the most significant achievements of the EU in creating a European project that goes far beyond economic-political cooperation, proving that the EU is also a strong cultural and civilisation project. That is why we propose to further extend Erasmus+ into a scheme allowing all European citizens, regardless of their academic background or activity, to spend at least one year in another Member State with an adequate grant.