

CITIZENS MANIFESTO

FOR EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY,
SOLIDARITY AND EQUALITY



CITIZENS PACT
FOR EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY



Democracy in Europe is about more than choosing between one party and another on election day, and it is about more than complaining about the lack of vision of politicians. It is about the citizens of Europe voicing demands and suggestions for alternative policies on a continuous basis and enacting day after day the politics and society we want to live in.

Throughout the continent many citizens are engaged in improving the world around them, and there is no shortage of proposals for progressive alternative European policies. If this 'other' Europe of the citizens is rarely audible in the European media or political discussion, it is firstly because of strong vested interests in keeping it silent, and secondly because it is scattered geographically, disparate citizens often not working together across national and other borders. Nationalist and reactionary movements are capitalising on this disunity and starting to tear into the social fabric of Europe, exploiting and exacerbating divisions.

Since its creation 7 years ago, the civil society organisation European Alternatives has been trying to bring together the voices and practices calling and enacting a change in political direction. Since 3 years, European Alternatives - along with hundreds of partners - has been running consultations with citizens across the continent to collect proposals and ideas. The result of this process is the **Citizens Manifesto for European Democracy, Solidarity and Equality**. The preamble of the manifesto is in this flyer.

Now we are taking the manifesto across Europe, in advance of the European Parliament elections on the 22-25th May. We will work in the run up to the elections and afterwards to build a European democracy starting with the citizens, and together change the political direction of Europe.

You can follow our journey throughout Europe and read the full detailed manifesto proposals online here: www.citizenspact.eu.

European Alternatives is a transnational civil society organisation promoting Democracy, Equality and Culture Beyond the Nation-State. To find out more about European Alternatives and join us, see www.euroalter.com.



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Citizens manifesto for european democracy, solidarity and equality

We, the people of Europe, by birth, by choice or by permanent circumstances, believe that the European Union and its Member States have failed to guarantee the welfare of their citizens and to live up to the global and local challenges that have shaken Europe in the last five years of crisis.

We believe Europe has a common future, but we feel that we are losing control of our destiny. Rather than relying on fractured national sovereignties, we want to be empowered to act at a transnational level. Europe can play a strong role as a space of democracy, solidarity, and equality, but this requires rapid and radical changes to the current political framework and priorities of the European Union.

2014 will offer the opportunity for a break with a past marked by perpetual crisis. A new European Parliament will be elected and a new European Commission appointed. Renewed governance must be accompanied by renewed citizen engagement. Healthy democracies have always lived off vibrant participation, expressed through collaboration, contestation and critique. In that spirit we have developed a participatory transnational Manifesto as a pact between the people of Europe and its governing structures.

This Manifesto contains political demands developed transnationally through a three year Europe-wide participatory process that has involved thousands of people. The process consisted of over 60 citizens' panels, 12 transnational forums, 2 hearings at the European Parliament, online panels, and a widespread presence on the streets and squares of Europe. This has led to the formulation of proposals that go beyond national zero-sum games.

The developed proposals take into account the EU legislative and juridical context

in order to provide a realistic policy blueprint for a possible alternative Europe within our immediate grasp. The issues covered do not exhaust the multitude of problems we face, but reflect priorities highlighted by diverse participants to this process. The Manifesto will be updated regularly in the future to include new citizens-led proposals. This is a living document that echoes people's demands.

We ask citizens, organisations, and social movements who have at heart any of these issues to activate themselves around an open and participatory process of European reform.

We ask politicians running for local, national, and especially European elections to sign up to the proposals of this Manifesto, to include them in the election campaign, and promote them during their mandate.

Europe is facing an economic, environmental and democratic crisis. In the last decades, we have responded to new social challenges, from developing the welfare state to building institutions that aim to enshrine peace.

The biggest crises of all are not the challenges we face, but Europe's lack of ability and legitimacy to respond to them. Vested interests take advantage of this vacuum to monopolise the economic sphere, public discourse and the sense of justice.

One of the most visible signs of this has been the "race to the bottom", creating internal competition between workers and between countries. This has resulted in chronic unemployment, precarity and poverty, fundamentally undermining the value of work. This needs to be replaced with a European welfare system that ensures a set of social and economic rights which meet people's basic needs irrespective of their circumstances and place of residence, such as unemployment and pension benefits, minimum wage or basic income.

This requires a common and equitable fiscal policy, which stops tax competition to the benefit of large corporations. We refuse to see our social and economic rights being undermined, while huge amounts have been mobilised to save a financial system that has failed us. Europe must start by putting a brake on bank bailouts and by restructuring the banking industry so it returns to its original social functions of safeguarding people's savings and financing small and medium sized businesses. An EU Financial Transaction Tax, for example, would encourage more responsible forms of trading and investment. We should refuse the blackmail of the financial

markets through a mutualisation of debts including a mechanism of last resort to write off unsustainable sovereign debt without prejudice to minimum social standards.

Europe needs a new integrated economic policy which promotes full employment in meaningful and adequately paid jobs, which is less dependent on carbon fuels, and which does not rely on trade agreements which are unfair to countries outside of the European Union. The European Union is the largest economy in the world, and coordinated and ambitious decisions about its functioning can make a real global impact in terms of protecting the environment, promoting meaningful and decent employment, ensuring global justice in trade relations and moving from a consumerist society of competition to an economy of collaboration and sharing.

The Common Market has expanded our liberties but its current functioning has given powerful corporations more opportunities to evade their social responsibilities in paying tax. Gaps in regulations have also been used by organised crime groups to maximise their criminal activities across borders. The EU should combat tax havens and should have powers to confiscate illegally acquired assets and promote their social re-use.

Democracy is in crisis in Europe. Voter turnout and party membership are in continuous decline. People feel powerless about being able to promote change through current institutional channels, especially at a European level. This is why we need to radically transform the EU's democratic structures, for instance by creating a fully elected European government, by granting full legislative powers to the European Parliament and by introducing transnational lists for European elections.

We need to open up the decision making process to all civil society, letting long-term residents vote for the European elections. We request user-friendly and effective tools to directly influence change - from improving the European Citizens' Initiative to enabling us to audit the use of public money. To kick-start this process of radical reform, we propose a European Convention where citizens and politicians come together to develop a new democratic architecture.

Any democratic system needs media freedom and pluralism. In Europe, this is guaranteed only in principle and not always enforced, with some voices being shut out of the public debate. We need independent regulatory bodies monitoring transparency of ownership and clear rules against concentration. We demand substantial investment in independent public media and the internet as spaces of open access. We also demand the protection of personal privacy, that it be free from corporate or state surveillance as well as substantial investment in media literacy.

The future that the people of Europe desire necessitates a tangible redistribution of power. Democracy in Europe must mean that decisions are made by all with regard to all, not by some for the benefit of the few. We call on the EU to take the lead in creating incentives for long-term sustainable action to tackle common problems.

Redistribution of power requires that no one should be discriminated against in the enjoyment of common resources essential to life. Our young generation will live with a vivid reminder of the severe harm caused when unaccountable and irresponsible competition is incentivised. The EU must act to guarantee access to common goods, such as safe drinking water, which are essential to the enjoyment of basic rights.

We have a one-off opportunity as we get Europe working again to recondition the world's largest economy in a clean and sustainable way. Europe must lead the energy transition from destructive to clean and renewable sources.

Redistribution of power requires that private actions which have environmental impact must be subject to the consent of the residents of Europe who depend on that environment.

The EU must enforce the precautionary principle when harmful environmental risks are identified by its citizens.

The crisis has particularly hit specific groups which were already disadvantaged, including migrants, women, those displaced by war, LGBT and Roma people, whose access to fundamental rights, basic social services and common goods as well as meaningful political participation have been restricted or denied. There is an urgency for the EU motto "unity in diversity" to be put into practice by enabling all residents and citizens to become actors for change at EU level and enjoy adequate protection for equal access to fundamental rights., regardless of their gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, social or ethnic background, place of origin.

In particular, in times of crisis, the EU needs to live up to its ambition to guarantee the protection of human rights, not only within the Union, but also at its borders. The EU should ensure that migrants entering the EU see their cultural and human rights respected.

Border management should be transparent and accountable. Administrative detention should be excluded as a standard measure and detention of children should be prohibited in all circumstances. In order to ensure the dignity of migrants, they should be provided with the rights to work while waiting for the administrative

decision on their migratory condition. Deportations should not provoke the separation of families. Migrants' experience and intellectual capacity are as great as any labour they provide.

Women have been disproportionately hit by the crisis and the ongoing attacks on social policies. The EU should guarantee women's rights and gender equality, notably by fighting all forms of violence against women and closing the gender pay gap.

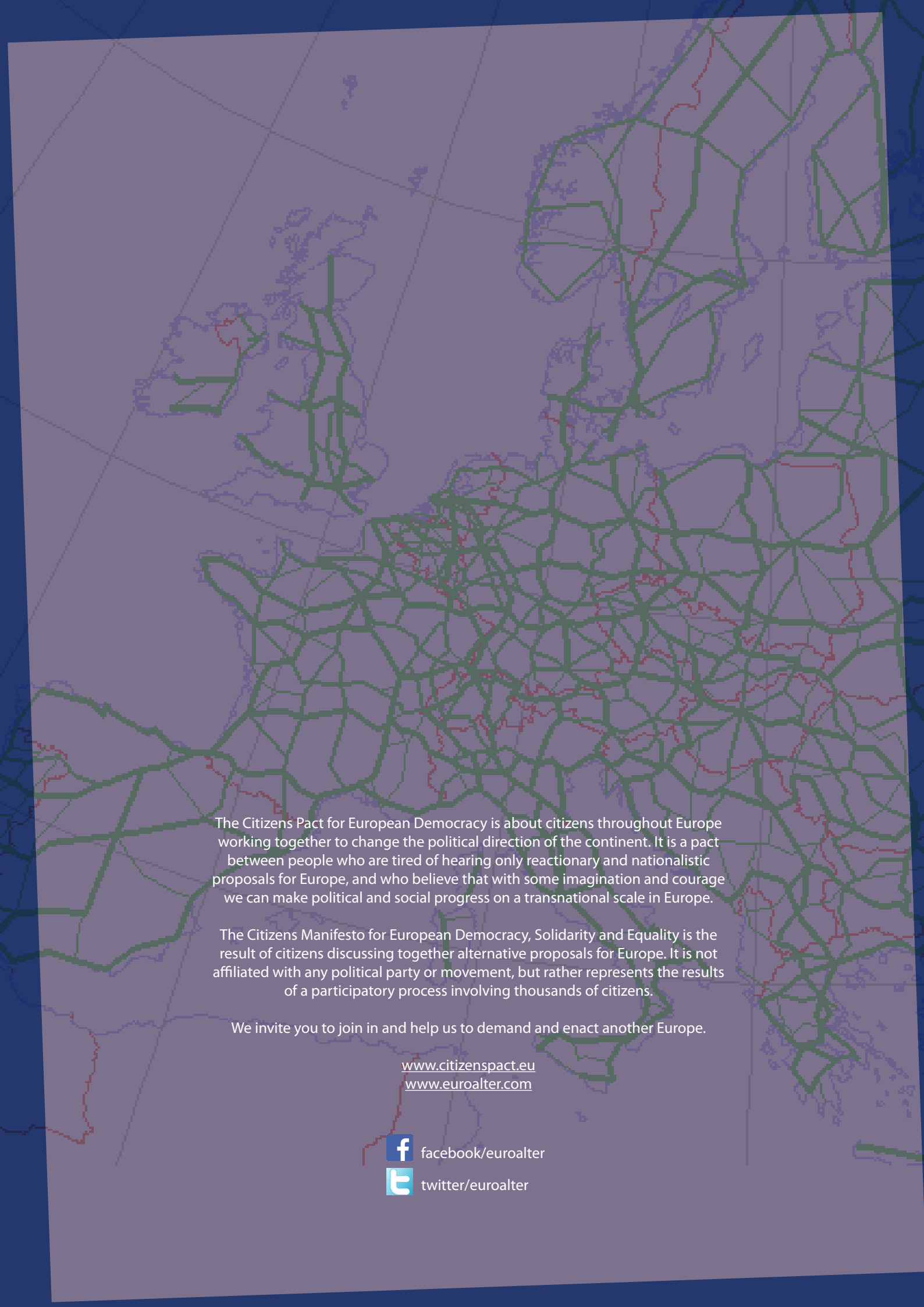
Crises are a breeding-ground for discourses that use the fear of the "other" to identify scapegoats. Migrants and Roma people are regular targets for hate speech and hate crimes, as are LGBT people, who are often socially excluded for their differences. EU citizenship should not be an empty concept or allow first and second-class citizens. All benefits deriving from it, such as the freedom to move and reside in the EU and the portability of rights, should be enjoyed by all. LGBT citizens should not be prevented by their gender identity and expression or sexual orientation to move freely. This does not translate to giving additional rights to some, but in ensuring specific protection of disadvantaged groups to access equal rights.

If countries can be judged by the way they treat their minorities, then the EU should be judged by the way it treats the Roma people, who are perhaps the most transnational European group on the continent, but also one of the most excluded. Roma people should be recognised as an integral part of European society and they should participate in all stages of policy discussions affecting them.

Today Europe is facing a crossroad. The process of integration as it has happened so far has created a political entity without an active citizenry which is able to influence its course. We need to be made protagonists of much needed change to reform the European Union into a democratic and participative space.

Time is not on our side: Eurosceptic and xenophobic discourse is spreading quickly across the continent and risks becoming an even larger voice in the European institutions. The forthcoming European elections need to be understood as an opportunity to decide on the kind of future we wish for our society. We need ambitious political proposals from candidates and parties and we have to be empowered to be part of the change. The EU has the opportunity to be at the avant-garde of democratic reforms, providing a new global model of representative and participatory democracy in a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural society that is able respond to the local and global challenges that need urgent and radical responses.

Europe has shown its capacity to rise from the ashes more than once and now needs to reaffirm its agency for change. The time is now.



The Citizens Pact for European Democracy is about citizens throughout Europe working together to change the political direction of the continent. It is a pact between people who are tired of hearing only reactionary and nationalistic proposals for Europe, and who believe that with some imagination and courage we can make political and social progress on a transnational scale in Europe.

The Citizens Manifesto for European Democracy, Solidarity and Equality is the result of citizens discussing together alternative proposals for Europe. It is not affiliated with any political party or movement, but rather represents the results of a participatory process involving thousands of citizens.

We invite you to join in and help us to demand and enact another Europe.

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