Ms Marta Cygan, Director Strategy and General Affairs, DG Home
Mr Michel Magnier Director Culture and Creativity, DG EAC
Mr Emmanuel Crabit, Director Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law, DG Justice
Ms Irena Moozova, Director Equality and Union Citizenship, DG Justice
Mr Giuseppe Abbamonte, Director Media policy, DG CNECT
European Commission

Copy: Mr Gilles PELAYO, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Dept C1

Brussels, 16 March 2018

Re: request for a meeting on the Europe for Citizens' Programme and MFF post 2020

The Europe for Citizens Programme enables citizens of all ages and backgrounds in their different communities to participate directly in shaping Europe's future, increase their understanding about the European Union, exchange knowledge and strengthen their understanding of common challenges. The programme is also the only EU programme specifically dedicated to critical reflection and mutual understanding between citizens, while addressing key issues such as democracy in the European Union, solidarity, cohesion & inclusion, intercultural dialogue and reconciliation by enabling citizens, think tanks, local and regional authorities, as well as their associations, to work together to develop joint solutions cross border and to bridge the gap between local and European level.

Through its **two strands on European Remembrance and Democratic Engagement and Civic participation**, the Europe for Citizens Programme allows for a diversity of citizens to be heard and contributes to the construction of the European Union from a bottom-up perspective. In addition, it offers unique opportunities for citizens, think tanks, local and regional authorities and civil society organisations to participate in the development of the European Union through

- **European projects** *enabling citizens to engage, contribute and build* the EU they want to see from a grassroot perspective;
- **Town twinning** and **networks of towns** *bringing citizens closer together seeking joint solutions to common challenges;*
- **Supporting civil society networks, organisations with European outreach, associations of local and regional government** and **think tanks** which *foster dialogue, exchange and solidarity* by contributing to their operating costs, and thus favouring their independence and possibility to engage in long term strategic planning in support of citizens and their interests.

Despite the success of the programme and the need to put citizens back at the centre of the integration process, the funding has been cut in the current Multiannual Financial Framework compared to the previous period. Even if the number of applicants continues to rise, the average success of granted applications to the Programme is only 17.5% and only between 10% and 6% of the network of towns and civil society projects (sub-strands) respectively have been selected for funding, which is extremely low compared to other programmes.

We are aware that as a result of the current reflection process on the post-2020 programming period and MFF, there is a possibility that the Programme might disappear as we know it and that a new Programme might be created. Even if we understand the need to achieve more flexibility and simplification as a response to budgetary constraints, we are convinced that citizenship needs to be at the core of the future EU not only from the perspective of the rights associated to EU citizenship but also to strengthen critical reflection, active participation and engagement from a bottom-up perspective.

The undersigned organisations believe that the opportunities that the Europe for Citizens programme offers, contributes to providing crucial support to the EU Institutions to bridge the gap between citizens and the EU and to involve them and their representative organisations in the continued construction of the European Project.

We further believe that in the next MFF the different funding possibilities currently available under the Europe for Citizens Programme, through the two strands and different project and operational grant possibilities, should be further reinforced. The 2017 report from the European Parliament calling for an increased budget of the symbolic amount of 1 EURO per citizen should be taken into serious consideration. Increased efforts should also be invested to achieve stronger visibility and dissemination in order to become even more accessible to new potential beneficiaries.

Keeping the unity and comprehensiveness of EU citizenship as a top priority, not only from the perspective of funding and programming but also from a political perspective is important to us. Because of this, regardless of the result of the negotiations, we would like to ask for an integrated approach to EU citizenship in the future programming period, as well as keeping the civil dialogue as the main platform for political discussion on EU citizenship by creating more synergies between funded projects and the policy agenda at the EU level. We also appreciate the openness of the current program to smaller and new organisations and we believe that this should be maintained.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss how best this can be ensured under the next MFF and programming period, taking into account the recent consultations and analysis of how to make EU funding opportunities "*deliver on the things that matter most, in areas where it can achieve more than Member States acting alone*". We believe that this is the case for the Europe for Citizens programme, more than any other.

We are ready and willing to work with you to ensure that under the next MFF the current and future beneficiaries can do even more to promote and support Remembrance and Democratic Engagement and Civic participation initiatives in the EU.

We look forward to hearing from you in order to identify some suitable dates. Carlotta Besozzi, contact@civilsocietyeurope.eu, 02 7214069 is at your disposal for any further information.

The signatories:

Active Citizenship Network
ALDA - The European Association for Local Democracy
Association Européenne des Droits de l'Homme - AEDH
CIDEM – Association Civisme et Démocratie
CMFE Community Media Forum Europe
The Council of European Municipalities and Regions CEMR
EAVI - Media literacy for Citizenship
Europäische Akademie Berlin
European Alternatives
European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
European Civic Forum
European Movement International
European Policy Centre

European Volunteer Centre
EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy
Friends of Europe
Institut Jacques Delors
The Jean Monnet Association
Lifelong Learning Platform
Polska Fundacja im. Roberta Schumana
The Robert Schuman European Centre
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Service Civil International
Social Platform
Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA)
Volonteurope

Under the coordination of Civil Society Europe

