

European citizenship has been traditionally underestimated as an empty box and a bad copy of national citizenship, or, on the contrary, overestimated as a threat to national sovereignty. Today, the space of public discourse on this topic is overlooked by two opposite approaches: one that reduces Community citizenship to the five rights established in the Maastricht Treaty (the *Five-Right Citizenship*); and the other one that projects all the highest values and virtues of an ideal good citizen onto European citizenship, thus making it something that will never be accomplished (the *Still-to-Come Citizenship*).

The Euproact project aims at sharing and diffusing an approach to European citizenship overcoming these defecting visions and making it possible to observe Community citizenship as a social and political phenomenon that is carried on not only by public institutions, but also by citizens and a multiplicity of stakeholders.

The distinguishing elements of this approach are both methodological and substantial.

As for the **methodological** side, we consider citizenship of the Union not only as a fixed legal status, but also as a process of redefining and increasing the content and extension of citizenship itself. Moreover, beside its juridical content, it covers social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. All of that can be detected if citizenship of the Union is observed not only in the **Treaties**, but also in the whole **Community Acquis** and in **citizenship practices**.

As for the **substantial** aspects, we consider membership, rights, and participation as fundamental components of European citizenship.

As for **membership**, the link to the civic dimension of Europe as part of a system of multiple identities, including the national and local ones (*feeling European*), as well as a legal status materialized in everyday life practices in terms of a often implicit “banal” identity (*being European*) should be taken into account. b

As for **rights**, they include not only those established in the Treaties (with the addition of the Charter of Fundamental Rights), but also those coming, for example, from the European Court of Justice decisions and from the continuous redefinition of the EU responsibilities due to the action of citizens' movements, as in the case of patients' rights.

As for **participation**, political participation through the vote (local elections included) and civic participation in EU policy making (consultation on decisions, support to implementation), up to the recent right of citizens to propose new EU legislation, are part of the Community participatory dimension.

In this way, European citizenship can be viewed as the membership of citizens of the EU countries to a larger political "civic" community and of a polity operating as a multi-level and polycentric governance system, based on a set of rights established in the Treaties and increased over the years by the Community *Acquis* and citizenship practices, on a principle of multiple and difference-based identity, and on people participation both in the construction of representative institutions and in the intervention in public policy making on a daily basis.