

RE-INVENTING “VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS” (VWB) IN THE RUN-UP TO THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

ECIT is a Brussels-based think-tank, with predominant focus in three main areas: **Developing a Statute on European Citizenship, Political Rights, and European Citizenship Education.** To see our work in these areas so far, please visit our [website](#). ECIT operates on the principle that an experienced group of Board Members should pass on know-how to the young generation, who should then take the lead on specific projects.

VWB 1 campaigned for a European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) demanding full political rights for mobile EU citizens, and ended in June 2022. Although it collected under 10,000 signatures VWB became a recognisable brand in Brussels, and the youth task force participated in many high-level conferences and hearings organised by the European Parliament. The campaign contributed to the creation of a network of 50 organisations and had a high-level of output. Those involved gained experience in research such as the monitoring of cross-border and non-national citizen participation in elections, organised a symbolic election, and received extensive support in their demands for full political rights for mobile citizens from Members of the European Parliament.

Our mission now is to protect the social capital created from this ECI campaign and revive VWB in the run-up to the European Parliament elections 2024! The elections present a unique opportunity to continue the push for political rights for all EU citizens.

Our Plan:

i) *Creating a new taskforce of volunteers:* We are now recruiting for volunteers and interns with a mixture of skills. The priority is sourcing those with motivation and interest, and selection will not be based solely on location or availability.

ii) *Providing training:* Successful applicants will be given full access to all the material of VWB and receive training from *ECIT Board Members, The Good Lobby* and the *ECI Forum*. There will be three opportunities to gather information and contacts by participating in ECIT events either on-the-spot or online on 19 July, 19 September and 31 October.

iii) *Fundraising*: This should involve raising funds from different sources such as donations, grant-making foundations and EU programmes, particularly European Parliament calls for proposals for the European elections. In most cases, fundraising involves partnerships with other organisations.

iv) *Building the strategy*: New members of the taskforce will be directly involved in shaping the *VWB* approach to the European elections, and updating the website and social media to promote this. More information about the milestones leading up to the elections should come after the Summer parliamentary recess with European political parties beginning to prepare their manifestos, communication strategies, and the timetable for voter and candidate registration. By the end of the year, *VWB* should come out with a detailed report on how well prepared the EU and national authorities are for the June 2024 elections.

v) *Active monitoring*: From the beginning of 2024, monitoring should enter a more active phase and the strategy revised for the 6-month period before the elections. A final report should be created following the election results.

In conclusion, the task force should have sufficient scope to define its own strategy and working methods, with ECIT acting as host and adviser. On the other hand, this cannot work as a general project on the European elections. There should be a specific target group (13.7 million mobile EU citizens, and EU citizens around the rest of the world.)

There should also be a number of specific objectives:

-Monitor the practice by national electoral authorities to inform EU citizens resident in the country of their rights to vote and stand in the European elections (quality of the information and the languages used; advance warnings and deadlines for registration);

-Monitor the practice towards citizens temporarily abroad (ie Erasmus students) or permanently living in another EU country or the rest of the world;

-Focus both on obstacles to cross-border voting and the spread of examples of best practice with a variety of ways to vote to enable an increase in turn out of mobile citizens;

-Focus on attempts at foreign interference in the European elections and report on them;

-Examine the possibility of organising a European symbolic election on 26 April 2024 (International Voting Rights Day).

Of course, it will depend on the task force to what extent such activities can be pursued in depth, and which will be leading priorities as we move towards June 2024. Let's make a start!