

## DECLARATION BY THE ECIT FOUNDATION FOR THE 28<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY

With the 28th anniversary of the Treaty of Maastricht this coming Monday, the ECIT Foundation celebrates the ambition and foresight of this landmark agreement. This occasion also represents an opportunity to evaluate what we have achieved and to define an effective way forward to strengthen European citizenship — deepening existing rights and defining new rights, extending opportunities for political participation and cultivating a stronger sense of belonging — towards a more citizen-centred Europe.

The date of 1 November 1993 marks a crucial achievement for the European project. With its adoption, the Treaty of Maastricht created not only the European Union but the first transnational citizenship of the modern era. Initially considered as no more than a symbolic gesture, EU Citizenship has evolved over the following decades and has been described as a “fundamental status” by the European Court of Justice. It is now part of a broader framework of rights, freedoms and principles in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Pillar of Social Rights; the provisions of these can be invoked as constituting the core of European values on which common citizenship can be further developed.

Now, the Treaty of Maastricht’s potential must be fully realised for the next generation. Indeed, EU citizenship was established in the text as an evolutionary process, and that new provisions are needed for a much-changed and much-larger Union. This is more important than ever as Europe recovers from a generation-defining pandemic, while undergoing a profound transformation from the green and digital revolutions. It is high time to reform and define new political, environmental, health and social rights.

The ECIT Foundation hereby calls on the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament to work together towards three high-level objectives, in order to meet the needs and expectations of Europe’s citizens:

- 1. To deepen existing rights and define new rights and responsibilities accorded to European citizens**, so that EU Citizenship becomes more than the sum of its parts, clear and popular. The ECIT Foundation calls on the EU Institutions to propose reforms to existing rights, and in other cases, supporting rights with policy initiatives. European citizenship must first be based on the right to freedom of movement, in tandem with the recognition that all European citizens have a portable right to equal treatment which can be supported by legislation and defended in court. Through its draft proposal for a [‘Statute on European Citizenship’](#), the ECIT Foundation has attempted to depict an

inclusive and outward-looking European citizenship for future generations, including ambitious proposals for new citizenship rights. We welcome comments on our proposals and call for more endorsements on the digital platform for the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE).

- 2. To extend the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union** through reform of the ways citizens can make their voice heard with the EU. This includes the genuine introduction of participatory democracy as a pillar of decision-making, complementing reforms to representative democracy at the European-level. The ECIT Foundation has been particularly active in its campaigning for EU citizens to have the choice to vote and stand in all elections in their country of residence and in their country of origin via its European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) '[Voters Without Borders](#)'. Participatory processes should also be launched in all countries and across borders to involve citizens in the shaping of their own European Citizenship, from the lessons learned from CoFoE. This is an unprecedented exercise in active citizenship and should lead to more permanent systemic change in EU decision-making.
  
- 3. To cultivate a sense of belonging and attachment to European citizenship** as a fundamental status. In particular, a full-scale European Citizenship cannot be achieved without education. All citizens should be accorded the right to be both informed and to receive an education for European Citizenship, and should in turn be given meaning by the possibility to experience what Europe offers through the Erasmus programme. All European citizens must have a right from a young age to be educated about European Citizenship and the EU; the ECIT Foundation is exploring new initiatives for a 'child guarantee' in this area. A genuine sense of belonging is indispensable to ensure European citizenship becomes the status with which people identify to come together across borders, languages, cultures, histories and beliefs — to truly become a transnational citizenship for all.

The ECIT Foundation would like to highlight that, while these reforms are necessary, 1 November should nevertheless be an occasion to celebrate the EU's achievements. The Treaty of Maastricht can point a way forward for the European project, towards a Union not just of states, but of citizens.