

Overview of the awareness raising and policy support activities

Report

Prepared by EUROPEANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD (ETTW), 2024

Table of Contents

1. Scope of the Report.....	2
2. Engagement Strategy (T5.1)	2
3. Policy Proposals (T5.2)	3
4. Communicating with the EU policy actors – advocacy (T5.3)	4
4.1. Advocacy Letter to the Members of the European Parliament.....	5
4.2. Advocacy Letter to the European Parliament political groups	6
4.3. Advocacy Letter to the Officials of Relevant DGs of the European Commission	7
4.4. Advocacy Letter to the European Economic and Social Committee’s relevant members and officials.....	7
4.5. In-person outreach	8
5. Outreach to EU Policy Actors – results (T5.3)	8
5.1. Members of the European Parliament.....	9
5.2. European Parliament political groups	11
5.3. Officials of relevant DGs of the European Commission.....	12
5.4. The European Economic and Social Committee’s relevant members and officials....	13
6. Further substantive insight into the feedback received during the Advocacy Phase (T5.3)	13
6.1. Response from the European Economic and Social Committee	13
6.1. Response from DG EAC within the European Commission	19
6.2. Meeting with DG JUST within the European Commission	20
7. Evaluation and Feedback (T5.4).....	22

1. Scope of the Report

This report was drafted in the framework of Work Package 5 (WP5) of the MobileCIT project "Inclusive Europe for mobile EU citizens" and supports the WP5 deliverables D5.1 "Engagement strategy" and D5.2 "Evaluation report".

2. Engagement Strategy (T5.1)

As a part of WP5, an engagement strategy was established for effective awareness-raising and policy support process.

The strategy defined the approach to grassroots engagement on the Open2vote platform and with the ETTW member organisations, and how it would be consolidated as a basis for advocacy and feedback to the target groups.

The strategy was elaborated in consultation with the ETTW members and partner organisations (email lists and dedicated meetings). The strategy framework was presented to and discussed with project stakeholders, target group representatives and other ETTW members in the framework of the ETTW Board and General Assembly meetings from October 2023 to February 2024.

Preliminary consultation with policy actors both within the EU institutions and with citizen representatives (selected interested MEPs) took place through in situ/hybrid meetings from October 2023 to February 2024.

The acquired feedback was used to finetune the advocacy strategy (notably the priority channels, in particular in light of the project's timing in the policy cycle ahead of the European elections). The updated strategy was approved by the ETTW General Assembly on 14th February 2024, with the decision to focus the advocacy on the European Union (EU) institutions and structures as the key policy actors for the MobileCIT project purposes, and to prioritise wide-ranging outreach to the outgoing MEPs and potential incoming cohort as key players for political follow-up and commitments to advance the rights of mobile EU citizens in the new policy cycle 2024-2029. The Council of Europe and its structures were excluded from the MobileCIT outreach strategy at this stage. However, the Council of Europe and its structures are maintained as potentially relevant interlocutors for eventual further advocacy activity by the ETTW after the project, notably due to the relevance of some of



the CoE's work and competencies about diaspora matters to mobile European citizens.

Altogether, the strategy served as a procedural framework for an inclusive approach to preparing elaborate policy proposals and their communication to the policy actors. The engagement strategy is attached to this report as deliverable 5.1.

3. Policy Proposals (T5.2)

Policy proposals were elaborated drawing on the data gathered from the online outreach on the Open2vote platform and in consultation with the ETTW members and partner organisations.

The policy proposals were elaborated in consultation with the ETTW members and partner organisations (email lists and dedicated meetings). This included citizen consultations with priority target audiences through *in-situ* events:

- Consultation regarding selected policy issues identified in the research phase (notably on mother language learning, drivers' licenses, academic and professional qualifications, e-ID) on 9 December 2023 – in situ seminar with Latvians in Luxembourg;
- Consultation regarding selected policy issues identified in the research phase (notably on access to healthcare, pension rights, driver licences) on 14 December – online seminar with Swedes Worldwide;
- Consultation regarding selected policy issues identified in the research phase (notably on right to vote and European citizenship rights) on 24 January in Brussels, Belgium/hybrid online.

Based on research and citizen consultations, the 14 selected priority issues were presented to and discussed with project stakeholders, target group representatives and other ETTW members in the framework of the ETTW Board meetings from February to March 2024.

The acquired feedback was used to finetune the proposals and the ETTW General Assembly on 16 March 2024, the ETTW formally confirmed that these 14 issues presented on the online platform need to be covered by policy proposals, to ensure that the full range of grassroots engagement and member organisation priority areas are followed up by advocacy.

For the advocacy phase, The ETTW decided to prepare 4 advocacy letters with policy proposals and requests for follow-up meetings:

- To all members of the European Parliament (EP);
- To the European Parliament political groups;
- To the officials of the relevant DGs of the European Commission (EC), and
- To the relevant members and officials of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

In addition, it was agreed to complement written outreach to institutional policy actors with in-person meetings in the margins of or in follow-up to project events or advocacy letters.

4. Communicating with the EU policy actors – advocacy (T5.3)

The ETTW MobileCIT advocacy letters were prepared in cooperation with the project's partners and ETTW member organizations, approved by the ETTW General Assembly and signed by the Secretary General of ETTW, Steen Illeborg, and ETTW acting President, Steven van Laer.

The approach was chosen in the light of the timing of the advocacy effort, notably the end of an EU policy cycle and the forthcoming European elections; this particular period was considered particularly adapted to (i) highlighting the performance of policymakers in the current policy cycle and (ii) to noting and showcasing their policy intent for the next policy cycle.

The **advocacy letters** sought to gather their input on the work done throughout their respective mandates as well as to seek future-oriented commitments on some or all of the issues selected in the MobileCIT project. This information would inter alia help to inform mobile European citizens before the European elections, facilitating their electoral choices and mobilising their democratic participation.

To show concrete commitment to defending the interests of mobile European citizens, an **online pledge** was created for policy actors to sign. This would also encourage policy actors to commit to this cause by providing a communication tool which allows them to be credited for the work that they have done so far and/or plan to do; by using the pledge in their communication or electoral campaign, the policy actors would also serve as

multipliers of the project and mobile Europeans.

Direct advocacy was supported by **media outreach**. ETTW approached Brussels-based media outlets ("The Brussels Times", Politico Europe) to publish press releases on the MobileCIT project. This would have allowed us to highlight the project and the policy proposals to the EU policy actors. The media outlets did not follow up on the press releases, demonstrating low interest in the situation of mobile Europeans. There were no publications made as a result of the editorial choices of these media outlets. This demonstrates a persisting wide disregard of or lack of interest in the cause of mobile EU citizens among wider audiences, even in EU- specialised contexts.

In the upcoming sub-chapters, each of the advocacy letters is referred to in more detail.

4.1. Advocacy Letter to the Members of the European Parliament

Each letter contained a general description of the project and its partners, highlighting the ETTW lead role for the advocacy phase, as the umbrella organisation for EU diaspora organisations engaging in civic interest representation of mobile Europeans with the EU institutions. In addition, the latter introduced the policy actors with the project's objectives which were as follows:

- To understand the needs and challenges the mobile European citizens face, by conducting thorough research.
- By engaging the mobile European citizens in e-deliberation processes through the digital Open2Vote platform where they can express their opinions and attitudes on selected issues through internet voting.
- To improve their representation by raising awareness among the EU public authorities regarding the selected issues.

The letter specifically to the members of the European Parliament invited them to inform the ETTW whether and if yes, which of the issues of the MobileCIT project the member has raised in the EP debates, resolutions, legislative or budgetary work and with what results - in particular noting that the EP current mandate approaches its end and that Europeans are considering their voting choices for the next intake. Members were also invited to share which of the issues he or she is ready to pursue as a part of their political program for the next mandate at the EP level or national level.

In addition, members were invited to also sign a pledge to recognize the importance of including mobile European citizens in the democratic process of the EU.

The letter was complemented with the annex which displayed all 14 selected issues and voting percentages for each of the issues where it could be seen for which of the issues the mobile European citizens were more in favour of "For" or "Against".

4.2. Advocacy Letter to the European Parliament political groups

Each letter contained a general description of the project and its partners, highlighting that ETTW is in the lead role for the advocacy phase, as the umbrella organisation for EU diaspora organisations engaging in civic interest representation of mobile Europeans with the EU institutions. In addition, the latter introduced the policy actors with the project's objectives which were as follows:

- To understand the needs and challenges faced by the mobile European citizens, by conducting thorough research.
- By engaging the mobile European citizens in e-deliberation processes through the digital Open2Vote platform where they can express their opinions and attitudes on selected issues through internet voting.
- To improve their representation by raising awareness among the EU public authorities regarding the selected issues.

The letter specifically to the European Parliament political groups requested them to advise the standing candidates for the European Parliament elections to get acquainted with the selected issues to stand ready to resolve or improve them during the mandate if the candidate gets elected. As well as signing a pledge to recognize the importance of including mobile European citizens in the democratic process of the EU.

The letter was complemented with the annex which displayed all 14 selected issues and voting percentages for each of the issues where it could be seen for which of the issues the mobile European citizens were more in favour of "For" or "Against".

4.3. Advocacy Letter to the Officials of Relevant DGs of the European Commission

Each letter contained a general description of the project and its partners, highlighting that ETTW is in the lead role for the advocacy phase, as the umbrella organisation for EU diaspora organisations engaging in civic interest representation of mobile Europeans with the EU institutions.

In addition, the latter introduced the policy actors with the project's objectives which were as follows:

- To understand the needs and challenges faced by the mobile European citizens, by conducting thorough research.
- By engaging the mobile European citizens in e-deliberation processes through the digital Open2Vote platform where they can express their opinions and attitudes on selected issues through internet voting.
- To improve their representation by raising awareness among the EU public authorities regarding the selected issues.

The letter specifically to the officials of relevant DGs of the European Commission invited them to inform us about which of the selected issues have been addressed by the Commission during the current mandate, and what type of initiatives have been taken to tackle or to solve these issues. Also, each official of relevant DGs on the European Commission to whom the letter was sent was informed about the invitation for the members and candidates of the European Parliament to sign a pledge to recognize the importance of including mobile European citizens in the democratic process of the EU.

The letter was complemented with the annex which displayed all 14 selected issues and voting percentages for each of the issues where it could be seen for which of the issues the mobile European citizens were more in favour of "For" or "Against".

4.4. Advocacy Letter to the European Economic and Social Committee's relevant members and officials

Each letter contained a general description of the project and its partners, highlighting that ETTW is in the lead role for the advocacy phase, as the umbrella organisation for EU diaspora organisations engaging in civic interest representation of mobile Europeans with the EU

institutions. In addition, the latter introduced the policy actors with the project's objectives which were as follows:

- To understand the needs and challenges faced by the mobile European citizens, by conducting thorough research.
- By engaging the mobile European citizens in e-deliberation processes through the digital Open2Vote platform where they can express their opinions and attitudes on selected issues through internet voting.
- To improve their representation by raising awareness among the EU public authorities regarding the selected issues.

The letter specifically to the relevant members and officials of the European Economic and Social Committee invited them to inform the ETTW about which of the selected issues have been addressed by the EESC, the member or his/her group during the current mandate, and what type of initiatives have been taken to tackle or to solve these issues.

The letter was complemented with the annex which displayed all 14 selected issues and voting percentages for each of the issues where it could be seen for which of the issues the mobile European citizens were more in favour of "For" or "Against".

4.5. In-person outreach

In addition, outreach to other institutional policy actors was ongoing through in-person meetings in the margins of or in follow-up to project events or advocacy letters – with the advocacy letters as the basis for feedback.

5. Outreach to EU Policy Actors – results (T5.3)

As indicated in the adopted engagement strategy, it was planned to reach the policy actors in the European Union institutions and structures.

Altogether, for the advocacy phase, three different EU institutions and structures were chosen: the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Economic and Social Committee. Individual advocacy letters (displayed in the 4th Chapter of this report) were sent to their members to provide outreach on a more personal level and reach the highest participation level of the policy actors.

Overall, 787 individual policy actors were contacted to raise awareness of and to seek feedback on these 14 selected issues.

Additionally, 20 EU policy actors were consulted in the margins of the events that were organised in the framework of the MobileCIT project.

In the further sub-chapters, information is provided on the specific policy actors of these three European institutions and structures which were approached and their feedback or follow-up, if any.

5.1. Members of the European Parliament

The largest group of the reached policy actors consisted of the members of the European Parliament. The Engagement strategy stressed the importance of communicating with those members of the Committees of the European Parliament whose areas of responsibility were linked with the issues of mobile EU citizens. These Committees were:

- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs;
- Committee on the Constitutional Affairs;
- Committee on Culture and Education;
- Committee on Budgets;
- Committee on Employment and Social Affairs;
- Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

In the first outreach round, 705 individual emails were sent out to the members of the European Parliament in March 2024.

During the first round, the response rate was very low as only one member responded.

During the second outreach round, a reminder letter was sent to 704 members of the European Parliament in April 2024. The second round also brought a low level of response.

Out of 705 individual emails that were sent out two times), only 17 members of the EP responded, but with little substantive feedback.

These letters were sent to 705 persons representing 27 countries – Member States of the EU (Table 1):

Table 1. Number of European Parliament members by countries – recipients of e-mails.

	European Union Member State	Number of members in the EP
1.	Germany	96
2.	France	79
3.	Italy	76
4.	Spain	59
5.	Poland	52
6.	Romania	33
7.	The Netherlands	29
8.	Belgium	21
9.	Czech Republic	21
10.	Greece	21
11.	Hungary	21
12.	Portugal	21
13.	Sweden	21
14.	Austria	19
15.	Bulgaria	17
16.	Denmark	14
17.	Finland	14
18.	Slovakia	14
19.	Ireland	13
20.	Croatia	12
21.	Lithuania	11
22.	Latvia	8
23.	Slovenia	8
24.	Estonia	7
25.	Cyprus	6
26.	Luxembourg	6

	European Union Member State	Number of members in the EP
27.	Malta	6
Total	27 Member States	705 members of the EP

5.2. European Parliament political groups

The second largest group of policy actors consisted of the European Parliament political groups, as the political groups can be recognized as their own internal organizations which consist of legislators of aligned ideologies in the EP. These groups also allowed us to reach out to potential European Parliament members before the elections, since the majority of candidates campaigned in contact with the political groups.

Letters were sent to the following EP political groups:

- Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats);
- Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats;
- Renew Europe Group;
- Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance;
- European Conservatives and Reformists Group;
- Identity and Democracy Group;
- The Left Group in the EP – GUE/NGL.

In the first outreach round, 93 individual emails were sent out to the members of European Parliament political groups in March 2024. During the first round, only two members of two different political groups responded: a member of the European People’s Party and the Left Group GUE/NGL.

In the second round, 91 reminders were sent to those who did not answer in the first round, in April 2024. There was no feedback.

In the third round, 20 reminder letters were sent to the groups’ Secretary Generals or assistants who work closely with them or Deputies, seeking to transmit the advocacy letters to the incoming members of the new EP cadence. It was decided to send out again the advocacy letter on 13th June, as the European Parliament elections had taken place and the letter could, via political groups, reach the newly elected members soon coming to Brussels to undertake their mandate. This letter was sent out in June 2024.

As a result, some in person meetings were arranged with the staff of the EP Political

groups, notably Greens/EFA, to draw their attention to the possibility to incorporate these issues in the further work of the Group in the new EP cadence.

As a result of this line of outreach, 1 candidate for European Parliament elections subscribed to the pledge to support the cause of mobile EU citizens in the further work in European Parliament. This candidate was not elected to the European Parliament.

5.3. Officials of relevant DGs of the European Commission

The third largest group of policy actors consisted of the relevant officials of the European Commission. By the project description, it was advised to reach out with the prepared advocacy letters to the relevant DGs of the European Commission to help with more targeted advocating, since each DG consists of specific Units that could be working particularly on one of the selected issues by the project. It was decided to reach out to the specific Head of Units of the relevant DGs whose descriptions can be found in the engagement strategy, and they are as follows:

- DG for Justice and Consumers;
- DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture;
- DG for International Partnerships;
- DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion;
- DG for Communications Networks, Content and Technology;
- DG for Health and Food Safety.

The first round consisted of 37 individual emails sent to the relevant Head of Units of the DGs of the European Commission in March 2024. To this round, only automatic replies acknowledging receipts were received. The second round brought more activity, as the reminder letters were sent again to the same Head of Units in April. Altogether, 6 Head of Units got back to us, of which one could not fit us in the busy schedule (DG SANTE), 3 were ready to re-direct us to a different Unit or DG (DG EMPL, DG EAC), and the other 2 were from DG EAC and DG JUST. DG EAC shared pre-prepared reports about the work that they do.

DG JUST invited us to an online meeting to discuss the project (a detailed outline of their responses can be found in the 6th Chapter).

Additional informal exchanges were set up with some EC officials in order to consult on the best ways to secure more substantive follow-up from the relevant DGs.

5.4. The European Economic and Social Committee's relevant members and officials

The smallest group of the policy actors consisted of the members of the European Economic and Social Committee and selected officials.

The EESC closely works with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to represent their interests in the framework of the EU by organizing regular consultations and public hearings to let the CSOs actively contribute to the Committee's work. The selected issues feature in the Committee's work, including the fields of social affairs, sustainable development, digitalization, education, and the well-being of Europeans.

The advocacy letter to selected EESC members and policy officers was sent on in March 2024. Overall, out of 4 individual emails, 3 actors of the EESC reached back to us.

6. Further substantive insight into the feedback received during the Advocacy Phase (T5.3)

Altogether, during the advocacy phase, 787 individual policy actors from 13-15 different European Union countries were contacted to raise awareness and seek policy followup to the policy proposals.

The response below from the EESC is possibly the most significant and certainly the most extensive, both at the level of officials and members.

6.1. Response from the European Economic and Social Committee

An email response with an attachment was received from the relevant official of the European Economic and Social Committee on 10th April to provide the Committee's opinion on as many proposals as possible, specifically in the context of voting, remote work, healthcare, and academic qualifications. Its full contents are as follows:

Voting:

EESC Resolution: Vote for a United, Democratic, Competitive, Sustainable, and Social European Union (22.03.2024)

As the European Parliament elections approach, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) urges EU citizens to exercise their democratic right to vote. The European Parliament, being the only directly elected EU body, co-decides on laws and the budget, and jointly appoints European Commissioners. Voting in June allows citizens to elect members who support stronger European integration. The EU has historically guaranteed peace, democracy, economic prosperity, and social progress. Despite recent challenges such as rising living costs, wars, migration, and climate emergencies, the EU remains a successful union.

The EESC emphasizes that no single EU country can address these issues alone. Collaboration and cooperation are essential, as nationalism and populism are not viable solutions. A united, democratic, competitive, sustainable, and social EU is necessary to make progress on pressing concerns and reverse inequalities. The EU's foundational values—democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, the rule of law, tolerance, justice, non-discrimination, equality, solidarity, and democratic participation—must be continuously defended and strengthened to prevent poverty and social exclusion.

Peace and economic and social cohesion are intertwined, requiring respect for fundamental rights and high standards of social justice. The EU must be a global player to prevent conflicts and build durable peace through multilateralism. A strong EU is vital for sustaining its economic and social model, ensuring economic and food security, global competitiveness, and the digital and green transitions. The EESC calls for a European Union that includes all citizens, providing opportunities and promoting active participation in civic and political processes. A united EU is crucial for living in a peaceful, open society where the environment is protected, everyone is respected, and European identity thrives.

SOC/713 - Reinforcing Democracy and Integrity of Elections Package

The "Reinforcing Democracy and Integrity of Elections" package, issued by the European Commission in November 2021, focuses on revising regulations for European political parties and foundations, and increasing transparency and targeting of political advertising. The EESC supports the package but suggests more ambitious regulations and swift implementation. They propose additional actions to promote conscious political participation and involve civil society in ensuring transparent and honest political activities. The EESC emphasizes the need to counter disinformation in political campaigning.



For political advertising, the EESC recommends a broad but clear definition, expanding penalties for wrongdoings, limiting non-EU influence, and prohibiting targeted political advertising based on tracking individuals' behaviour's. They also suggest banning targeting based on sensitive personal data. Regarding the funding of political parties and foundations, the EESC proposes strengthening gender balance standards, tackling discrimination, promoting human rights, limiting donations from outside the EU, and restricting EU parties' involvement in national referendum campaigns.

The EESC also calls for annual events to share best practices and strengthen democracy, funding for civil society, and removing barriers preventing inclusive participation in elections, including for mobile citizens and those with disabilities. Harmonizing legislation related to European Parliament election conditions is essential.

Remote work:

Digitalisation in Social Security (SOC/781)

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) acknowledges the challenges in cross-border social security coordination, citing complex bureaucratic procedures, manual processing, and the need for physical documents as significant hindrances to free movement for citizens and businesses. The EESC supports the European Commission's goal to simplify cross-border social security and healthcare coordination through digitalisation. They call for an immediate development of a comprehensive action plan to digitalise social security coordination, emphasizing a bottom-up approach that considers the needs of all stakeholders, including citizens, employers, and social economy entities. They also urge the provision of alternative solutions for those who are unable to use electronic means or are otherwise digitally excluded, insisting that digital identification should be optional until suitable alternatives are established that respect data protection standards. Furthermore, the EESC believes that digitalisation alone will not remove obstacles to free movement until the reform of Regulation 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems is finalized. They propose a permanent exchange of best practices between Member States and suggest organizing a conference with participation from government and civil society to promote this initiative.

Enhancing Labour Mobility to Support Economic Recovery (SOC/719)

The EESC asserts that labour mobility within the EU is crucial for economic recovery and growth, especially during times of economic uncertainty. They stress the need for a thorough analysis of why the percentage growth of working-age EU movers has slowed, aside from pandemic-related



restrictions. They call for a study to determine the economic cost of the current labour market state and recommend more effective national measures, focusing on active labour market policies. The EESC urges the European Commission to take measures to prevent brain drain and promote upward social and economic convergence. They also call on Member States to ease mobility for persons with disabilities and emphasize the importance of gender equality in increasing labour mobility. They highlight the need for the European Commission to monitor social security coordination and address new issues like teleworking from abroad, advocating for the establishment of a European Social Security Number to remove barriers in cross-border situations. To maintain a competitive advantage and attract skilled workers, businesses need to provide decent working conditions and quality-of-life aspects such as good schools and recreational facilities. The EESC emphasizes the importance of ongoing statistical analysis of labour mobility flows to address skill mismatches and assess the impact of significant events like the war in Ukraine.

Coordination of Social Security Systems (SOC/557)

The EESC concludes that the proposal for a new Regulation on the coordination of social security systems should facilitate, not restrict, the movement of jobseekers and workers. The goal should be to achieve a fair balance between home and host countries. The new rules should not create new entitlements to long-term care in every Member State, as this depends on the availability of such services in the host country. The terminology used in the proposal for revising the Regulation on Social Security Coordination should align with the Posting of Workers Directive. The proposed requirement for workers to have worked at least three months in the host Member State before qualifying for unemployment benefits will delay the aggregation of periods necessary for benefits. Extending the period for exporting unemployment benefits from three to at least six months might not provide employment opportunities for jobseekers, as this depends on the labour market situation. Greater convergence in benefits, aggregation, and activation would improve and facilitate social security coordination. Public employment services should be more effective in supporting mobile jobseekers. There is also a need for Member States to facilitate economically inactive mobile citizens' contributions to health coverage schemes in host countries and recognize the benefits of receiving mobile citizens. The proposed new rules should not restrict the fundamental rights recognized in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Healthcare:



SOC/741 - The European Care Strategy

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) proposes the launch of a European Care Guarantee to ensure lifelong access to affordable, quality healthcare and care services for all EU residents. They emphasize the importance of supporting families in their caregiving roles, suggesting investments that extend beyond social policies into communities. To tackle gender equality issues in the care sector, the EESC advocates for measures to address gender stereotypes, attract more men into the sector, and ensure a fair distribution of care responsibilities within households.

A life cycle approach promoting healthy and active ageing is highlighted, with a call for the development of a European Strategy for Older Persons. The EESC stresses the need for adequate funding in the care sector, urging Member States to mobilize a full range of care suppliers under strong quality assurance frameworks. They call for quality job creation in social care, ensuring these jobs are attractive, well-paid, and offer good career prospects. Better data provision on children's participation in early childhood education and care is requested to support the design and implementation of effective reforms.

The EESC also calls for the establishment of a gender-balanced High-Level Expert Group on Long-Term Care, involving care receivers and providers throughout the policy cycle. They stress the need to consider the mobility of care professionals and labor migration from non-EU countries, coupled with tools for matching demand and supply and recognizing qualifications. Additionally, a mid-term review of the recommendations based on monitoring the Barcelona targets and long-term care reform objectives is proposed.

SOC/721 - Health Workforce and Care Strategy for the Future of Europe

The EESC calls for a transformative care approach centered on people, their rights, and needs, involving them in relevant discussions, consultations, and decisions. They urge the European Commission to be ambitious in setting a care strategy that promotes cohesion and upward convergence in healthcare and long-term care among Member States. The EESC reiterates the proposal for a European Care Guarantee to ensure lifelong access to affordable quality healthcare and care services, addressing care deficits and promoting decent working conditions for carers, including informal carers.

The EESC stresses the importance of efficient, accountable, and well-funded public services to ensure equal access to quality care. They call on the EU to balance public and private care service providers based on solidarity and support investments in the social economy. An update of the

Action Plan for the Health and Care Workforce in the EU is proposed, including integrated health workforce planning and forecasting, and updating workforce skills to leverage digitalization opportunities.

To support Member States in planning and coordinating cross-border aspects of healthcare, the EESC calls for establishing a European health workforce surveillance service. This service would assist in maintaining planning structures and ensuring the right to free movement for health workers. Finally, the EESC emphasizes the importance of social dialogue involving governments, employers, workers, and their representative organizations as key to a transformative care strategy and resilient health systems in the EU.

Academic Qualifications:

SOC/715 - Higher Education Package

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) emphasizes the crucial role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in fostering green skills, environmental responsibility, and sustainable development. The EESC supports the European Commission's initiative to assist Member States and HEIs in developing comprehensive sustainability and environmental literacy strategies. They call for improvements in the quality, fairness, equality, and social inclusion of higher education and research, especially through digitalization strategies. The EESC also urges the Commission to engage with students and academics in creating digital skills training programs within the Digital Europe Programme.

Transnational cooperation is highlighted as essential for enhancing students' skills for the evolving labor market and economy, while upholding EU values, identity, and democracy. The EESC advocates for the active involvement of learners, academics, and researchers in higher education governance and cooperation structures to ensure quality, inclusivity, and effective mobility. Partnerships between HEIs and companies are deemed vital for aligning educational outcomes with labor market needs and providing high-quality, paid apprenticeships and traineeships.

The protection of academic freedom and institutional autonomy is stressed as a fundamental value, with the EESC welcoming the development of guiding principles to protect these values, based on the Rome Communiqué. Despite their importance, HEIs face underfunding, especially highlighted during the pandemic. The EESC calls for increased public funding to support HEIs' diverse cultural, educational, societal, and economic roles.

The EESC supports the establishment of a European Higher Education Sector Observatory to consolidate EU data tools and the development of the European Student Card initiative. They call

for transparent and fair recognition of third-country qualifications, including those of refugees, through academic recognition centres. The involvement of social partners and civil society in developing European criteria for a European Degree label and ensuring social dialogue with academic trade unions for sustainable careers in higher education is also advocated.

SOC/786 - Talent Mobility Package

The Talent Mobility Package will be adopted at the end of April, focusing on enhancing the mobility of talent within the EU to support economic growth and innovation. The details of this package will address various aspects of facilitating movement and recognition of skills across borders, aiming to create a more dynamic and integrated European labour market.

In addition, a Policy Officer from the Committee of Regions was met in June 2024 to present the project and the policy proposals, notably discussing the practical implications and challenges of the EU citizenship, including for EU citizens living outside the EU, as well as the importance of civil society organisations for interest representation and integration all while nurturing the diverse identities; we also discussed innovative approaches to inclusion of future EU citizens currently residing in the EU i.a Ukrainian civilians fleeing Russia's war of aggression, and how the policies developed for mobile Europeans (i.e., on native language learning, recognition of qualifications) would develop and support the broadening of EU citizenry. Two EESC members specialised in youth policies and defence of democracy agreed to participate in an exchange and/or the MobileCit events.

6.1. Response from DG EAC within the European Commission

An email response was received on 19th April from DG EAC A.4 Unit, from Akis Kyriacou (Acting Head of Unit). It highlighted the publishing of the analytical report "Education and Training Monitor" which sheds light on how education and training systems evolve across the European Union. The report itself consists of a comparative report that provides insights on context and possible policy levers, country reports that give information on recent and ongoing policy development at all education levels in the European Union countries, as well as a toolbox that is an overview of the key indicators used in the monitor with links to the most prominent studies and reports. It was recommended to check out specifically the monitoring part of the reports as these provide information on learning mobility that may be of interest to the project partners.



Among the 14 selected MobileCIT project issues, there is only one about education. The response from DG EAC did not provide an answer regarding this issue, e.g. about the recognition of academic qualifications within the European Union countries.

6.2. Meeting with DG JUST within the European Commission

An online meeting with DG JUST A.3 Unit took place on 12th June 2024 where the relevant officials of the European Commission, Marie-Helene Boulanger (Head of Unit), Srd Kisevic (Team Leader), Harry Panagopoulos (Policy Officer), and Deborah Riccetti (Policy Officer) were present to learn about the results of the project and exchange views and expertise about the challenges and opportunities for the mobile European citizens, as well as to help facilitate contact with other DGs.

Project partners were represented by Gatis Pavils (MobileCIT coordinator), Steen Illeborg (Secretary General of ETTW), Steven van Laer (President of Vlamingen in de Wereld), and Cecilia Borglin (Secretary General of Swedes Worldwide).

During the meeting, the five following points were made:

- The project partners will be open to sharing the methods and more detailed results of the long research phase with DG JUST and other Commission DGs.
- The answers to the 14 questions confirm the diaspora associations' experience that mobile citizens still have many practical problems that need to be addressed such as health care rights and the need for EU-wide digital driving licenses.
- These questions seem to be as important to the European diaspora as more abstract matters such as lowering the voting age or transnational list of candidates for the EU parliament.
- Social media have proved to be an efficient way of contacting and communicating best practices and finding solutions to the practical problems most mobile citizens are faced with.
- A dialogue with top Swedish candidates for the EP elections on the prioritized questions for the Swedish expats had proved to be an efficient way of raising political attention to the most important themes which concern the more than 500,000 Swedish mobile citizens.

The interaction between the MobileCIT project partners and the Citizenship Unit of DG Just was extensive. On 31st January 2024, an informal meeting took place with Marie-Helene

Boulanger and two of her colleagues to discuss the run-up to the European elections and the next legislature, including the issue of resources for policy work of the EC on citizenship rights and mobile EU citizens in line with the ambitious EP report on "Parliamentarism, European Citizenship and Democracy" adopted in September 2023 and an amendment to the EU budget tabled by Maite Pagazaurtundia MEP requesting a 20% increase in the staff approved by the AFCO Committee on Constitutional Affairs. It was made clear at this meeting that the issue of resources should be raised with the new Commission, especially in the context of preparing the multi-annual budgetary framework. Marie Helene Boulanger emphasised that she and her colleagues found the MobileCit project a useful source of ideas.

Four important MobileCIT events included a speaker from the Unit in DG Justice:

- **Marie Helene Boulanger** was part of a panel for the conference on 19 September 2023 bringing together speakers from the local, national and European levels to discuss preparations for the European elections and in particular the innovation in Belgium of votes at 16. This event included a group of young Austrians to come to Brussels to explain to young Belgians their experience with voting at 16. Thanks to the support of DG Justice a member of this group was invited to speak at a major event on democracy and electoral issues organised by the Commission in early December.
- **Harry Panagopulos** was a speaker at the opening session of the annual ECIT conference on 31 October 2023 which marked the 30th anniversary of the creation of Union citizenship by the Maastricht Treaty. A particular feature of this session was a presentation by a senior official at the European Court of Justice about the recent case law of the Court on EU citizenship. This largely supported the evidence coming from the project that the concerns raised by 13.9 million mobile citizens included but went beyond traditional free movement questions to raise issues of access and loss of EU citizenship and increasing issues of transnational digital citizenship.
- **Srd Kisevic** made an important contribution to the project when he presented the package of the 2023 Citizenship report adopted on 6 December 2023 to the conference organised on 24 January 2024. The guidelines on free movement and residence under Directive 2004/38 in the light of recent court judgments – on same- sex couples, for example-relate directly to concerns raised in the MobileCIT project. The session was also instructive because it included a

speaker from the European Parliament and showed where there are differences of emphasis between the two Institutions.

- **Marie Helene Boulanger** came back to the project and the final event on 3 July 2024. This was a valuable opportunity to review what had been achieved over the last legislature and what could be expected from the next. The point was made that whilst the Commission had done valuable work to defend rights to freedom of movement during the pandemic and ensure that they were restored with the return to normal, a stronger commitment at the political level would be needed to preserve European rights in the light of the results of the European elections and the influence of more euro-sceptical and nationalistic forces in the policy-making process. For example, the new Dutch government had announced that it would seek a revision of European rights to freedom of movement, a danger also emphasised by a newly elected MEP from the Netherlands. DG JUST was present throughout the final event.

7. Evaluation and Feedback (T5.4)

The results of the advocacy phase were presented to the project stakeholders and target groups during the final conference organized by ECIT which took place on 3rd July 2024 in the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee. This was an opportunity to present the Evaluation Report to the target audience representatives and institutional stakeholders (EESC, DG JUST, European political parties) participating in person and/or following the live stream. The Evaluation Report was distributed to the conference participants and presented in a dedicated panel discussion.

To provide feedback to the project target audience and in particular to the participants of the online voting phase, this report and a summary of the advocacy phase have been published also on www.open2vote.eu.