Academic News

EU Citizenship Research Project Awarded € 6.5 Million EU Subsidy

The year 2013 was the European year of the citizen, revolving around the rights of 500 million EU citizens and how these European citizens can more effectively understand and make use of their right, making it a very good year for Utrecht University to kick off a new large-scale research project on European citizenship.

The title of this new European research endeavour is 'All Rights Reserved? Barriers towards EUropean CITIZENship' (acronym bEUcitizen), a project to be carried out by a consortium of 26 universities in 19 countries, coordinated by Utrecht University. This four-year research study involves an EU subsidy of € 6.5 million and started in May 2013. It aims to analyse the obstacles that EU citizens encounter in the exercise of their rights and obligations. What causes these impediments, and what are the possibilities for the European Union to further develop the notion of European citizenship in the future? The research proposal was made possible as part of Utrecht University's 'Institutions' field of focus, allowing lawyers, social scientists and humanities specialists to draft the applications for the progamme. This project is part of the EU's 7th Framework Programme.

The bEUcitizen project aims to gain insight into the obstacles faced by European citizens when they exercise their rights and obligations, into the possible contradictions between economic, social, political and civil citizenship rights and into their conceptualization at the European and national level. According to the research programme, this challenge requires a multidisciplinary approach and international comparative research.

The multifarious and multifaceted citizen

This study considers citizenship to be a heterogeneous, dynamic, social and historical collection of practices which finally found their repercussions in firmly-enshrined legal and institutional rights and obligations. The mutual dependency between rules and practices means that citizenship is in a permanent state of flux:

- Various forms of citizenship – local, regional, national and EU – exist alongside each other. Research into the development of citizenship before the French Revolution and into the concepts of citizenship in existing (con)federal states are to offer inspiration for the further development of a European form of citizenship.
- Point of departure is the fact that citizenship, depending on the field in question – economic, social, political or civil rights and obligations – is still developing.

– Citizens' rights and obligations are different for various groups of citizens: women, men, the youth, the older generation, people within and outside the EU.
– Various groups of citizens may encounter different social barriers when exercising their rights and obligations.

A multidisciplinary approach

Research into the multifarious citizen within the interplay of forces concerning rules and practices requires a multidisciplinary approach. The applicants who have taken the initiative represent three faculties at Utrecht University: the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance (Dr. Sybe de Vries, Prof. Frans Pennings and Dr. Wieger Bakker), the Faculty of Social Sciences (Prof. Trudie Knijn and Prof. Frans van Waarden), and the Faculty of Humanities (Prof. Maarten Prak). Sybe de Vries and Frans van Waarden are the programme coordinators.

The bEUcitizen project is imperceptibly linked to the university's strategic field of focus 'Institutions', which is to establish why these formal and informal regulations, and the organisations that design the economic and social intercourse between people – at the local, national and European level – have been given their specific form and how they work. The bEUcitizen project aims to study citizenship in the mutual dependency between rules and practices, where citizenship is not seen as a purely legal or constitutional construction. It is exactly this approach that offers the possibility to gain more insight into the role of European citizenship in the further design and functioning of institutions. ¶

For further information, please visit <www.bEUcitizen.eu>