The year of 2013 is the European Year of Citizens dedicated to the rights that come with EU citizenship. 2013 also marks the 20th anniversary of EU citizenship, and preparing for the elections of the European Parliament, taking place next year. At this crucial juncture in the move towards a stronger Europe, it is a fitting time to dedicate 2013 to EU citizens and remind them of their rights and at the same time through events and involvement of all citizens and sectors from business to NGOs, to build a vision together on how Europe should be in 2020.

Socrates once said, ‘I am not an Athenian nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world’. To some 503 million of EU citizens the EU citizenship gives a set of special rights which lie at the heart of their everyday lives. Every national of one of the EU’s 27 member countries (as of July 2013, 28 with Croatia) is automatically a citizen of the European Union. Although rights it confers are reserved for Member States’ citizens only, it is an attractive perspective for all candidate countries. Once Serbia becomes an EU member, its citizens will fully enjoy the same rights without renouncing national citizenship.

RIGTS DERIVED FROM EU CITIZENSHIP
1. The right to move and reside freely within the EU and not to be discriminated against on grounds of nationality
EU citizens have the right to travel throughout the 27 EU (soon 28) countries and settle in any of them or work, study or even retire. However, some conditions apply. For example, when entering another EU country, an EU citizen may be asked to show identification. To live in another EU country for more than three months, s/he must meet certain conditions depending on whether s/he is working, studying, etc.
2. The right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections
Every EU citizen has the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections for the European Parliament or in municipal elections in whichever EU country s/he lives, under the same conditions as nationals.
3. The right to petition
The right to petition allows EU citizens to raise concerns or complaints in any of the official languages of the EU with the European Parliament, being the most democratic institution, since their members are directly elected. They can ask the Parliament to address either a personal need or grievance, or a matter of public interest. The subject must fall within the EU’s sphere of activity, and must directly concern the citizen who is filing a complaint.
4. The right to complain to the Ombudsman
For grievances concerning mismanagement by an EU institution or body, a complaint can be addressed to the Ombudsman. EU citizens can also contact EU institutions and advisory bodies directly, and they are entitled to receive a reply in any of the EU’s official languages.
5. The right to consular protection
When in a non-EU country and in need of help, EU citizens are entitled to consular protection from the embassy or consulate of any other EU country. Assistance is provided in situations including death, accident or illness, arrest or detention, violent crime and repatriation. This can be especially useful when a smaller member state does not have an embassy in the given country, but can still turn to any other present Member State embassy.
6. The right to ask the Commission to propose new legislation
As of 2011, EU citizens have an additional right: the European Citizens’ Initiative enables them to ask the European Commission to prepare a proposal for a legal act. The petition must be signed by at least one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU countries, which is now 7 countries.

Fundamental rights
The EU is based on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union brings together into a single text all the personal, civic, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by people within the EU. It became legally binding in 2009, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Other cross-border rights
EU citizens are entitled to other cross-border rights, which are firmly anchored in primary EU law and substantially developed in secondary law. Since 54% of EU citizens are not well informed on their rights (Eurobarometer 77, 2012), the European Year of Citizens aims to help inform the general public, in particular about recognition of academic and professional qualifications, passenger and consumer rights, access to cross-border healthcare and social security, consumer’s right to safe, secure and affordable energy.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH EU PROGRAMMES
The EU encourages all citizens and organisations to play an active role in the development of the EU with funding support from a variety of programmes and initiatives.
- The Europe for Citizens programme funds local initiatives seeking to encourage citizens to become actively involved in the process of European integration, to develop a sense of European identity and to enhance mutual understanding between European citizens. Since November 2012, Serbia actively participates in it. Government’s Office for Cooperation with Civil Society is national Contact point for the Europe for Citizens programme europeforcitizens@civilnodrustvo.gov.rs
- The Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme, for the period 2007-2013, focus on the protection of the rights of the child; combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism; the fight against homophobia; active participation in the democratic life of the Union; data protection and privacy rights; training and networking between legal professions and legal practitioners. Acceding and candidate countries (including Serbia) and the Western Balkan countries included in the Stability and Association Process may participate in the actions of the programme.
- Youth in Action programme is open for Serbia and 2012 was its most successful year, with 60 international youth projects approved, worth more than one million euros.
- European Year of Citizens projects could be eligible for funding within Lifelong Learning, Erasmus, MEDAS Science in Society 2013 programmes that are all open for Serbia.

To allow better make use of and defend their rights, the EU citizens have at their disposal Your Europe web portal (http://europa.eu /youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm), as well as multilingual Europe Direct Service, a free phone and on line service that offer answers to all EU-related questions) and SOVIT (http://ec.europa.eu/sovit/) – an on-line network in which Member States solve legal problems caused to misapplication of EU law by public authorities. Another useful tool is PLOTEU (http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/home_en.htm) - on Learning Opportunities that inform on studying in Europe.