

## CHECK OUT THE WINNERS OF THE FIRST EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AWARDS 2014!



The European Civic Forum held its first European Democratic Citizenship Awards on Saturday 3rd May 2014 in Strasbourg. The ceremony was hosted by the Strasbourg City Council. In its opening address, the Mayor of Strasbourg, Roland Ries, welcomed ECF initiative to celebrate civic engagement and activism as instrumental in giving a new impetus to European democracy in the current context of political and institutional renewal.

The ceremony rewarding the most innovative and creative approaches to the development of a true European active citizenship began with a short retrospect by ECF President, Jean-Marc Roirant, on ECF accomplishments since its creation nearly ten years ago in Strasbourg, in the Council of Europe. MEP Catherine Trautmann, and Nawel Rafik-Elmrini, Deputy Mayor, who have supported the initiative since the very beginning, as well as Brigitte Degen from the European Commission task force on the European Year of Citizens were also present to reward the winners.

**Right2Water**, first European Citizens' Initiative to have been auditioned by the European Parliament, was elected best **campaign of the year**. Its objective: make of access to water a human right. More generally, it aims at changing the mentality of the European executive, bringing it to stem its reasoning from the protection fundamental rights and public services, rather than to follow the market logic.

Launched in Spain at the heart of the crisis, **Goteo**, elected **NGO of the year**, is the prototype of innovation in the field of collectively financed and distributive collaboration projects. More than 260 projects have been financed according to this method up until now, raising 1 800 000 euros (70% success) and circa 1800 offers for different forms of cooperation have been made by volunteers.

Children of the Portuguese Spring of 1974, **Pedro Santos and Joao Labrincha**, elected **Personality of the Year**, are the founders of the Citizenship Academy, born from the demonstrations against austerity measures. First project of the kind in Portugal, its mission is simple yet ambitious: create the conditions for a return of power in the hands of the people and give a new momentum to democracy.

Finally, **Europe's Café**, elected **citizen media of the year**, is the product of a student collaboration. Finding its inspiration in the XIX and XX Century French Cafés, this blog was built as an informative platform for the European public space, providing information ranging from economy to culture in Europe.

This first edition of the awards was quite an adventure. The open call for nominations was launched merely by mid-March. Despite this short timing, more than 10 000 votes were casted on line between 14th and 25th April to decide which campaign, NGO, personality and citizen media to reward for their innovative approach to democratic citizenship.

Great moment of celebration, this first edition was all in all a success, particularly with regards to the laureates and their day-to-day struggles to get ownership of the public space and help create civic-driven social change. Quite some lessons to be learned though, in terms of gender balance! We would like to say our deep regret that no woman was nominated as such in the personality of the year category and we can only hope next years' editions will largely compensate this absence.

And now that the dice are rolling, we really hope that this European Democratic Citizenship Awards will help connect, give visibility, but also public recognition and support to all those who work to improve the lives of our communities in terms of democracy, social justice and access to rights.

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**Note to the editors:**

*The European Civic Forum (ECF) is a transnational network that brings together over 100 associations and NGOs across 27 countries in Europe and is actively working to promote civic and popular ownership of Europe. Facing the growing civic disaffection across Europe, it is more critical than ever to foster citizens' engagement for a collective project and the emergence of a European public space where the role and influence of civil society are fully recognized. For more information: [www.civic-forum.eu](http://www.civic-forum.eu)*

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