MEPs vote to remove barriers to foundations’ cross-border work

Brussels, 2 July 2013 – Today Members of the European Parliament voted by a large majority in support of a resolution for a European Foundation Statute, which will make it easier for foundations to support citizens’ initiatives across Europe. The vote represents an important milestone for the Statute as a democratic expression of the will of Europe’s citizens. The proposed Statute must now be adopted unanimously by the Council.

In a statement following the vote, Evelyn Regner, Vice-Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (JURI) and Rapporteur on the Statute, welcomed the strong show of support by the European Parliament and called on the Council to quickly move the file forward: “It would be very welcome if an agreement could be reached during the current legislature,” she stressed.

“The positive vote on the Statute sends a crystal clear signal to the Council that Europe’s citizens want and need this piece of legislation,” said Gerry Salole, EFC Chief Executive. “This is a critical step in the final stretch of what has been a long process to give European citizens the tools they need to fulfil their philanthropic impulses and to fully benefit from the philanthropy of others. The fate of the Statute is now in the hands of the Council.”

With annual combined expenditures of over 100 billion euros, 1 million FTE employees, and more than 2 million volunteers, Europe’s foundations are active in every area of citizens’ lives. Foundations are increasingly seeking to engage in transnational European initiatives, but their efforts are hampered by a European legal and operating environment that does not afford them the advantages of the Single Market. Many European initiatives are delayed or abandoned due to a number of barriers, including high legal and administration costs, difficulties with the recognition of foreign legal personalities, and legal uncertainties over the recognition of the “public interest” nature of resident foundations’ cross-border work and public-benefit status.

A European Foundation Statute is widely recognised as the best policy option to overcome these hurdles. The foundation sector has made repeated calls over the past ten years for the introduction of this optional legal form to allow foundations and funders to work across borders on citizens’ initiatives. The latest call for support was an open letter to the current and forthcoming EU Presidencies1. In 2011, a significant number of MEPs signed a written declaration (84/2010) asking the European Commission to establish a European statute for foundations, as well as statutes for mutuals and associations.

The estimated 110,000 public-benefit foundations in Europe support both individuals and civil society organisations, and run their own programmes, research institutes, hospitals and museums. Working with partners from the public and private sectors, foundations play a key role in promoting scientific excellence and knowledge, education and training, innovation, sustainable development, well-being, social justice, culture and creativity.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the EFC
The European Foundation Centre (EFC), founded in 1989, is an association representing more than 200 public-benefit foundations and corporate funders active in philanthropy in Europe and beyond. The EFC develops and pursues activities in line with its objectives: creating an enabling legal and fiscal environment for foundations; documenting the foundation landscape; strengthening the infrastructure of the foundation sector; and promoting collaboration, both among foundations and between foundations and other actors, to advance the public good in Europe and beyond.

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