



EURACTION – CITIZENS ACTING FOR EUROPE

RESULTS FROM A PILOT PROJECT IN LITHUANIA, POLAND, CYPRUS, ITALY AND FRANCE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. Foreword and Acknowledgements	3
2. The partners	4
<i>ALDA as the main coordinator (France)</i>	4
<i>Partners Polska Foundation (Poland)</i>	5
<i>Municipal Training Center Kaunas (Lithuania)</i>	6
<i>Index – Centre for Research and Dialogue (Cyprus)</i>	7
<i>Municipality of Mogliano Veneto (Italy)</i>	7
<i>Municipality of Rovigo (Italy)</i>	7
3. The project EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe	8
<i>Methodology</i>	8
4. Challenges and opportunities of the project	12
5. Chronology of the project	12
6. The results of the citizens' panels	14
6.1 The Strasbourg citizens' panel	15
6.2 The Polish citizens' panels	29
6.3 The Lithuanian citizens' panel	37
6.4 The Cypriot citizens' panel	43
6.5 The Italian citizens' panel	58
7. Results and conclusion	66
Contacts	68

1. FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart that you have given me the opportunity to participate in the trans-national panel meeting in Rovigo – yesterday I was a citizen, I turned into an "ordinary" citizen and now I have become a "special" citizen because of having met you. Thank you for everything!"

participant of the French citizens' panel in Strasbourg

After the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the challenges imposed by the enlargement and the low participation at the last European Parliament's elections, the European Union fell into an unprecedented crisis. It was felt that the European institutions had lost contact with their citizens and something needed to be done to overcome this communication gap. As a consequence, the Plan D on democracy, dialogue and debate was launched.

The pilot project "EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe" was set up in this context, supporting the active participation of citizens in European issues through their involvement in "citizens' panels". It tried to bring together ordinary citizens to debate European topics of their choice and to give them the opportunity to express their hopes and fears with respect to Europe. In a second step, they developed concrete proposals how the communication between them and the European institutions could be improved. With the help of five main partners, namely INDEX (Cyprus), Partners Polska Foundation (Poland), the Municipal Training Center of Kaunas (Lithuania), the Municipality of Mogliano Veneto (Italy), and the Municipality of Rovigo (Italy), the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) implemented the project throughout Europe, both in old and new EU member states. A whole series of events (information days, workshops, conferences) took place between February 2007 and July 2007.

The following handbook will give detailed information on the process of setting up citizens' panels. It will evaluate in how far the experiment of working with real "ordinary citizens" was successful and if and how citizens' panels could become an institution in all European countries, supported by European and other funding.

On behalf of ALDA, I would like to thank our partner organisations for their courage to explore this new methodology of citizens' panels with us, the European Commission for their financial support, the Council of Europe for providing us with logistical and political support and most of all the citizens who actively participated in this pilot project.

Dorothee Fischer, Press Officer and Project Manager, ALDA

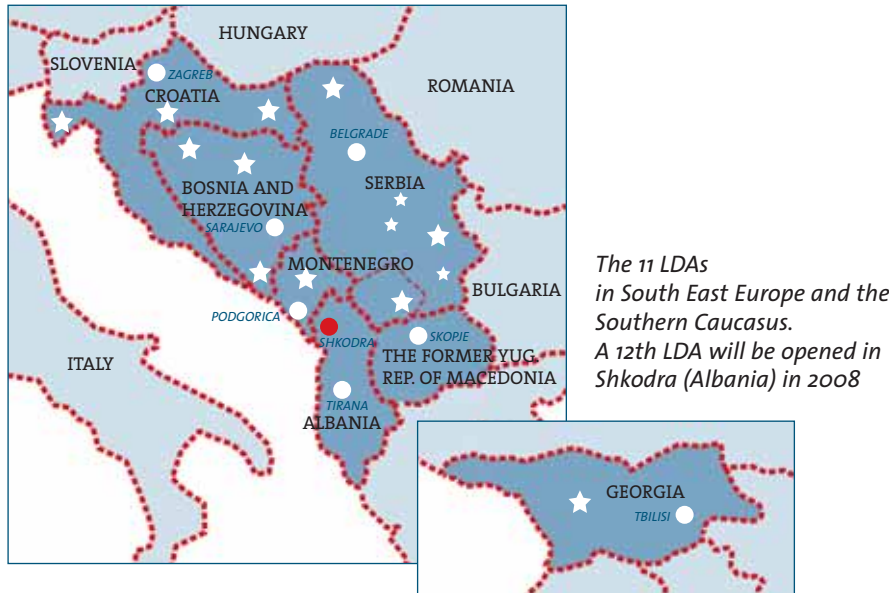
2. THE PARTNERS

ALDA as the main coordinator (France)

The Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), initiator and lead partner of the project “EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe”, was founded in 1999 with the help of the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to co-ordinate a network of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) in South East Europe and the Southern Caucasus already in existence since 1993. The main aim of ALDA and the current 11 LDAs is to foster human rights, local democracy and sustainable development – not only in the regions where the LDAs are located, but also across Europe. To achieve this goal, both ALDA and the LDAs are co-operating with a network of more than 300 members and partners from 28 European countries.



ALDA's member and partner network



The support of active European citizenship has become a priority mission for ALDA. Throughout the past four years, several projects were implemented in this area, including surveys, international conferences, best practice exchanges, workshops, a Europe-wide campaign “Cities for Peace and Democracy in Europe” and finally the setting up of five citizens’ panels in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France within the present project “EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe”. Besides its role as a project co-ordinator, ALDA also initiated the setting up of a citizens’ panel in Strasbourg. All these activities have made ALDA one of the main European stakeholders active in the field of European citizenship.

Partners Polska Foundation (Poland)

Partners Polska Foundation is an organization committed to building sustainable local capacity to advance civil society and a culture of change and conflict management.

The Foundation is associated with the international non-governmental organisation “Partners for Democratic Change” which has offices in the USA and national centres in Argentina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. Partners Poland Foundation is a member of the “Grupa Zagranica” – the Polish Platform of NGOs working abroad.

Their activities include:

- **Training local activists** to foster their development as emerging leaders of emerging communities. The participants of the training programmes initiated many actions addressed to their local communities such as the opening of new internet cafes, orchestrating lobbying campaigns for the increased involvement of women in politics and gender equality, introducing new educational initiatives for the local youth.
- **Preparing young politicians** for professional participation in the democratic political life.
- **Providing guidance for local governments** in their development of effective communication channels with local citizens.
- **Organizing study visits** for our partners from emerging democracies in Southern and Eastern Europe. So far local councilors, NGO leaders and trainers from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Kosovo, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Montenegro, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Georgia and Serbia including Kosovo/ UNMIK took part in Partners Polska activities.
- **Providing public administration with skills** for building new democratic relationships within institutions and in contacts with their citizens. Since 1995 more than 1700 have been trained.
- **Mediating** – local, business and family conflicts in the Partners Mediation Center based in Warsaw. Every year the panel of mediators meets over 150 couples seeking help to enable them to reach a solution to their disputes.

Municipal Training Center Kaunas (Lithuania)

The Municipal Training Center (MTC) was established in 1993 as a joint initiative of the US-Baltic Foundation and Kaunas University of Technology.

MTC’s mission is to strengthen self-governance by:

- Developing and implementing training programmes for public officials and politicians
- Providing information, consultation and research services
- Improving the performance of local government institutions
- Initiating and implementing civil society development programmes

The Municipal Training Centre is a unique institution in Lithuania in the sense that it is at the same time a school, a research centre and a consulting agency in local governance and community development issues. One of the MTC’s basic tasks is to assist municipalities in improving and modernizing the way they provide their services. The Center trains them on best practices, outlines the possibilities of cross-administrative co-operation and familiarizes them with the latest trends in the field of local governance.

Being a department of the Policy and Public Administration Institute of Kaunas University of Technology, the MTC works closely with numerous Lithuanian partners (in particular the Association of Local Authorities, the Lithuanian Institute of Public Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) as well as foreign partners. MTC is a member of NISPACE, SCEPSTA, ENTO and the Lithuanian Public Administration Training Association.

Index – Research and Dialogue (Cyprus)

Index – Research and Dialogue is a Cyprus-based NGO which aims to produce research related to the broad political, economic and social situation in Cyprus.

Their work mainly focuses on the consequences of accession to the European Union, the continued inter-ethnic conflict in Cyprus and related themes such as democratisation, empowerment, justice, conflict management, and community development.

Index promotes dialogue and debate in a variety of ways and works with both communities in Cyprus including civil society actors and local authorities.

Municipality of Mogliano Veneto (Italy)

Mogliano Veneto is a city with around 27,000 inhabitants, in the Treviso province, Veneto Region, North-East of Italy. The landscape of Mogliano Veneto, with an area of 46qkm, is rich in villas and parks. The origin of the city goes back to the Roman period when the Venetian territories were divided into farms (“centuriazione”) and assigned to the veterans of Roman legions as reward. The territory of Mogliano Veneto counts around 40 villas with large parks built by Venetian nobles during the XVIII century.

After the Second World War, Mogliano Veneto developed a network of small and medium enterprises, but the majority of the population works in the tertiary sector, in particular tourism, and administration.

Mogliano Veneto has been a member of ALDA and a partner of the Local Democracy Agency in Sisak (Croatia) for several years now. The city was involved in previous EU-projects run by ALDA and intends to involve as many citizens as possible in these initiatives, like for example in December 2004 when it organised a major international closing conference for the project EU Mayors concerning the challenges and benefits of EU Enlargement.

Municipality of Rovigo (Italy)

Rovigo is a town in the Veneto Region of North-eastern Italy, the capital of the eponymous province with a population of 50,000.

Being a new member of ALDA, the city was very interested in joining the project, although it had not been foreseen in the original composition of partners. But taking into consideration their special motivation and interest, ALDA decided to eventually add them to the list of partners and to organize the trans-national meeting of citizens’ panels in Rovigo on 14 and 15 June 2007.

3. THE PROJECT EURACTION – CITIZENS ACTING FOR EUROPE

“What was important to me was that the deliberations took place on a trans-national European basis. What was interesting is that there were many differences. A second dimension is that you are open to change. But being able to engage with others is part of the experience. One of the achievements was the actual methodology. What will happen with the results though? Is it only cosmetrical for the EU?”

Participant of the citizens’ panel in Cyprus

The main aim of the project “EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe” was to include “ordinary citizens” in the debates about Europe and to give them a voice in European politics. Five citizens’ panels were set up in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France for this aim. The results of the citizens’ panel meetings are partly gathered in this handbook (cf. Activities section) and will be reported back to the European institutions and other European stakeholders.

Specific objectives of the project

- To promote the participation of citizens who would not have spontaneously taken part in projects of a European nature by directly involving them in the citizens’ panels.
- To encourage a bottom-up approach to allow citizens to express their views on European topics and the European Union
- To promote trans-national mobility opportunities among the citizens of the countries involved

Target groups

One of the main aims of the project was to engage those citizens who normally do not participate in projects of a European nature and to particularly work with people from different social, demographic and professional backgrounds. The main participants were from Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France – the countries in which the partner organisations are located – but other Europeans joined the project either in the local panel meetings or during the international launch and closing conferences.

Methodology

The project used two main methodologies: the institution of “citizens’ panels” and the “Open Space Methodology” to facilitate the panel meetings.

During a Steering Committee in December 2006, the project partners developed guidelines for the setting up of such panels which contained the following:

- the panel should consist of at least 60 citizens

- the participants should be ordinary citizens who normally do not participate in European projects or have contact with European institutions
- to select the participants of the panels, each partner should first of all point out five or six key citizens who would then motivate other people to participate
- each panel should organise two meetings and a final local conference
- some panel participants – most probably the key citizens – should be given the opportunity to participate in the trans-national meeting of citizens’ panels and the final international conference
- application of the “Open Space Methodology”

The partners adapted these guidelines to their local context and below you can find further information as to how each panel was set up and what kind of results they produced (cf. activities section).

Open Space Methodology

Origins

The Open Space methodology is a method used for organizing conferences that was coined by Harrison Owen at the beginning of the 1980s. He had organised an international conference in 1983 that brought together some 250 participants, which took him approximately one year to organize. The conference was a success but the participants agreed, at the end of the conference, that the most useful part of the event were the coffee breaks, something that he had nothing to do with!

The Open Space approach

Extracting the valuable lessons learnt from this experience and using also information he gathered in Liberia at the end of the 60s when he had assisted to passage rites of young boys, Harrison Owen put together a series of ideas that underlie the Open Space approach:

- The circle with an open space in the middle – is the geometrical figure that best promotes human communication (we never talk of “squares of friends” or “family square” but always use the term “circle”)
- The rhythm of breathing – which leads to a successful conference – is natural and does not involve any organizing committee.

Two basic mechanisms were clearly defined here. In order to decide on the content and on the regularity two other traditional (sometimes forgotten, yet very useful) mechanisms were borrowed:

- Chatting together, a simple and comfortable way to find out what is interesting to citizens
- The marketplace of the village that offers a means to bring these interests together in an orderly fashion

Consequently:

- the Open Space Methodology works without an agenda and without a table. Sitting in a circle, all participants have the opportunity to propose and to post on the walls the topics that seem important to

them – within the larger topic initially agreed on. Thus, the participants are invited to take initiative, to contribute to the elaboration of the agenda and to create self-run working groups

- **all types of questions are explored:** all the questions brought forward by the participants are discussed, which facilitates the communication and the elaboration of their solution. In fact, there is no better motivation than to be involved in topics that participants feel passionate about

The objectives

This approach aims at:

- improving the communication among the participants and to motivate them to give them energy and to render groups more dynamic
- allowing participants to explore a question from a variety of angles in order to obtain effective solutions
- at discussing subjects that are frequently neglected in traditional conferences as they tend not to be included in agendas or are considered taboo

The principles

Four principles and a law govern the behaviour of participants in an Open Space event.

The four principles are:

- **“Whoever comes is the right person”:** this principle reminds the members of the group that in order to accomplish something it does not necessarily take a large number of participants and a leader, but a number of motivated individuals who are prepared and interested to participate.
- **“Whatever happens, is the only thing that could have happened”:** this principle keeps the participants on the here-and-now and eliminates all the “who could have/ would have”.
- **“When it starts, is the right time”:** this principle reminds the participant that the inspiration and true creativity rarely keep track of the time. These come (or go) whenever they come (or go).
- **“When it’s over, it’s over”:** you don’t have to waste time. Do what you have to do, and when it’s done, move on to something that’s more important.

According to the **“law of too feet”**, if, at any moment, a participant finds her/himself in a situation where s/he feels s/he is not contributing anything to the panel or the discussions are no longer fruitful, s/he can stand up and move on to another group that better responds to her/his needs. The law is created to remind participants that if they are not comfortable with or interested in a particular subject of the panel, it is unlikely that they will be productive. The law also stresses the responsibility of each participant to contribute to the group so that the group can offer an enriching experience to all the participants.



The context

The Open Space approach is particularly designed for a specific context:

- The problems to solve are complex and require creative, innovative solutions that can result in an intense exchange of opinions
- There is a great degree of diversity of individuals touched by the problem and involved in the identification of the solution

The time available for finding an appropriate solution is limited

The advantages

This approach allows:

- To unify groups with a diverse background in terms of education, ethnicity, political visions, cultures, economic and social conditions
- To bring up important questions that had previously been ignored
- To stimulate intense and fruitful exchanges, particularly in conflict situations
- To share the leadership and to alleviate the negative effects of authority

4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PROJECT

Being a pilot project of a European nature, the EURaction project confronted ALDA and its partners with a variety of challenges. During the preparational phase, a lot of time was invested in the preparation of the methodology (cf. chapter 3), in particular to effectively put into practice the Open Space Methodology with the panel participants. However, the most difficult aspect of the overall project was the setting up of the panels in the first place. Many questions imposed themselves: who is an ordinary citizen? Is this a pejorative term or not? Where to find ordinary citizens that are usually not in contact with the European institutions? What kind of methods to use to recruit them for the panel?

It was certain from the beginning that these questions would be answered differently according to the cultural and geographical context of the partners. This was undoubtedly also one of the opportunities and strength of the project: it enabled us to analyse the differences of approaches in different European countries, both old and new EU member states and their different political cultures in place, while at the same time stressing the similarities and common values that unite the peoples of Europe.

Activities

Chronology of the project

December 2006:	First Steering Committee among the partners in Vicenza, Italy
27 February 2007:	International Launch Conference in Strasbourg, France
Between March – June 2007:	Setting up of the five citizens' panels
24 – 26 March 2007:	First panel meeting in Bialystok, Poland
19 April 2007:	First panel meeting in Kaunas, Lithuania
21 April 2007:	First panel meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus
21 April 2007:	First panel meeting in Mogliano Veneto, Italy
27 – 28 April 2007:	First panel meeting in Dabie/Gronow, Poland
30 April 2007:	Second panel meeting in Dabie/Gronow, Poland

5 May 2007:	First panel meeting in Strasbourg, France
5 May 2007:	Second panel meeting in Mogliano Veneto, Italy
12 May 2007:	Second panel meeting in Bialystok, Poland
19 May 2007:	Panel conference in Mogliano Veneto, Italy
9 June 2007:	Second panel meeting in Strasbourg, France
11 – 12 June 2007:	First panel meeting in Szczecin, Poland
14 – 15 June 2007:	Trans-national meeting of the five citizens' panels to exchange best practice and to identify common topics in Rovigo, Italy
28 June 2007:	Final local conference in Strasbourg, France
28 June 2007:	Second panel meeting in Szczecin, Poland
June – August 2007:	Final local conferences in the five partners' countries to present the results of the panels
5 July 2007:	Evaluation session among the partners in Nicosia, Cyprus
6 July 2007:	Final international and local conference in Nicosia, Cyprus to present the results of the panels in the presence of an international audience including representatives of EU institutions
27 July 2007:	Final local conference in Poland (cyber conference)
August 2007:	Final publication

4. THE RESULTS OF THE CITIZENS' PANELS





6.1 THE STRASBOURG CITIZENS' PANEL

"I participated in the panel because I was personally interested in all questions concerning identity, values, and questions of nationalism. I am neither right-wing nor left-wing. Neither xenophobe, nor anything that could be linked to the term nationalist. My parents have simply changed their nationality twice, my wife is American and I am often asking myself what makes me a European citizen and why I do not feel like one at present."
participant of the Strasbourg citizens' panel

Setting up the panel

The Association of the Local Democracy Agencies decided to modify the selection procedure of panel participants slightly. Instead of appointing five or six key citizens, it prepared a questionnaire to find out the motivation of interested citizens. In addition to this, the ALDA staff in Strasbourg prepared an information flyer that was distributed throughout the city:

- at the university
- in socio-cultural centres
- in old folk's homes
- in churches
- in schools
- at the House of Associations

Two announcement articles were also published in the local media (DNA and 20 minutes) and ALDA forwarded the flyer to its contact network in Strasbourg and its surroundings by e-mail.

Moreover, ALDA participated with a stand at the Open Days of the European Parliament where it could “recruit” additional citizens interested in participating in the panel. Each citizen had to fill in the questionnaire and indicate whether he or she would be interested in becoming a “key citizen” of the project, meaning to take on a “spokesperson role” and to participate in the international meetings in Rovigo and Cyprus.

Despite the fact that Strasbourg has a population of 450,000 inhabitants and is the headquarter of several European institutions, ALDA only managed to mobilise about 40 people for each panel session, not meeting the objective of 60 participants in the panels. The same phenomena could be observed at the final local conference on 28 June 2008 which mobilised about 40 people – half of them panel participants and the other half were other interested citizens from Strasbourg.

Profile of the panel participants

The 40 citizens from Strasbourg that participated in the two panel meetings on 5 May 2007 and 9 June 2007 had the following profile:

- Aged 24 - over 60
- Very diverse professional backgrounds: students, consultants, civil servants, teachers, employees, unemployed, freelancers, retired people, housewives
- Slightly more women than men

Agenda Setting

In compliance with the Open Space methodology, the participants proposed and adopted the topics to be discussed during the first panel meeting on 5 May. After having posted on a whiteboard all the proposed topics, they were grouped under several themes in order to finalize the main working groups.

This is the list of topics:

- European citizenship, identity and construction
- Democracy and governance in Europe
- The media and communication in Europe
- Exchanges and mobility in Europe
- Young people and Europe
- Women and gender equality in Europe
- The environment in Europe

- Consumer protection
- Immigration and demographics
- Social cohesion

The first six topics were dealt with during the first panel meeting, whereas the remaining six other topics were treated during the second one, to which ALDA had invited three experts who gave an introduction on the topics.

Summary Reports of the panel working groups

Each working group was responsible for their own reporting. In the following the main results of each group are summarised including concrete proposals directed at the European institutions.

> EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP, IDENTITY AND CONSTRUCTION

Participants:

Hervé Baumgartner, Marielle Bour, Patrice de Cremiers, Pierre de Vault, Bernard Mathis, Jean Schmitt, Sandrine Seurre, Patricia Vogt

The relationship between the three themes have given the impetus to reflect them in a single working group. We have tried to respond to the following two questions:

- What are our expectations in relation to Europe?
- What does it mean to be a European?

Issues identified and means for improvement

- **There are two visions of Europe:**
 - A common market that ensures common economic prosperity
 - More than just a common market, a status of political and diplomatic power
- Today, the 3 initial motivations [for establishing the Union] are no longer valid; there is no more need to fight against a common external danger menacing all, nor to avoid a new war and, finally, not to rebuild a war-ravaged Europe. The context is very different.
- **There are two trends:**
 - Federalism
 - A group of states grouped together to ensure a set of competencies



- Europe has not managed to have a common voice on the international arena
- In our daily lives – we are lacking strong symbols and benchmarks

Suggestion: to develop signs of belonging to Europe that are not just simple technical measures, such as stamps, passports. A Europe-wide holiday (9 May) could be introduced

- Difficulties in understanding who actually runs Europe and who does what
- In the national debates European issues are not sufficiently present, the visibility and presence of Europe is not strong enough
- A sense of confusion concerning the distribution of competence areas

Suggestion: improving the knowledge of Europe by developing a real and adapted pedagogy. Clearly distributing the areas of competence in order to save money and put the principle of subsidiarity at its heart.

- A feeling of uncertainty and insecurity due to important tensions among the member states. These countries act frequently as if they competed against each other. National interests are given a priority before the interest of Europe. This brings us to the crucial question how each member state and each citizen are contributing to the construction and development of Europe.
- There is a great gap in the relationship between the European Union and its citizens. Technocracy has erected a wall between the elected officials and the tax-payers. Citizens do not feel any solidarity with

the decisions of the elected officials, in the rare cases when they are actually aware of these decisions.

- **identity:** the definition of a common set of values is difficult, as there are numerous diverging philosophies
- **citizenship:** the feeling of being European comes from learning about various countries, really getting to know them and their languages

Suggestion: establishing a general, pan-European civil service

- Europe launches a great challenge – that of overcoming the difficulties related to finding common grounds while respecting the differences between the member countries

Conclusions

- Europe is still a young construction. The notion of “nation” and “country” are still stronger than that of a common Europe. We are far from a federalist conception however attractive such a concept may be. We need to be more clear in the distribution of competences and on the roles of each level of administration – both national and European.
- Today, we cannot really talk about “European citizenship”. This would entail more participation, more knowledge and a more acute feeling of belonging and of being concerned by Europe. In the best scenario, we have a feeling of belonging to Europe.
- We notice an important difference between the European ideal and the everyday reality. But it is equally important to know that some member states are not pleased with the current situation nor with the current role of Europe. <

> DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

Participants:

Colette Beck, Bruno Flochon, Patricia Schramm, Kerstin Stenberg

Lobbying

The European Commission consults regularly the representatives of “civil society”, businesses, NGOs, trade unions, and other bodies. This system of consultation – imported from the USA – can be labelled as a new form of “democracy” called [good] governance.

In current language, we call this type of influence – lobbying.

- It is illegitimate – representing the interests of small groups and not that of every individual
- Lack of transparency
 - “governance” is a concept which is not known to the citizens
 - funding – the ultimate objective of each lobbying initiative
- who are the lobbyists/ lobbying initiatives? there is little information on www.europa.eu.int
- there are problems of balance between lobby groups (unequal resources)

The lack of power of the European Parliament

- It is the only European body elected directly by citizens, but its powers are limited
- There is a very poor rate of participation in the European elections

Limited opportunities for the European citizens to participate and to express their opinions

We notice that:

- Numerous citizens are excluded from the system based on lobbying
 - The weakest, the most vulnerable
 - Those who are not organised at the European level
 - The poorest
 - Those that don't have the possibility to have their interests represented in Brussels
- The majority of the citizens ignore this channel for having their voice heard.
- The media speak very rarely about European issues and the citizens are not aware (or little aware) of the EU information sources
- The citizens of different member states communicate marginally among themselves on European issues
- **the system of lobbying is not democratic**
- **the citizens are not involved in the construction of Europe**

We suggest:

- To initiate a **mandatory control of lobbyists** by requiring them to publish:
 - their real objectives
 - the name of their initiators and sponsors
 - their sources of funding
 - their members
 - their contact information
- to facilitate the creation of a European NGO of today's "voiceless/ invisible" citizens
- **to render the process of consulting "civil society" more democratic**
- to give citizens the possibility to be regularly and directly consulted in the form of citizens' panels (following the model of the French popular jury)

- to decentralize consultation (not only in Brussels)
- to **reinforce the power of the European Parliament** in a significant manner (which would increase, in our opinion, the participation in elections)
- to establish a minimum requirement of participation of EU-Parliamentarians in the monthly sessions
- to promote the role and actions of the European Ombudsman. Is there a branch/representative in each country? <

> COMMUNICATION AND THE MEDIA IN EUROPE

Participants:

Mylène Laroche, Sylvie Riaux, Laurien Noizet, Frédéric Daull

Main question

How to move on from passive communication (informing citizens) to a more proactive type of communication?

Education, learning how to communicate:

- at the school level
 - creation of a common programme of teaching European issues: the history of Europe, European citizenship, the religions of Europe, communication and philosophy in Europe, European civilisations
 - establish a minimum number of teaching hours dedicated to Europe in each member state and decide on a set of common themes
 - increase the twinning of schools and development of exchange programmes

- create multimedia workshops with participants from a variety of countries to facilitate exchanges
- promote the value of participatory democracy
- at home
 - develop exchange programmes involving families from different countries
- extra-curricular
 - school of "taste"/ European cuisine
 - European institutions

Hierarchy of communication

- use unilateral means of communication (TV, Radio..) to communicate information on the common values and news of each country
- establish a brief section of European news in all TV news journals of all countries to create the custom of being aware of what is going on in Europe
- establish a free daily newspaper (the 20 minutes type) on European news
- TV games on Europe
- use subtitles rather than dubbing in order to accustom the citizens with the different languages
- establish minimal requirements for European TV productions
- organize festivals in the European capitals
- use music as a communication instrument – support the creation of European music bands
- libraries: have a section reserved for European publications/ publication on European issues
- develop cross-border areas in order to facilitate the relations among European countries (following the model of the garden festival between Strasbourg (France) and Kehl (Germany))
- promote access to European youth hostels and a more intense communication of their existence
- create "Europe-Cafés"

What do the European institutions need to do in order to better communicate with their citizens?

- publish annual report (concrete results)
- use more attractive means of communication (for example, subsidize the ideas in the previous paragraph)
- communication on expensive moves but not on the positive points
- poster campaigns on "Europe did this/ Europe did that..."
- establish youth councils to find out their expectations of Europe

Conclusion

The construction of Europe moves on from construction to communication. <

> **EXCHANGES AND MOBILITY**

Participants:

Emilie Magnier, Eglá Hoxha, Anne-Laure Hamelin, Gilbert Sabbadin, Claudine Muller, Violette Walther

Lack of communication on the possibilities for non-student mobility

- on funding
- on the existing programmes
- on the motivations to get involved (Counselling Centres for instance - but they do not encourage/ promote exchanges. Why not encourage local initiatives such as "theme of the week" or promotion

projects in order to stimulate curiosity and a European spirit?)

- develop and inform the networks of associations (important local resource networks) on how small organisations can access European funding; create a House of Europe that would bring together the organizations responsible for disseminating/promoting information on exchanges/mobility
- establish a clear network of information providers – to simplify and clarify information on mobility

The issue of language learning:

- there is an important need for initial training in most languages used (based on the example of Français Langue Etrangère for foreigners in France)
- create occasions/places for practicing languages outside traditional training cycles (Café Smile for example where different people come together to chat in foreign languages) in order to give people an opportunity to practice the languages they learn
- have teaching assistants to make language training more concrete
- there is a very limited number of languages available for training and therefore a limited number of countries for exchanges, generally always the same destinations.

Professional training:

- it would be interesting to exchange professional practices with peers from other countries in the EU
- Problems:
 - the issue of diploma recognition and recognition of competence in other countries. There are efforts to recognize university diplomas but none for the recognition of other types of training (animation, health professions)
 - there are no programmes conceived to help businesses in this endeavour
- the extension of DIF (Droit Individuel à la Formation/

individual right to training) to DIM (Droit Individuel à la Mobilité/ individual right to mobility)

- Current development of apprenticeship and traineeships: to go abroad in the framework of an apprenticeship or traineeship

Travel

- good accessibility to intra-European travel for the under 25 but not for other ages
- develop a tourism policy to develop intra-European tourism (develop low-cost options) <

> **YOUNG PEOPLE AND EUROPE, OR HOW TO DEVELOP A EUROPEAN CONSCIOUSNESS IN YOUTH**

Areas of reflection: education, schooling, work, citizenship

- Developing linguistic exchanges in schools, universities and professional frameworks; cultural and sport events, travelling, twinning by supporting and giving the means to do it (from municipalities, enterprises, the government, etc ...)
- Integrate Europe in professional training modules of the "tour de France des compagnons du devoir".
- Facilitate the access of young people to work in European countries and validate their experience
- Harmonise diplomas, legislation, regulation and practices
- Encourage a European civil service and, why not?, a voluntary military service in a European country of choice
- Fighting prejudices, preconceived ideas by means of education, meetings, debates and information

> **WOMEN IN EUROPE – GENDER EQUALITY: MYTH OR REALITY?**

Participants:

Mathilde Bonichot, Gisèle Ekobe, Andrée Kempf, Victor Silva, Mireille Silvestro, Christophe Tissot, Evelyne Winckler, completed by three visitors

Themes

- **Evolution of the relationship between men – women: is there equality in Europe?**
- **Are the roles assigned to women adequate?**
- Starting from the inequalities in the relationship between women and men in daily life
 - in social life
 - in cultural life
 - in professional life
- There is a need for balancing in order to reach a state of complementarity and harmony.
- The traditional roles attributed to women are:
 - Mother
 - Educator
 - Social
 - Professional
- The education and training of women are major issues in the evolution of society.
- Due to time constraints, the group focused only on the work and professional life.
- Ever since the understanding of fecundity, a significant progress marked the twentieth century. Women were integrated into the professional life bringing equal competences and qualifications and claiming equal treatment.
- Having become financially independent, women could aspire at a social evolution in order to get rid

of some stereotypes and mental schemes.

- The French-German comparison in terms of professional integration of women is significantly pointing out the cultural differences in this process.
- We note, for example, that the development of child-care facilities have allowed French women to remain in their jobs as opposed to German women.
- There are also cultural and religious obstacles in Germany. <

> **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

We need to take global action in order to protect the environment, both because we owe it to the future generations but also because it is affecting our lives (e.g. 60% of cancers are due to environmental issues/pollution). The general idea is to save energy and to use clean energies.

The main problem – and consequently the first level to act on – is the individual behaviour. Educational projects must be a part of the strategy (as for example decided by the Municipality of Strasbourg). We must particularly focus on the young generation – teaching them about sustainable development so that they can grow with a new type of behaviour and become new types of consumers.

Then we need to learn to use our resources more effectively and more efficiently (particularly when it comes to wood). 80 to 90 % of the laws being adopted in France in terms of the environment are derived from European Directives. Elimination of pollution (all types) is one important issue: for example, air pollution generated by transportation causes 340,000 deaths annually at the European level. The distances between producers and consumers should be shortened.

A European authority on water should be established; there are currently some directives, but the European Union does not assist the member states in their implementation. If directives are not met, a system of fines should be used. This is particularly important in the context of global warming with the Nordic states facing vital problems. The directives also tend to aim to the minimum, and there are no incentives for doing more. Sometimes local actions are better understood and have more weight.

It would be necessary to find a way to allow the citizens to measure their daily impact on the environment in order to stimulate responsibility. This would make people think and act more responsibly. Moreover, it would be useful to give all individuals the possibility to obtain an electric switchboard that displays information on the environmental impact of her/ his consumption.

In addition, it would be a good idea if labels contained information on the environmental impact of the product (a bottle of Vosges water shipped to Paris has a different environmental impact than one shipped to Montreal).

Very important: simplify information available on the internet (not expensive) as well as via other communication channels in order to give the people the possibility to take ethical decisions on the products they want to buy.

Initiate a European communication on health risks, with a local perspective. Also, in a more global view, the communication should be intensified in terms of frequent reports on our impact on the environment. Another idea is to transfer the social contribution of the employers towards the VAT and consequently towards the final price which would encourage

national production rather than imports and thus lead to a decrease in the negative environmental impact. Water concerns everyone – and can become a unifying theme in an effort to change the status of the European Union to a federation.

Conclusions

In 50 years time, we will be faced with problems generated by our current thoughtless management. The resources available on the planet are limited – it is crucial that we act now. We must become more responsible in our management of water, air, energy, biodiversity. We have the privilege of being able to take an ethical decision and to be able to reverse problems by a change in our behaviour in order to participate in a societal project based on a sound environmental policy - a different way for us to show solidarity, responsibility and activism. <

> CONSUMER PROTECTION

This group focused on the differences in prices in France vs. Germany (as neighbours) and, ultimately between the various countries of the EU. Variations in prices are mostly due to the different costs that go into the final price of a product (social, tax etc). Other differences might relate to the differing cultural approaches (in the case of France vs. neighbouring Germany it may be that the Germans buy to be fed while the French have a more gourmand approach). The French hard discount chains offer an image of low prices for mediocre quality, as opposed to Germany where the same quality can be found at



lower prices. There is also a difference in terms of the buying power of the two countries, as salaries differ greatly, with Germany scoring here, too. Social and health insurance differ also on the two sides of the Rhine (in Germany 10? have to be paid per trimestre which provides for illimited medical consultations) as do working conditions – which led to a pilot project experimenting with giving people in Lorraine and Sarre the option of consulting a French or German doctor, based on their own decision. However, it seems important to note that while doctors appear cheaper in Germany, it may be due to the different compositions of the system.

Other issues discussed included rules concerning gaming, selling tobacco, the various health campaigns (such as to raise awareness on obesity and the risks of poor diet – the Manger-Bouger campaign).

Europe protects its consumers, and France is doing well in this respect. A European directive requests that products need to be repaired if they show problems in the 6 months after they were sold – and the costs are carried by the seller and an ensuing AUTOMATIC warrantee of 2 years (little known but nonetheless mentioned in the French consumers' code...)

Private/ non-profit bodies acting in the field of consumer protection can, due to a recent decision, notify the relevant authorities which will investigate and further notify other relevant institutions of the poor quality of products or services (for instance – in the case of clients displeased with the services of an airline that breaks the regulations established by the EU).

Fraud is another sensitive issue; numerous deluxe products – all essentially French – are subject to

counterfeiting, which affects the industry. The French are fighting this, as opposed to Italy who, faced with similar situations, seems more tolerant, if not unable to react...

Internet fraud seems contained, but it is important to be vigilant.

The future EU constitution included a great chapter on the protection of consumers stating the fundamental rights of the consumer. It may be difficult to understand the constitution and it may partly reflect our stereotypes of Europe (many documents, bureaucracy, and lack of clarity) but it is really the contrary, it is a complex system of provisions that will be better structured and better conceived than national legislation in the field.

Europe is facing its future and the Commissioner in charge of consumer protection is active, informed and involved in what concerns the mobility of goods, their guarantees etc. A notable result is the significant reduction in the cost of communications. Some reforms, however, appear less well-translated into appears to respect all relevant legislation).

In conclusion, the group has discussed the future of consumers in Europe. Their key message was that it is important to be always well-informed when you buy something. This way the citizens will become a force that will cause the businesses to respect consumers' rights.

The group concluded by stating that they are well aware of their role as **consumactors** in the European Union; aware that we have become important stakeholders in the economy, knowing that we have to be vigilant in safeguarding a united Europe of consumers. <

> IMMIGRATION

The group started off by defining the main terms (to emigrate: to leave one's country of origin vs. to immigrate: to settle into a new country; stranger: person who does not have an EU nationality; asylum seeker, refugee).

The EU aims to preserve peace while ensuring the respect of fundamental human rights. European citizens have the freedom to move and to settle in other European countries. In terms of people moving into Europe from other countries, these can come as asylum seekers, economic migrants, and persons in an irregular situation.

The EU Constitution – valid for all member states – would allow a joint, coherent policy with regard to migration, the only thing that could ensure a proper and effective treatment of immigration issues. The alternative would be that each country regulates immigration individually – but this would have implications in terms of the Schengen area. Also, the candidate for immigration would be able to enter the Union through the weakest point and move to any other point in the Union, thus breaking national immigration laws.

On the other hand, it seems that we need to consider if the possibility to close the Union's frontiers is really an option. Because we have noticed over and over again that despite all efforts to limit immigration, it prevails. So it makes more sense to be better organized in dealing with the issue. So maybe the best way to deal with the issue is to address the causes of migration, namely security issues (wars, anarchy, insecurity), political issues, quality of life (access to resources, work), solidarity issues (unemployment,

social security, family allowances), quality of the environment etc. So it would make sense to attempt to reduce the differences in order to prevent immigration. But first we need to decide if it is really the best option, given the dramatic aging of the European population which will soon raise issues in terms of balance as well as the quality of life of all. Evidently – the birth rate in Europe is quite low – so immigration seems an opportunity as long as we are prepared for it. But, as seen above, it is crucial that Europe regulates this through a joint policy on immigration – which would lead to the creation of common Consulates.

We cannot close the borders – as this would have a social, cultural and financial impact. European history demonstrates that people always knew how

to make the most out of migration fluxes which have contributed significantly to the rich cultural heritage we share.

Finally, we will need to deal with other issues that have an impact on immigration decisions, such as pollution, since climate change provides reasons for emigration (particularly in the Indian Ocean – where the typhoons have become more violent; the Sahara desert is progressing, there is an increase in the rain in the equatorial countries which lead to floods, land slides due to the cutting of the trees with no replacements etc) - all situations that can push nations to exodus. <

The final local conference

The Strasbourg citizens' panel finished off their activities with a final conference on 28 June 2007, which was supported by the City of Strasbourg. About 40 participants were present – both members of the citizens' panel and other interested people – to listen to the final results of the two panel meetings and their international follow-up. The key citizens summarized the main ideas and proposals that had been developed in the various working groups.

In addition, a round table debate was held including Joao Sant'Anna, Representative of the European Ombudsman Office in Strasbourg; Wiebke Ecklé, French-German journalist; Lena Morel, Café Babel Strasbourg, and Gilbert Sabbadin, Club Europe Strasbourg.

Unfortunately, despite the overall support of the city of Strasbourg to the whole EURaction project and the final local conference, no city representative could take part in the event to get acquainted with the results of the panel debates. The same criticism arose with respect to the Members of the European Parliament of which several were invited in vain to the final event.

Nevertheless, the event successfully ended the pilot phase of the citizens' panel in Strasbourg with fruitful discussions and viable results.

Summary

It was very interesting to include Strasbourg in the project, being a city “at the heart of Europe” with several European institutions being based there. The rather low participation (40 people out of 450,000) was disappointing. However, the quality of the debates and the enthusiasm of the panel participants exceeded all expectations.

At the end of the two panel meetings it was almost difficult to stop the working groups in their debates which they fastidiously compiled in summary reports at the end of the day including concrete proposals to EU-decision-makers. Some proposals existed already (House of Europe, European civil service) and therefore underlined the lack of communication/publicity of some EU initiatives, whereas other suggestions were very innovative and thought-provoking such as the introduction of a Europe-wide bank holiday on May 9th or European stamps.

The co-operation with the local media was excellent throughout the project (several articles and radio interviews) and the city of Strasbourg was actively involved in the events, too, in particular in the closing conference.

A core group of at least 20 citizens was formed that insisted on continuing the panel meetings in the second half of 2007. Suggestions were made to set up a sort of “Café Europe” and to meet in one of the Strasbourg Cafés or a quieter place to continue the debates about European issues. A first meeting already took place on 27 September and the participants are currently preparing further follow-up events, hopefully with the support and interest of the European institutions.



6.2 THE POLISH CITIZENS' PANELS

The Polish partner organization Partners Polska Foundation based in Warsaw decided to apply the project and the search for “ordinary citizens” in a slightly different way from the other project partners. Three decentralized cities in Poland were chosen with very different demographic characteristics to set up three independent panels.

1. Szczecin

The city of Szczecin is located on the German border, about 55km away from the Baltic Sea and 150km from Berlin. It has a population of 411,000 and serves as the capital of Pomerania.

The Theatre in Emergency Foundation together with the University of Szczecin, the Technology Park of Szczecin and Radio Szczecin assisted in the setting up of the panel.

Target group: students

2. Białystok

Białystok, with a population of almost 300,000, is a city located in north-eastern Poland, close to the Belarusian border. It is the administrative, economic, and academic centre of the region which, due to its exceptional environmental assets, has been termed the Green Lungs of Poland.

The city is a melting pot of different nations, religions, cultures, customs and traditions. It has become an example of the integration of ethnic and religious groups, a meeting place for Poles, Byelorussians, Jews, Lithuanians, Germans, Russians and Tartars.

Partners Polska Foundation worked with the Support Centre for non-governmental organizations.

Target group: Women leaders of rural communities in Eastern Poland

3. Gronów/Dąbie

The Community of Dąbie near Gronow is located in the South-West of Poland at the border with Germany and has 5500 inhabitants.

The Alices' Foundation set up the panel in the city and its surrounding villages.

Target group: farmers and local authorities from small villages in South-Western Poland

Setting up the panels

For the recruitment of citizens, the different partner organizations used the following methods:

- personal invitations were sent to the local media
- information on the debates was announced on the websites of the local partners and their collaborators: NGOs and local institutions. In SZCZECIN, for example, 3000 invitations were sent via email-newsletter and the local radio spread the information in their news programme. In BIALYSTOK, invitation letters were sent to village women leaders, known to the Centre from past projects.
- In GRONÓW/DABIE, invitations were sent to local authorities which attended all project meetings.
- personal oral invitations delivered by active citizens to their peers and neighbours.

Agenda and profile of participants

Organiser of the debates	Place	Date of debates	Date of workshops	Description of participants
Support Centre for Non-governmental Organisations in Bialystok	Bialystok	24-25 March 2007	12 May 2007	25 rural women
Alices' Foundation	Gronów, community of Dąbie	27- 28 April 2007	30 April 2007	30 people, inhabitants of Dąbie community representatives of local government, NGOs and entrepreneurs
Theatre in Emergency	Szczecin	11-12 June 2007	28 June 2007	21 people, students, scientists and teachers of Szczecin University

Summary of the three panels

1. Białystok

In Białystok, 25 rural women leaders, representing surrounding villages and small towns, took part in the debate. The majority of these women are working for the development of their region, however, none of them has direct contact with the European institutions. During the debate, the participants wanted to discuss the benefits and negative impact of being a member of the European Union. Among the advantages they specified:

- increased standard of living;
- development of tourism;
- subsidies for farmers and for the development of the region;
- open market and open borders.

The following negative aspects were collected:

- bureaucracy and lack of stable procedures and rules of the EU institutions;
- increased migration and brain-drain;
- lack of information concerning subsidies and other opportunities the EU gives their citizens. They also discussed the very difficult situation of small farms after EU accession.

The citizens of Białystok were very pleased and enthusiastic that a citizens' panel was set up in their city. Among the most appreciated results of the debates and workshop were:

- recognising the problem of having access to information;
- finding reasons why there is a problem of information flow about the EU, its procedures and institutions;
- exchanging information on effective ways of spreading the information at the local level;
- receiving essential information about the EU, its procedures and institutions important for citizens were elaborated during the workshop.

The participants of the events in Białystok had been probably for the first time in their lives given the opportunity to express their feelings and opinions about living in the EU and the way the EU institutions function and communicate with their citizens.

2. Gronów/Dąbie

30 citizens attended the citizens' panel meetings in Dąbie: ordinary citizens of the community, people working for the local institutions, representatives of non-government organizations and business companies.

The main subject of all the meetings was "Living in the EU". The citizens were asked to identify those issues related to the EU which were interesting to them as EU citizens. The main topic turned out to be "territorial



self-government” which reflected a typical voter’s point of view. The discussion was about rights and responsibilities of the Dàbie Community citizens as inhabitants of the EU. The main conclusions from the discussions are:

- The inhabitants of Dàbie do not feel their membership to EU to the degree that they think they should do;
- They still do not think “me, the citizen of EU” and they do not think that the decisions made by the EU have got any influence on their everyday lives;
- But at the same time, they declared their willingness to travel through EU countries, not only for tourism purposes, but also to find a job there. Especially young people are more open concerning EU membership: they see the chances it brings that could change their lives. They want to study and work in the EU. It does not matter in which country – there, where they are needed at a particular time.

During the debates, the citizens also discussed the issue of Europe without conflicts. The citizens expected from the Polish Government and EU institutions to establish a peaceful and stable life. They declared that they want to live in a community where rights, duties and aims are clear, and where each citizen feels responsible.

- An important subject was “Green Europe”. The participants appealed to decision-makers in each EU country to put more emphasis on environmental protection. They have noticed that life is a subject related to nature in such a degree that trivializing these issues is a direct threat to the existence of our planet.



All participants have admitted that these types of meetings should take place more often and that debate is a good method to share your observations with other people. They appreciated the fact of having created a space for people where they can have their voice heard by EU institutions.

3. Szczecin

21 citizens of Szczecin were given the opportunity to express their ideas about the European Union within the project “EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe”. Three important local institutions were involved in the debate: University of Szczecin, Science, Technology Park of Szczecin and Polish Radio Szczecin. Several topics were suggested by the citizens to be discussed in the panel meetings:

- The problem of an ageing society. On the one hand this is a positive situation since it shows that our society is healthy and safe and that the people can live longer. But on the other hand, this creates problems such as an increase of taxes; bankruptcy of the insurance system; increasing number of immigrants that not familiar with our culture; discrimination of older people (especially on the work market). In this context, participants discussed the costs and profits related to a social state. Most of them criticized this system.
- Future of the energy system. Citizens asked: how to invest in renewable energy?
- European constitution, does the EU need a constitution?

- The citizens also discussed the issues of brain-drain, wasting EU money (in their perception too many weak projects were financed), ineffective ways of spending structural money, lack of information about EU subsidies; bureaucracy.

The level of knowledge on EU issues among the participants in Szczecin was very high, the discussions were deep and complex. The participants of the debates declared that they want to meet more often. They appreciated a lot the idea of the project. In their opinion, the project should last for a longer time. As they said “people like to discuss and want to discuss”, “people would like to meet more frequently”. In a world that is overflowed with information not everything is understandable for them and they want to stop and discuss things.

Virtual conference: panel via Internet

The final conference within the project took place on 27 July 2007. The use of the internet made it possible have all project partners participated from their home communities. The information about the Internet discussion and forum was sent to:

- Partner organizations of Partners Foundation – 30 invitations;
- Organizations’ website. As the statistics say, they were read by approximately 900 readers.

There were 13 active panellists involved in the discussion about the most effective methods of addressing people with EU issues:

- Coordinators of local debates and workshops
- Local events participants – citizens
- NGO members and local government representatives

The conference lasted for 3 hours and covered the following subjects:

- Debates organized within the EURaction project and similar initiatives designed to draw the citizens’ attention on public issues;
- Results and subjects selected in Biafjystok, Gronów/Dabie and Szczecin;
- Successful methods of citizens’ recruitment used by project partners.

The general conclusions from the virtual conference:

- Debate is an effective tool of exchange of opinions and information which is appreciated by citizens and gives them satisfaction;
- However, as the participation in all events is voluntary, it is not certain that it gives a representative picture of all Polish citizens.
- There were critical votes about a lack of feedback after the debates: people missed information about further plans of using their opinions by politicians and decision-makers.

There is a tradition of organizing citizens' debates in Poland. Citizens, however, usually focus on practical issues of the community — local development plans, planned investments (construction of new roads). These local debates are important for local citizens and create a lot of interest and emotions.

The Participants of the EURaction debates positively evaluated the combination of local issues with broader regional and European aspects. They underlined that the debates inspired them to ask questions, in particular whether they feel European or not and what does this involve.

The internet panel involved also observers who were not directly involved in the project. They shared their opinions about debates and the citizens' panels as a tool for expressing people's opinions.

Summary

The debates in Poland were successful in many terms. The topics discussed were really important for citizens and the conclusions inspired the participants to reflect more deeply about issues related to European identity. Many citizens, critical about the European Union institutions, declared a high satisfaction from the fact that their opinions were going to be heard and delivered to EU decision-makers, especially those who work in Brussels. Of course, there are important issues which influence the final evaluation of the project:

- Participants of the debates were more active in public life than average Polish citizens: it was them who wanted to become part of the initiative. So there is a questionmark if we really succeed to involve ordinary citizens.
- The participating citizens, very diverse in terms of their age, level of education, material status, were still not representative for the whole of Poland. So we can only say we learned opinions of some groups of Polish citizens, but we do not know what the rest of the Polish society thinks. However, the population of Gronów was represented in its whole diversity, so we can say we learned a lot about certain population's opinions;
- Despite all differences, the issues selected for discussion were very similar: job emigration; environmental issues; the use of EU funds; European identity.



6.3 THE LITHUANIAN CITIZENS' PANEL

Setting up the panel and profile participants

For the selection of key citizens, the Municipal Training Center in Kaunas (MTC) referred to its main target group: civil servants. The information on the project was disseminated through the MTC e-newsletter which has over 3000 recipients. The selected key citizens originated from different Lithuanian cities – Kelme, Ukmerge, Alytus, Kaunas district and Kaunas city. All of them were civil servants except for the one from Kaunas, who was a lecturer at Kaunas University of Technology. Selecting civil servants from municipalities solved the transportation problem, as the transportation was always provided by the municipalities themselves. The key citizens selected other active citizens from their local communities. These people had very different professional backgrounds (22 students, 12 civil servants, 18 community centre members, 2 unemployed), were from different social groups and the age ranged from 17 to 65. The majority of participants were women, though.

Agenda-Setting

The first panel took place on the premises of the Kaunas University of Technology. It was attended by 54 people. Using the open space methodology, the participants designed their agenda and suggested topics they wanted to discuss. During the discussions, the participants mixed with each other, having retired people discuss with students and vice-versa. Several facilitators and experts assisted in the process, since the knowledge on European issues was quite limited among the participants.

The most popular topics raised during the panel included:

- Do we feel as EU citizens?
- Employment possibilities in the EU for young people
- Study options in the EU
- Public participation in the decision-making
- EU position on common environmental problems (Baltic gas pipeline)
- Bureaucracy slows down initiatives

During the first meeting numerous representatives of Kaunas District Municipality were present. They liked the way the discussion was organized and asked MTC's help to organize their own panel meeting at Kaunas District Municipality, attended by 60 heads of neighbourhoods, heads and members of neighbourhood councils, representatives of NGOs and community centres.

The following topics were suggested by the participants:

- How to integrate the community into self-government?
- What relations should be between community centres and neighbourhood councils?
- How does the community take part in the strategic planning of the municipality?
- How can communities exert an influence on the detailed planning of their territories?
- How to make citizens more active?
- How to keep green territories?

Results of the panels

The topics discussed during the panels in Lithuania:

- Do we feel like EU citizens?
- Employment and study opportunities for young people in the EU
- Public participation in the decision-making
- EU position on common environmental problems (Baltic gas pipeline)
- Bureaucracy slows down initiatives
- Why have people stopped reading books?

> DO WE FEEL EU CITIZENS?

It was the most popular topic during the first panel.

The members of this group drew the following conclusions:

- We feel European Union citizens when we are at the airport
- Village people do not travel, do not know languages, do not communicate with other EU citizens and they do not feel that they are EU citizens
- EU support is felt (structural funds)
- EU citizenship is more relevant for young people (more possibilities in education and employment).

Problem solving:

- More information about EU needed
- More information about the opportunities and support the EU offers <

> EMPLOYMENT AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EU

The topic of the first panel was suggested by young people, mostly students. Elderly people contributed to the discussion, however.

The following proposals were made:

- Different education conditions in different countries
- Currently more exchange and mobility programmes
- Lack of information about programmes (at universities)
- Passivity of students

Problem solving:

- To exchange experiences between representatives

- of the different educational systems in the EU
- To promote exchange programmes between the countries of the EU
- To support the activities of young people <

> EU POSITION ON COMMON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS (BALTIC GAS PIPELINE)

- Bad control of forest cutting
- Lack of people
- No strict fines for poaching (many people from wealthy countries can afford it)
- Lack of common EU position on Baltic gas pipeline

Problem solving:

- Educate youth about ecological problems
- Spread EU values
- Stimulate recycling, waste sorting <

> BUREAUCRACY SLOWS DOWN INITIATIVES

- Takes too much precious time
- Very often requires unnecessary documents
- Ordinary citizens after finding out how many documents are required often decide not to participate in important initiatives

Problem solving:

- To take more trust in the citizens
- Simplify procedures
- Simplify requirements for calls for proposals
- Intensify training <



> WHY HAVE PEOPLE STOPPED READING BOOKS?

- No time
- Books are very expensive
- Internet became the main source of information
- Children stopped reading books, they spend all their time by the computer
- Parents are responsible for children's free time

Problem solving:

- To promote reading
- To reduce the prices of books
- To control children's free time <

Panel in Kaunas District Municipality

After the first successful panel meetings, Kaunas District Municipality decided to follow the good example by organising a panel meeting at the District level themselves with the help of the Municipal Training Centre. The participants consisted of heads of neighbourhoods, heads and members of neighbourhood councils, representatives of NGOs and community centres.

For the discussion the Open Space Methodology was used. The “ordinary citizens” were given the opportunity to have an informal discussion with the head of the Kaunas District Administration and the heads of their neighbourhoods. All of them were equal citizens during the discussions. The feedback was very positive and it was agreed to organise similar meetings on a regular basis.

The following topics were discussed:

- How to integrate the community into local self-government?
- Why should citizens join community centres?
- How does the community take part in the municipality’s strategic planning?
- How can we make citizens more active?
- How can we respect our environment?

> HOW TO INTEGRATE COMMUNITY INTO SELF-GOVERNMENT?

The citizens’ and communities’ participation in the decision-making processes should be encouraged which could strengthen the bonds between elected Councillors, Council Officers and the citizens they represent. All stakeholders should be involved in developing policies for the local community.

Four main problems were described:

- Citizens are not active. They do not believe that they can contribute something useful to local, regional or EU politics. They do not believe that they can influence European politics.
- The politicians, especially at the local level, are

not interested in the citizens’ participation in the decision-making processes.

- The main problem is the lack of information. There is enough information about crucial projects. However, there is lack of information what local politicians think about it. The relationship between the citizens and their councils must be improved. Politicians must give citizens the right to take initiative.
- There is no mechanism how to involve the citizens in decision-making processes. Therefore, it is not clear how ordinary citizens can participate in the local or European decision-making. The main question were how can citizens participate, which institutions should they contact and how to address the European institutions. The citizens must receive guidelines how they can participate.

For active citizens there are three conditions:

- Information
- Structure
- Institutions need to listen to their proposals.

Problem solving

Democracy may be facilitated by using modern information technology (IT). New technologies can change the way in which Councils engage and work with their citizens. IT should be used for informing the citizens of the projects the local government or the European institutions are involved in. There should also be interactive functions that give the citizens the opportunity to express their point of views. Thus, the drafting and implementation of e-Democracy projects is a very important factor for involving citizens in decision-making processes. <

Summary

Through the citizens' panel "ordinary" citizens were given the opportunity to be involved in informal discussions with the head of Kaunas District Administration and heads of their neighbourhoods. All of them were equal citizens during the discussions. The participants were very content with this. It was the first time that they were asked their opinions so directly.

However, it was noticed that there is currently a lack of knowledge among Lithuanian people with respect to the European Union, in particular in rural areas and among older people. They take a stronger interest in local issues. It could therefore be helpful to use new technologies in future projects.

Due to the overall success of the project in Lithuania, it was decided to organize similar meetings on a regular basis. This shows that citizens do care about the governance of the cities they live in and that they want to participate in the decision-making processes not only at the local level, but also at the European level.

> WHY SHOULD CITIZENS JOIN COMMUNITY CENTRES?

Problems:

- Citizens are not active; they do not see any perspectives
- Everyone cares just about him- or herself
- No cultural activities
- Youth is passive
- Lack of information
- Villages are "dying"

Problem solving:

- To select leaders
- It is easier to solve problems in communities, citizens are more active when they are the members of communities, so the local government should motivate citizens to join such communities
- To spread information among citizens, communities, local government.
- To motivate the members of communities to become active
- Social promotion <



6.4 THE CYPRIOT CITIZENS' PANEL

Index

Research and Dialogue convened the citizens' panel on Saturday 21st April at the Fulbright Centre in the buffer-zone, Nicosia Cyprus. This event was the centre piece of local, Cypriot based, activities aimed at exploring what issues preoccupied the participants as these related to the EU. Further, the event provided an opportunity to explore the utility of specific software through which participation could proceed in an open and inclusive manner.

Context

The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) joined the EU in April 2004 but did so in unique circumstances. Whilst the Republic has **de jure** authority over the whole of Cyprus, since the division of the island in 1974 it does not have **de facto** control of northern Cyprus. The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) recognized only by Turkey has effective control over this area north of the green line. So, whilst the whole of Cyprus acceded to the EU the **acquis communautaire** was suspended vis a vis the north until such time that the re-unification of the island becomes an accomplished fact.



This context was one which Index sought to approach in an imaginative way modifying the general process to suit these prevailing conditions. Firstly, it was important to take account of a significant number of people living in Cyprus who, as Turkish Cypriots might possess RoC passports and thus be citizens of the EU but reside outside the RoC's and thus the EU's full reach. Secondly, to anticipate the future reunification of the island within the EU meant that the project ought to take account of those who might enjoy the full benefits of EU membership in a future arrangement. Thirdly, to anticipate issues thrown up whereby thinking about the EU might be pursued exclusively through the prism of the Cyprus problem, a common feature of local political discourse. Finally, being aware of the political culture that predominates in Cyprus, to take account of low levels of participation in processes beyond elections and within which there is a disabling environment through which to consider citizenship beyond a 'thin' description of what that might involve.

Taking all these salient factors into account Index, with the assistance of its local partners, carefully calibrated each stage in the process of design and delivery to circumvent anticipated problems and accommodate these complex realities. Importantly, it was also proposed to explore the utility of a software package **Cogniscope**, based on interactive management principles, in order to structure and enable the content of the deliberations proposed.

The Methodology

Cogniscope

The software Cogniscope was designed to support a methodically grounded dialogue practice, the Structured Design Process (SDP), by experts who for many years deployed Interactive Management (IM). SDP (as well as IM) produces a unique means of mapping shared group intentions from the content of facilitated dialogue.

The Structured Design Process (SDP) integrates knowledge from mixed participants in strategic design settings. It is especially intended for resolving multiple conflicts of purpose and values, and in generating consensus on organizational and inter-organizational strategy, encouraging innovation and preventing 'group-think'. It enables efficiently a democratic redesign of socio-organizational systems and practices based upon a dialogical process that consolidates power relationships into consensus agreement for effective cross-functional collaborative action.

The SDP methodology engages diverse groups of stakeholders in a series of structured dialogues for collaboratively developing:

- A shared understanding of a problem space
- A prescriptive designed solution based on patterns emerging from dialogue

Step 1 – Triggering Question

A single consistent question keeps the dialogue focused on the target objective throughout the design process.

Step 2 – Responses

As stakeholders respond to the Trigger Question the process is designed to:

- Foster trust and understanding
- Build commitment
- Capture an enriched set of ideas
- Impose focus and logical consistency
- Speed consensus

Step 3 – Clustering

As similarities among the attributes of different ideas are being discovered participants assisted by the facilitators and the use of the software will:

- Group ideas by similarities among their attributes
- Remove redundancy from the idea list
- Promote learning about how to 'learn within a group'
- Generate labels for the clusters
- Establish a baseline of associations with which future learning will be reinforced.

Step 4 – Voting

Through individual, subjective and open voting, the process will:

- Create a precedent for openly sharing subjective view of importance within the design group
- Create a shared understanding of where strong consensus about importance exists (saliency)
- Focus the dialogue upon the most salient ideas

Step 5 – Mapping

Exploring the relationship between different ideas: in this process the software will:

- Provide a consistent framework for making pair-wise judgments amongst a set of ideas
- Track ideas which have been compared
- Record the comparison made between ideas
- Prompt the group to make the fewest logical comparisons needed to examine the set of ideas
- Provide a graphic summary of the network of relationships that the group has identified among ideas.

Setting up the panel and profile panel participants

The intention of the project coordinators was not to recruit an entirely representative sample from the Cypriot population as a whole. Given the remit of the project, as well as the specific conditions in Cyprus previously outlined, a targeted recruitment strategy was developed. However, Index took account of the need to ensure that a range of ages, people from a mixture of occupational backgrounds, those from rural and urban locations, etc, were represented. Emphasis was also placed on the need to recruit from both major ethnic communities on the island, irrespective of whether they live within or outside the borders of the EU. In achieving this aim the role of the Management Centre, based in northern Cyprus, was instrumental in activating a network of concerned citizens from within the Turkish Cypriot community.

Index also took account of the need to try and recruit participants who had not been involved in an EU project previously. The process of selection was initiated in partnership with a range of CSOs which formed part of an informal network of which Index is also a part – Agem, Akti and Prosvasis based in the south and the Management Centre in the north.

The participants represented key sections of society both north and south. The young, women and Turkish Cypriots were formally over-represented; virtue can be made out of this outcome since all three groups tend to be severely under-represented within participatory processes as these relate to the relationship between the EU and Cyprus.

Index also brought together an experienced team of facilitators which reflected an even mix of men and women, T/C and G/C as well as a non-Cypriot EU citizen. Three of the facilitators also undertook a three day intensive workshop on the use of the Cogniscope software. Preparation meetings explored the appropriateness

of this methodology as well as other related modalities through which to ensure maximum participation within a diverse group of discussants.

The one day event was planned to take place in the Fulbright Centre located in the buffer zone, Nicosia. Importantly, this was selected as a neutral space of equal access to those living north/south, a conscious decision to avoid the 'chill factor' sometimes involved in bringing communities together.

Initiation of Process

STEP 1 – Triggering Question

An initial triggering question was identified in preparatory meetings involving the facilitators, Index and local partners; 'What kind of EU do you want to see in 2020?' In the preparation phase this was initially tested against a sample of the participants before being presented to the group as a whole.

STEP 2 – Generation of Ideas

Participants remained in the same room throughout the day but were broken into six heterogeneous groups who clustered around tables and were encouraged to deliberate collectively about how the triggering question may be answered. Each participant then completed their own answer to the question which was then committed to a posting note and posted onto a blank wall.

With each contribution there followed a process of clarification, discussion and possible reformulation of the original idea by the group as a whole. This successful strategy had the outcome of combining exchange and dialogue but also guaranteed that all participants made an equal, recordable contribution ensuring the group as a whole had collective ownership over the process and its' results.

STEP 3 – Clustering

During the break the facilitators made a first, rough attempt, to cluster the question responses into distinct groupings in order to identify general issues and themes that appeared to preoccupy the group as a whole.

Following the break, this provisional clustering was then presented to the participants for discussion, modification and re-organisation. With the clusters presented the group was encouraged to debate the saliency of the clusters and the boundaries between them. Significant time and space was provided for this exercise since it was central to the desired outcomes of encouraging participation, testing ideas out and trying to reach a consensus about how the group as a whole might prioritize its vision of a future EU.

Each participant was encouraged to elaborate on the statement s/he had submitted, reflect on the appropriateness of the cluster into which it was provisionally placed and explore the linkages of one statement and the rest. This resulted in modification, elaboration, distinction or amalgamation more clearly articulated as this related to the original responses to the trigger question posed.

The clusters were gathered under the following headings

1. EDUCATION – I would like to see an EU that:

- 1: has a common education system
- 8: offers free and equal education
- 24: life long learning becomes a reality
- 53: provides education on religion that will lead to no discrimination

2. ENVIRONMENT – I would like to see an EU that:

- 7: has a strong network of properly protected nature reserves
- 12: with a healthy environment
- 29: is more interested in environmental problems especially global warming
- 35: places more emphasis on the problem of global warming by implementing laws and actions securing the alignment of member states to the Kyoto Agreement
- 37: encourages the spread and development of organic agriculture to promote healthy living

3. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP – I would like to see an EU where:

- 15: the citizens participate in decision making processes on critical issues
- 25: there is active citizenship in Cyprus
- 27: there is communication and mobilization between the citizens
- 46: citizens of the EU state will have the right to forward their wishes directly through their NGO's
- 52: a 'citizen charter' is acceptable and applicable to all citizens of the EU

4. SECURITY – I would like to see an EU that:

- 13: creates conditions for secure life, no crime and increased awareness about drugs
- 19: produces new measures against nuclear weapons
- 22: will produce new policies to world peace interested in other countries' social problems especially situations of war
- 40: decreases armed forces internationally
- 50: lifts restrictions imposed on non-member states particularly developing countries

5. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM – I would like to see an EU that:

- 2: has simpler procedures for access to the EU institutions
- 9: provides statistical information for consulting for education
- 10: provides research facilities
- 39: prepares an infrastructure for future problems that are already foreseen
- 42: imposes heavy fines on member states

- 48: has Turkish as the 24th official language
- 49: decreases bureaucracy

6. EQUALITY – I would like to see an EU which:

- 14: provides equal opportunities for all European citizens
- 30: has real gender equality
- 31: provides an equal balance of economic, social and cultural opportunities in all member states
- 33: does not discriminate between communities within any member state
- 34: works more strongly to incorporate those with disabilities into the communities, implementing strict laws and controls
- 36: fights against racism
- 45: will support and develop policies for the less developed countries within the EU.
- 53: provides education on religion that will lead to no discrimination

7. HARMONIZATION – I would like to see an EU that:

- 3: operates well and in harmony internally as well as with third countries
- 4: separates EU from imperialistic goals of individual countries
- 5: develops policy and legislation bearing in mind the particularities of all EU member states
- 16: is really integrated with no border separation
- 18: is a state consisting of various countries which possess the same rights
- 28: would come up with mechanisms to integrate countries but also respect their particularities
- 38: works with more commitment to integrate the communities and create a European identity
- 41: has common welfare system
- 43: will be strong enough to resist outside pressure for example from the USA
- 44: has one monetary system without exceptions within the EU
- 51: works in a common language and provides adequate education for this language to be taught

STEP 4 – Voting Procedure

Having thoroughly aired specific perspectives and established a richer understanding of the clusters each participant was allocated votes to be given, on the basis of imputed importance, to the individual statements generated by the triggering question.

In-putting the data related to the votes allocated generated a list of key propositions ranked according to the votes allocated. (For results see Appendix 2)

STEP 5 – Mapping

The utility of the software was demonstrated by the next procedure which aimed to identify, with the active involvement of the participants, what were the ‘root’ ‘Ideas’ which could be taken to realize the visions of the group as a whole. Whilst there was not enough time to complete the procedure in the context of

the workshop and indicative results emerged which identified a 'common education system' as being a bridging or enabling issue which would influence the realization of other goals which included:

- The fight against racism
- Equal opportunities
- Uniting Cyprus
- Addressing environmental issues
- Establishing EU nature reserves
- A healthy environment
- A common welfare system

This final mapping exercise remained uncompleted, pursued in a very short space of time at the end of the day. It thus only generated provisional and incomplete results. Consequently, they are presented here as indicative of the full reach of the process associated with Cogniscope rather than as a conclusive outcome.

Results of the panel meeting – List of Ideas

Triggering question: “In 2020 I would like to see a European Union that”:

Idea 1: Has a common education system

Elaboration: Enable mobility of students. The Bologna Process.

Idea 2: Has simpler procedures for access to the EU institutions

Elaboration: If I want to have a question, opinion, or comment, I would like to send a message directly and get a direct response.

Idea 3: Operates well and in harmony internally as well as with third countries

Elaboration: Religious and cultural harmony within the EU, that will also affect the Mediterranean region will also prevent terrorism and the threat of war in the region. Europe with one voice.

Idea 4: Separates EU from imperialistic goals of individual countries

Elaboration: England, Germany, France

Idea 5: Develops policy and legislation bearing in mind the particularities of all EU member states

Elaboration: For example, in environmental legislation, to take the climatic differences into consideration, take account of differences of scale.

Idea 6: Has a strong network of properly protected nature reserves

Elaboration: There is a network, but it is not applied properly in most countries



Idea 7: Offers free and equal education

Elaboration: Free of charge education because it is not currently free for all. Equal access to all universities.

Idea 8: Provides statistical information for consulting for education

Elaboration: Not enough information and research for the field of education. The new graduates that want to go to university, for example want to know the possibilities after graduation. We do not have this kind of information available 9: Provides in Cyprus, so all European countries should provide it.

Idea 9: Research facilities.

Idea 10: With a healthy environment to live in

Elaboration: For example pollution and recycling issues, environmentl means both physical and social environment

Idea 11: Provides secure life, no crime, increased awareness about drugs

Elaboration: A secure life for our children

Idea 12: Provides equal opportunities for all European citizens

Elaboration: In all fields

Idea 13: The citizens participate in decision-making processes on critical issues

Elaboration: Crucial means issues that directly affect people

Idea 14: Is really integrated, with no border separation

Elaboration: Not only the 27 member states but all European countries on the continent

Idea 15: With education on religion that will lead to no discrimination

Elaboration: Respect people's religious choices

Idea 16: A state consisting of various countries possessing the same rights

Elaboration: The stronger countries should not have more rights than other countries

Idea 17: Produce new measures against nuclear weapons

Idea 18: Protects own culture and does not destroy local cultures

Elaboration: That the integration process does not destroy diversity, respect and preservation of all cultures of the member states

Idea 19: Will produce new policies to world peace

Elaboration: To go beyond national interest and to produce policies to solve global problems

Idea 20: Life-long learning becomes a reality

Elaboration: Learning beyond university, and personal development, good practices for learning

Idea 21: Active Citizenship in Cyprus

Elaboration: Cyprus is active in European decision-making

Idea 22: Is interested in other countries' social problems especially situations of war

Elaboration: Should do as a Union

Idea 23: Communication and mobilisation between the citizens

Elaboration: Freedom of travel

Idea 24: That would come up with mechanisms to integrate countries but also respect their particularities

Elaboration: Single legislation for all countries, but pay attention to specific problems

Idea 25: Is more interested in environmental problems especially global warming

Elaboration: Cancer rates are high on both sides of Cyprus. More food safety.

Idea 26: Has real gender equality

Idea 27: Provides an equal balance of economic, social and cultural opportunities in all member states

Idea 28: With a united Cyprus that includes all its communities in the EU

Idea 29: Does not discriminate between communities within any member state

Elaboration: All communities in all member states

Idea 30: Works more effectively to incorporate those with disabilities into the communities, implementing strict laws and controls

Elaboration: Life-long education and physical therapy, not to worry about social security when get older. To get the necessary assistance.

Idea 31: Places more emphasis on the problem of global warming by implementing laws and actions securing the alignment of member states to the Kyoto agreement

Elaboration: To apply pressure on other countries that are not in the EU to align themselves to the Kyoto agreement

Idea 32: Fighting racism

Elaboration: Racism is a threat for Europe

Idea 33: Encourages the spread and development of organic agriculture to promote healthy living

Elaboration: Less use of chemicals

Idea 34: Works with more commitment to integrate the communities and create a European identity

Idea 35: Prepares an infrastructure for future problems that are already foreseen

Elaboration: To use the necessary technology to anticipate and prevent future problems

Idea 36: Decreases armed forces internationally

Idea 37: With a common welfare system

Idea 38: That imposes heavy fines on member states

Elaboration: So the procedures do not take as long as they currently do.



Idea 39: Will be strong enough to resist outside pressure for example from the USA

Idea 40: With one monetary system without exceptions within the EU

Idea 41: Will support and develop policies for the less developed countries within the EU

Idea 42: Citizens of the EU states will have the right to forward their wishes directly through their NGOs

Idea 43: Provides better quality in health services

Idea 44: Has Turkish as the 24th official language

Idea 45: Will decrease bureaucracy

Idea 46: Lifts restrictions imposed on non-member states particularly LEDCs.

Idea 47: Works in a common language and provides adequate education for this language to be taught.

Elaboration: There is an already existing language but only as a working language, access to this education for those who are not in the educational system currently.

Idea 48: Has a citizen charter acceptable and applicable to all citizens of the EU

Idea 49: Provides education on religion that will lead to no discrimination

Voting results: Relative importance of actions proposed

1. Provides equal opportunities for all European citizens (11 votes)
2. Provides an equal balance of economic, social and cultural opportunities for all member states (11 votes)
3. With a united Cyprus that includes all its communities (11 votes)
4. Has a common educational system (10 votes)
5. Has a strong network of properly protected nature reserves (6 votes)
6. Is more interested in environmental problems, especially global warming (6 votes)
7. Fighting racism (6 votes)
8. With a healthy environment to live in (5 votes)
9. Places more emphasis on the problem of global warming by implementing laws and actions securing the alignment of member states to the Kyoto agreement (5 votes)
10. With a common welfare system (5 votes)
11. Separates the union from imperialistic goals of individual countries (4 votes)
12. Offers free and equal education (4 votes)
13. Protects own culture and does not destroy local cultures (4 votes)
14. Active citizenship in Cyprus (4 votes)
15. Works more effectively to incorporate those with disabilities into the communities, implementing strict laws and controls (4 votes)
16. Works with more commitment to integrate the communities and create a European identity (4 votes)
17. Provides better quality in health services (4 votes)
18. Develops policy and legislation bearing in mind the particularities of all EU member states (4 votes)
19. Provides secure life, no crime, increased awareness about drugs (3 votes)
20. Produce new measures against nuclear weapons (3 votes)
21. Does not discriminate between communities within any member state (3 votes)
22. With one monetary system without exceptions within the EU (3 votes)
23. Provides education on religion that will lead to no discrimination (3 votes)
24. Is interested in other countries' social problems especially war (2 votes)

25. Has real gender equality (2 votes)
26. Will be strong enough to resist outside pressure for example from the USA (2 votes)
27. Has Turkish as a the 24th official language (2 votes)
28. Has simpler procedures for access to the EU institutions (1 vote)
29. The citizens participate in decision-making processes on critical issues (1 vote)
30. A state consisting of various countries possessing the same rights (1 vote)
31. Will produce new policies for world peace (1 vote)
32. Prepares an infrastructure for the problems of the future that are already foreseen (1 vote)
33. Will support and develop policies for the less developed countries within the EU (1 vote)
34. Will decrease bureaucracy (1 vote)
35. Lifts restrictions imposed on non-member states particularly LEDCs (1 vote).

The other topics didn't receive any votes.

Overview and conclusion

Cyprus is a small, deeply divided island, where citizen's participation has frequently not been actively encouraged by the prevailing political and wider culture. To bring together 40 diverse individuals from a variety of backgrounds for a workshop of this sort was an achievement in itself.

However, it was the ability to successfully explore means and methods of participation which proved particularly fruitful for both the organizers and participants alike. Secondly, the content of the deliberation and decision-making process which generated fruitful results which mark the project as a whole and this specific exercise as a success.

In relation to modalities:

- The selection procedure, exploiting established networks, ensured a sample from diverse groups and backgrounds.
- The venue selection was important in providing a neutral space within which potentially divisive issues could be safely aired.
- Skilled facilitators ensured that the methods employed and the categories used were user-friendly.
- Translation issues were a notable challenge when three languages – Turkish, Greek and English were being used. Some of the Turkish Cypriot participants could only speak Turkish resulting in some of the other participants having to devote time to translate. Future inter-communal initiatives of this sort ought to build attempts to resolve this practical issue into future planning and budgeting.
- The software was easily used, if time consuming: However, it produced important insights which might not have easily arisen if more orthodox methods of managing the deliberation and decision-making process had been employed.

In relation to the process and subsequent results:

- Discussing the future of the EU proved to be an issue of common concern despite apparent differences between group members.
- It was significant that participants generally transcended a viewpoint that approached the issues raised exclusively through the prism of the 'Cyprus Problem'.
- Throughout the process the group remained together in the same space, working as a single team, rather than being devolved into sub-groups meeting separately. In this way the participants were genuinely a single Citizen's Panel, each participating on an equal basis.
- Ensuring that each participant was afforded the possibility of making their contribution known empowered the group as a whole which allowed confidence to accumulate as the workshop unfolded.
- The results were creative and insightful – rather than generating a list of specific issues, the software allowed the relationships between one issue and the next to be explored, clustering to occur and a complex cause/effect process to emerge more clearly.
- In achieving this, the grounds for more effective deliberation was established and the conditions through which to explore each perspective was achieved.



6.5 THE ITALIAN CITIZENS' PANEL

“The fight for Europe started a long time ago. Councils, debates, treaties, ratifications etc represent the eager and hard political labour of today’s Europe. Ignoring or pretending to ignore the present social, political and spiritual conditions of the Europeans would be a foolish act.

We, young students, have to feel the new exigencies that the present history of Europe involves. Only in unity Europe can rise again and continue that path of shining civilization which is defense and guarantee of freedom. It is the fundamental principle for each democratic state. Europe united. We should be the paladins of this idea, which isn’t nor doesn’t want to be, at service of no foreign power but at exclusive service of European peace and wealth. Today the pillar of European defense is situated not in the barracks but in the universities. The Union can only come from an increasing conscience of Europe in an increasing number of Europeans. For us students it’s a duty to cultivate that conscience of Europe in our souls and spread it all around us.”

A juvenile writing of a participant of the Mogliano Veneto citizens’ panel, drafted in January 1955

Setting up the panel and profile of participants

The Municipality of Mogliano Veneto decided to select seven key citizens that were already known to the Human Rights Office of the city, most of them City Councillors or people involved in NGOs or enterprises. These seven key citizens then went on to recruit other participants, altogether approximately 40 people.

Being a rather small town (27,000) this number is all the same a success and shows the strong interest that people have in European issues. The participants were aged between 26 – 70. It was difficult to convince younger people, unfortunately.

Agenda-Setting

The questions to be discussed during the meeting of the citizens' panel were the following:

- What role does each of us have and could have in the construction of the European Union, and European integration?
- What is the meaning for the people in Mogliano Veneto to be active citizens who participate in the construction of the European Union, to what extent are we influenced by and could we ourselves exert influence on the European Union?

After dealing with these introductory questions, the participants themselves by using the open space methodology decided which issues they wanted to discuss in more detail:

- A divided Europe: how can we unite it? Cooking and traditions
- Welfare in Europe
- Education
- Constitution: education, welfare, election mechanisms, non-religious Europe, information
- Referendum
- In a Europe which spread peace, let's talk about the environment
- History, meaning and culture
- Language, economy and welfare
- Saving energy in construction and bio-construction

The citizens of Mogliano Veneto decided to talk about the European Union, trying to identify with it and trying to feel themselves as part of its history and to spread its values and development in the member states.

Non-economic development, but social and sustainable development without differences, for instance, between the north and south of Italy and in general of all member states, of services, policies, and values seemed important.

In fact, the citizens asked and hope that Europe would be an institution to assure the quality of life, including welfare and education, to establish inside and outside the borders of the EU a culture of peace, and that the EU would be able to promote and enforce environmental issues by applying environmental criteria in construction and respecting the environment.

They finally think that the European Union is able, as a trans-national institution, to overcome the difficulties of each member state, in Italy for instance through policies, treaties, directives which start positive processes with significant outcomes on the local level.

The panel in Mogliano Veneto showed that the citizens' interest in the European Union rises if we talk about the role of European policies and the possibility for women and men to see their opinions taken into consideration, i.e. to affirm that local citizenship is a pre-condition of active European citizenship. Each decision concerning a local policy in terms of economy, welfare, institution, and culture is a result of a "cosmopolite" choice and vice-versa.

The citizens' panel in Mogliano Veneto tried to answer the obvious, but some questions remained unsolved in particular with respect to the political responsibility the European Union bears.

The panel calls for the EU to be a community as appreciated as national administrations, being able to avoid that only economic principles rule societal life. They stipulate that there should be a real European political power inspired by strong cultural and ethical principles.

The Mogliano Veneto citizens' panel proposes to pass on from mostly "negative" measures – aimed to remove obstacles to the functioning of the market – to "positive" ones to promote common policies in numerous fields of life such as culture and social issues.

Results from the panel meetings

> **A DIVIDED EUROPE: HOW CAN WE UNITE IT? COOKING AND TRADITIONS**

- Food as instrument of socialisation (twinning, school exchange, experience of twinning activated by the Municipality of Mogliano Veneto not well-known, convivial gatherings)
- The same food prepared in different styles with different habits and at different times (direct and indirect experiences in other European countries)
- Nutrition and recipes reflect the specificity of the local culture
- Typical guaranteed products: safeguard and promotion of national products but also of foreign products

- To use "simple" and "soft" approach (music, sport, art etc) to spread the knowledge of different local tastes
- Cultural traditions (folklore, theatre, dance): the significance of sharing them and spreading them. Opportunities of exchange and conviviality.
- Food as key of knowledge and exchange <

> **HEALTH POLICY IN EUROPE**

- Efficiency of assistance avoiding so that an appropriate health service can be guaranteed
- To assume the strengths of foreign experience in terms of health policies

- An assistance which inspires confidence
- Old people's home near the place of residence in order to avoid alienation
- Respect the dignity of sick and old people
- More resources from Europe for sick or disabled people and more support for research
- Management of health policies entrusted to highly skilled managers and not directly dependent on the politics, creation of control mechanisms <

> EDUCATION

- The main idea is to start from a local identity to develop a European identity
- To assure a constant training and education on EU issues at all age levels starting with primary school children, stressing the analogies of history, geography, culture
- To assure a common educational system and recognition of diploma at a European level
- The study of foreign languages should be done with the help of native speaker teachers
- To introduce a European quiz show "Europe in pills" to provide basic information on the EU
- University education: problems such as brain drain and shortage of funds for Italian research (how can Europe help us?) <

> EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

The European Constitution has to be partly rewritten and ratified by all EU countries, during this process the following indications should be taken into account:

1. Laity in the EU

Starting from the request of Pope Benedetto XVI to put in the European Constitution a statement related to the Christian roots of Europe, we consider unacceptable to create religious differences between citizens.

In order to be able to represent freely and democratically the culture of each country, the EU has to be founded on secularism and the respect for all religious beliefs.

We should avoid the risk of breeding religious extremism, remembering what history teaches us: religious extremism could become an explosive device during the crisis of a nation or between several nations.

2. Voting mechanisms

The principle of unanimity used for the approval of every proposal or modification provided by the present legislation risks to paralyse the evolution of the EU.

Therefore, it is crucial to find a mechanism to safeguard the opinion of the majority of the member states and to permit to decide democratically also without unanimity. A two/third-system could be taken into account.

3. Information

We state that the citizens lack information on what the EU represents and consequently some people adopt a nationalist attitude. Having said this, we advocate to include specific programmes on European issues in the national TV news in order to increasingly build up a European identity. <

> EDUCATION AND HEALTH SYSTEM

As regards education, we ask for an acceleration of the following:

- Education planning
- Official recognition of diploma
- taking into account the different cultures and applying integration mechanisms

As for the health systems we call for:

- Price equalization
- Standardization of quality
- Regulation of all medicines, holistic medicines included

In these two fields, it is fundamental to create effective and efficient control mechanisms (with the possibility to impose sanctions) <

> REFERENDUM

Why did they hold a referenda in France and the Netherlands, differently from many other EU countries?

What are the guarantees that assure that the referendum done in Italy will be respected?

- To adopt the same referendum system for the whole EU
- To introduce direct democracy (referenda) for all main political decisions (foreign policy, Euro, constitution, language)
- Referenda are the most democratic methods and have to be used as often as possible.

- Decisions, more and less important, if taken through the parliamentary system are interpreted as an imposition, often not understood and reluctantly accepted by the citizens. <

> IN A EUROPE WHICH SPREAD PEACE, LET'S TALK ABOUT ENVIRONMENT

Europe bearer of peace:

- To get over the present concept of NATO and to constitute a European Defense Structure
- A European seat at the UN (with veto right)
- A strong European identity
- Integration of the Balkan countries to the EU
- There isn't enough information on a united Europe
- Europe was born from the need of peace
- Europe as a large area of peace which promotes and exports peace
- The European Parliament has to adopt ethical regulations for the production and commercialization of goods, considering the environmental and ethical aspects in production processes
- Production policies have to respect every human being without exploiting them
- To increase scientific research looking for alternative energies
- Competition for decreasing resources can provoke conflicts
- Water is a natural element and the right to access to it represents a universal human right since fundamental for people's existence. Water should not become property of whatever international private corporation.
- Production and disposal of waste, attention to limit the production of waste. <



> HISTORY, MEANING AND CULTURE

The present European legislation has been built upon a historical and cultural foundation of Europe which goes through 2000 years of history.

The main issue is the knowledge of the history of Europe and of the European countries as an important instrument to build up a common European identity.

The conscience of being European has to be based on historical knowledge. Studying the history of every single EU member state would take a lot of time and commitment. Probably it is sufficient to study the historical process which involved several countries to feel the inescapable links between EU countries.

The debate pointed out:

- To increase, through education the knowledge of the history and culture of each European country.
- To develop exchange opportunities through study travels and jobs. This is the best approach because direct meetings help integration.
- To promote the importance and the modernity of history in schools
- Impulses from the families are very rare, our present society doesn't promote them. The contribution made by the introduction of the Euro was fundamental in terms of mutual knowledge between countries. <

> LANGUAGE, ECONOMY AND WELFARE

The main question was:

What are the nationalist dynamics which prevent people from feeling European?

There are different forms of nationalisms. Mogliano tends to protect its own interests that are those of a rich region of Italy.

The idea of the Euro is not wrong. The Euro unites economy and countries. The problem is the way the Euro has been introduced (prices increased).

There should be a policy to inform the citizens more efficiently. The fact we did not do the referendum in Italy implies that we lost an opportunity to raise awareness on EU issues. The EU could organize the same referendum throughout EU.

It is necessary to have a common language, English completed by national words (pizza, toilette, loco...). The economy is fundamental for Europe, the Euro permits immediate comprehension. But the EU should grow into something bigger, including other aspects than just economic issues.

In synthesis:

- Eliminate the destructive separatist and nationalist tendencies in Italy
- The Euro is not wrong, but the exchange rate with Lira was wrong.
- The difference with England, it is culturally and economically more advanced than the rest of Europe, leading to a refusal of the Euro.
- Not enough European culture, the mass media can favour cultural progress, giving preference to a cultural union versus an economic union
- Use of referenda to propose laws
- Use of specific resources praising the specificities of each

- It is necessary to use only one European voice which talks to the world
- The EU has been constituted by a free decision of free peoples, even if it has to be pointed out that this process involved only high political levels.

Regulation of production and health standards. Europe should expand considering the risks: economic, cultural, political and international (for instance Turkey). <

> SAVING ENERGY IN CONSTRUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is necessary to create specific legislation at national and local level in the matter of sustainable development. We have to promote energy saving.

Attention to energy saving is not enough, the EU has to create a restrictive regulation. It should be first applied in public buildings and schools. At the local level (municipalities), it is important to apply what has been decided by the EU, recommendations and directives. For example, thermo voltaic panels are expensive and people do not install them. The EU has to support the research of new materials and technologies in order to promote energy saving. The new regulations should be applied straight away when constructing new buildings.

The EU should support the people who use energy saving materials in construction. Awareness raising activities have to be promoted in order to permit the exchange of information on technologies. Municipalities should control the real application of the regulations in the new projects. The EU should promote effective awareness campaigns on environmental issues. <

Summary

Although the Municipality of Mogliano Veneto had difficulties in recruiting more than 40 people, the ones that were participating in the panel, were extremely motivated and active. For example, a group of ten people participated in the exchanges of the trans-national citizens' panel meeting in Rovigo in June 2007. There remains the doubt whether the opinions of the ones that took part in the panel can be claimed representative for all citizens of Mogliano Veneto....

All in all, it was a very positive experience for the city to be involved in this type of pilot project and it would therefore be desirable to have a follow-up project.

7. CONCLUSION AND RESULTS

Despite the different approaches in the five partner countries – from the use of a computer programme (Cyprus) to the setting up of three different panels in different cities (Poland) – one can say that the project was implemented in all of them in a successful way. Sometimes local or national problems seemed to have dominated the discussions (Cyprus, Lithuania), but there was nevertheless a strong European focus in all debates and concrete recommendations were developed, in particular by the Strasbourg and Italian panel. The question whether it brings advantages or challenges to be a member of the European Union, was only discussed in the new EU member states and shows that more than 50 years of a united Europe bear fruits.

It was particularly interesting to see that there were some recurring topics in all the panels:

- education
- environmental issues
- youth and mobility

All the participants stressed how content they were to have been given the opportunity to participate in such a pilot project, in particular the two international meetings in Italy and Cyprus. It would therefore be desirable to continue the work of the panels and to organize further international exchanges.

With respect to the methodology, one can summarize that it was quite a challenge to mobilize a high number of “ordinary citizens” to participate in the panels. Some of our partners rather recruited the participants within their existing networks of civil society organisations or university students (Lithuania, Poland, partly Cyprus), while the Italian Municipality of Mogliano Veneto designated the key citizens –most of them local elected councillors - who were then responsible for the further selection process. One can call into question whether we really worked with “ordinary citizens” in all five panels, but at the same time we can ask ourselves if it is possible to mobilise people who take no interest at all in European affairs? Some partners were also afraid that the panels could be instrumentalised by extremist groups or institutions, but no such case occurred throughout the project.

Another debate is also needed with respect to the terminology. Many participants were not very content with the designation “ordinary citizens” - it may even have kept some people from participating in the first place. Of course, there are different linguistic and cultural traditions in this context throughout Europe. For example in the German language one rather speaks of “Normalverbraucher” (citizen consumer) or “der kleine Mann der Straße” (“the little man on the street”), but the final evaluation meeting in Cyprus showed that there is a need for a neutral term such as “European citizens” in its vastest sense.

The set objective of 60 participants per panel was definitely too ambitious: approximately 40 participants seems more realistic. The Open Space Methodology proved to be a successful tool whatever age group or professional/cultural background the panel participants had. With the open and democratic way, discussions were being led during the project, astonishing ideas and results emerged. The fact that some of the proposals referred to already existing programmes and institutions (e.g. the setting up of Europe Houses or a European voluntary service) underlines the necessity to enhance the communication between the European institutions and their citizens including an intensified European curriculum in schools and universities.

One of the crucial challenges will be to transfer the ideas and recommendations to the European institutions and other European stakeholders, so that they will be given an appropriate follow-up. No reaction from the European Union would be a strong disappointment for all panel participants and would certainly lead to a further alienation from the EU institutions. But giving the citizens the feeling that their opinion is valuable and worth listening to would undoubtedly be a step forward towards a united Europe of the citizens!

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