

# European Citizens' Consultations

## Project Summary

September 2006

*The European Citizens Consultations are organised by a group of independent organisations led by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium) in collaboration with European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), the European Policy Centre (EPC) and the Network of European Foundations (NEF). They are supported by Compagnia di San Paolo, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Robert Bosch Stiftung. The European network of partners and funders includes organisations from all Member States. The Citizens' Consultations at national level are organised by coordinating partners at and co-financed by national funders.*



European Citizens' Consultations

Making your voice heard



## About the project

*Europe needs to engage with its citizens more than ever before. The European Citizens' Consultations provide the first-ever opportunity for members of the public from all 25 Member States to debate the future of the European Union across the boundaries of geography and language. Citizens exchange opinions, develop together their ideas on the future direction of Europe, and communicate their perspectives to policy-makers. Simultaneous and interlinked events across Europe allow every citizen to make his or her voice heard. The consultations and their follow-up aim at inspiring both European and national institutions and decision-makers as they prepare to take decisions on the next phase of Europe's development. The process is funded and organised by an independent consortium of foundations and non-profit organisations from all over Europe and led by the King Baudouin Foundation. It is co-sponsored by the European Commission's communication strategy "Plan D".*

## Objectives and participants

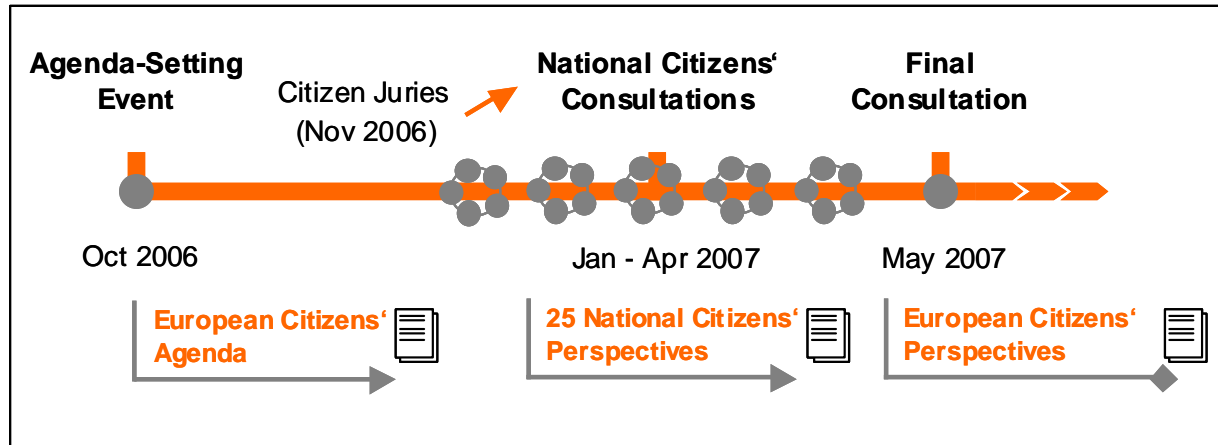
The consultations and their follow-up go beyond most European communication initiatives. The citizens of Europe are at the centre of the project: Reflecting and representing the diversity of the entire EU population, they engage into an authentic and exciting European dialogue. They are chosen at random whilst making sure that different age groups, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds are represented. Further criteria are added as appropriate in each country. During the deliberations, the participants can draw back on experts if needed, but it is them who set the agenda of the debates, identify common ground and formulate recommendations to policy-makers. Without requiring any special knowledge or language capabilities, they exchange expectations, hopes, and concerns across boundaries and cultures. Innovative dialogue design, modern technology, and simultaneous interpretation into all official languages of the EU overcome the typical barriers to effective participation – ensuring that each citizen can make his or her voice heard. The consultations will create a truly European discussion, bringing citizens from all Member States together to deliberate and linking simultaneous national debates on a shared agenda of broad ideas and visions set by the citizens themselves.

## Partners and funders

The European Citizens' Consultations are organised by a group of independent organisations led by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium) in collaboration with the European Action Service, the European Policy Centre and the Network of European Foundations. They are supported by Compagnia di San Paolo, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Robert Bosch Stiftung. The European network of partners and funders includes organisations from all Member States. They are supported by communication consultancy IFOK and opinion research agency OPTEM in implementing and organising the consultations at European and national level.



## Events and follow-up



The *Agenda-Setting Event* in Brussels on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> October 2006 kicks off the process. 200 citizens from all 25 Member States discuss the overall question of “what Europe do we want?” and thereby set the agenda for the following debates at national level. In November 2006, *Citizen Juries* meet to assess which kind of information the participants of the national consultations require to lead a fruitful discussion. At the heart of the dialogue are the *National Citizens' Consultations* – simultaneous, interlinked debates in all 25 Member States. From January to April 2007, they ask “what is needed to achieve the Europe we want?”. Each consultation has four other consultations in other Member States happening at the same time. They exchange their results and enable a European dialogue across locations. The 25 national reports serve as the basis for a European-level synthesis during the *Final Consultation* in May 2007, highlighting the common ground and the areas of divergence between the national outcomes. The final event also kicks off a comprehensive follow-up process, which actively communicates the outcomes to policy-makers and provides feedback to citizens.

## A model for European citizen participation

The European Citizens' Consultations are more than a one-time exercise in citizen involvement. They are designed as a model for dialogue across the boundaries of geography and language and thereby aim at establishing a template for future European citizens' participation projects that

- § create dialogue in a multilingual and decentralised setting,
- § empower randomly chosen citizens to set the agenda and lead informed debates,
- § use innovative facilitation methods and modern technology to make every voice heard.

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