

European Citizens' Consultations 2009



**What can the EU do to
shape our economic and
social future in a globalised
world?**

**Results of the European Citizens'
Consultations**

11 May 2009



**European Citizens'
Consultations**

The economic and social future of Europe



About the ECC 2009

The European Citizens' Consultations 2009 (ECC 2009) brought together citizens from all 27 EU Member States in the run-up to the 2009 European elections to debate the question:

“What can the EU do to shape our economic and social future in a globalised world?”

An online debate

A pan-European online debate marked the first stage in the ECC 2009 process. Between December 3 2008 and the national consultations in March 2009, more than 250,000 people from all over Europe visited the ECC websites set up in every EU Member State to discuss and put forward their ideas on what the EU can do shape our economic and social future. This debate took place in the national languages of each country, enabling all members of the public to make their voices heard and propose ideas for action. The top ten proposals from the online debate in each country were fed into that country's national consultation for discussion by the citizens who attended the event.

27 national conferences

The 27 national conferences were attended by a total of 1,605 citizens selected at random to reflect their country's demographic composition by professional opinion research institutes. These conferences, held simultaneously in nine countries at a time over three weekends in March 2009, were the heart of the ECC process. They enabled citizens to develop recommendations on Europe's economic and social future, and to discuss them with key national and European policy-makers. The European Citizens' Consultations do not take a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. While all the consultations followed the same basic format, the size of these events varied from a minimum of 30 participants to a maximum of 150. On the second day, the citizens were given the opportunity to debate their recommendations with national MEPs and candidate MEPs in the run-up to the June European elections.

A European Citizens' Summit

The outcomes of all these national deliberations were then drawn together to prepare a European overview of national recommendations, shortly after the last round of the consultations was held. This overview of the top ten recommendations from all 27 Member States was then debated online by the general public and the final 15 European recommendations were selected by those citizens who attended the consultations at national level.



These 15 European recommendations formed the basis of the European Citizens' Summit, attended by 150 participants from the 27 national consultations, which was held in Brussels on the May 10-11 2009. Here, citizens finalised a set of European recommendations and discussed these with European policy-makers, including the heads of the EU's institutions and European political party leaders.

Regional follow-up debates

The citizens' recommendations will be discussed with newly-elected Members of the European Parliament and other opinion-leaders at regional conferences in five EU Member States in autumn 2009. A final event will also be held in Brussels to draw all the strands together and discuss the results in front of an audience of Brussels-based policy-makers, stakeholders and media. The results will also be disseminated to the newly-appointed European Commission as it begins its term of office

Partners

The European Citizens' Consultations are organised by a group of independent not-for-profit organisations including foundations, NGOs, universities and think-tanks from all EU Member States led by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium). The ECC 2009 is co-financed by the European Commission under its "Debate Europe" programme, the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium), Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy), Robert Bosch Stiftung (Germany), Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Sweden), Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (Finland), Svenska kulturfonden (Finland), OSI Sofia (Bulgaria), Fondation de France, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal), Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Pears Foundation (all UK) and ING (Netherlands).



European Concerns

Asked about their key concerns regarding their economic and social future, the 1605 citizens involved in the consultations which took place in each Member State raised a wide range of issues:

In 26 consultations, concerns about the social situation in Europe were discussed. Issues raised included the consequences of demographic change, problems with current healthcare systems, fears of declining living standards and weak protection of the socially disadvantaged.

In 25 consultations, people voiced serious concerns about the economic and financial crisis, and its consequences for the competitiveness of the EU, potentially leading to an increasing poverty and unemployment. Especially in the new Member States, citizens were worried about increasing protectionism regarding the labour markets within the EU.

In 22 consultations, participants raised concerns about environmentally friendly energy supplies, future energy security and the future availability of natural resources.

In 21 consultations, the democratic deficit, a lack of transparency and too much bureaucracy in the EU institutions was of concern to participants. Corruption in the Member States and inefficient use of EU funds was also mentioned.

In 16 consultations, environmental issues such as air, water, soil and waste pollution were of concern.

In 15 consultations, citizens were worried about the low quality of, and lack of adequate resources for, the educational system.

In 13 consultations, people raised concerns about migration into the European Union, the fact that asylum seekers are not spread equally within the EU and about increasing racism against migrants.

In 10 consultations, the security situation was mentioned as a concern by the participants.

In 10 consultations, citizens were worried about the uncertain future of agriculture, such as the loss of traditional agriculture and environmental problems caused by farming.



European Recommendations

With additional input from participants at the **European Citizens' Summit** on May 10th 2009 in italics below each recommendation

No.	Recommendation	Votes
1	<p>The EU should aim to reduce global warming and phase-out fossil fuels by promoting renewable energy from water, solar, wind, hydrogen, waste and residues from industry. Member States should cooperate and develop energy sources on the basis of both national and regional conditions. This includes de-centralised energy production, energy self-sufficient regions and communities and by using economic instruments and incentives for internationally coordinated research.</p> <p><i>Climate change is happening faster than expected. The EU is also too dependent on its neighbours for energy. In order to tackle the problem, to generate economic benefits and look after future generations, renewed focus, investment and global leadership are required of the EU. It is possible. Therefore it must be done.</i></p>	419
2	<p>The EU should intensify its efforts towards establishing of a common health care system, based on know-how from the countries with the most effective systems. Together with Member States it should implement an equal basic standard of healthcare for each EU citizen. There should be centralised oversight of provisions and standards. An independent mechanism for EU wide recognition of qualifications for medical and health care professionals should be developed and implemented.</p> <p><i>All European citizens should have the same right to decent healthcare and services. Patients should be able to receive treatment in case of illness wherever they are in the EU. European-level research and databases are vital and exchanging best practice could improve the health system across Europe.</i></p>	339
3	<p>The EU should create the same working conditions and rules for all EU citizens based on a harmonised Labour Code, harmonising working conditions for employees, right and obligations for employers. This code should include the right to decent salaries and working hours, and it should include the principle of equal pay for equal work between men and women as well as workers from other EU Member States.</p>	333



This recommendation is important because it addresses significant differences in standards between Member States, will lead to improvements in living standards and bring wide-reaching economic benefits to employees and their families. It will keep companies in the EU, while allowing workers to enjoy free movement within the EU labour market and protecting them from abuses.

- 4 The EU should harmonise European educational and vocational systems by introducing common criteria and standards for the different educational levels which are recognised in all Member States. This should include a facilitation of pupil and student mobility within Europe, uniform admissions procedures, examinations and evaluations.

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Simplifying education and vocational systems will make it easier for EU citizens to access them. It will increase the global competitive advantage of European workers and make them more flexible in adapting to economic change. It will enable Europeans to exercise the right to free movement and provide excellent opportunities to exchange ideas, knowledge and good practice.

- 5 The EU should create incentives to prevent production entities from moving to countries with lower wages. The EU should sanction all companies that have benefited from EU financing and subsidies and which relocate outside the European Union. It should do this by demanding the reimbursement of public subsidies given to these companies and introducing taxes that would finance social plans.

305

Against the background of increasing unemployment, Europe should fight against unfair competition on the employment market and workers in the EU would then have a greater chance to keep their jobs. Incentives could attract more companies and more entrepreneurs to the EU and making them feel jointly responsible for the well-being of all EU citizens is important.

- 6 The EU should ensure that agriculture does not have adverse effects on health and environment and promote food self-sufficiency. This would include the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming, local food production, reduced fertiliser and pesticide use. GMOs should be banned except for medicinal purposes.

300

Healthy agriculture for healthy food is important because health is everything we have. The soil needs to be protected in order to produce food for future generations. The protection of natural resources is important if agriculture is to play its part in the economy, and to avoid Europe being dependent on unreliable



partners for vital foods.

- 7 The European Commission must propose legislation that would combat social inequalities, and create conditions for a convergence of social insurance and welfare systems in all member states. This would cover salaries and pensions, and would establish “floors” and “ceilings” for social benefits. The EU should create a mechanism to monitor member states’ social policies and, if needed, should issue binding recommendations for member states to ensure that the EU moves closer to a common EU social system.

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Some countries in the EU are not providing for peoples’ basic needs and this needs to be addressed. There is also a need to avoid unfair competition between Member States. Eliminating social inequalities will help to avoid social unrest and prevent a brain-drain from poorer to richer countries. Europe also urgently needs to tackle the aging of its population.

- 8 The EU should facilitate an accelerated flow of secure information required in the prevention and detection of crime across member states (e.g. drug trafficking and human trafficking and paedophilia). Activities should include increased funding for, and better utilisation of, new integrated technology, closer cooperation between national police officers.

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International crime is a growing problem, and criminals are taking advantage of the right to free movement within the EU and gaps in the information shared between police forces. Criminals are always one step ahead of law-enforcers and closer cooperation is needed to keep up with them. No one country can deal with this on its own.

- 9 The EU should increase the transparency and accountability of politicians and civil servants. This could be done through the development of a common code of conduct for public servants, requiring the disclosure of personal assets and the criminal record of those who work in European and national institutions, reducing the legal immunity of policy makers and introducing legislation on lobbying at national and European level. A Commissioner for Ethics or a European Integrity Ombudsman could be responsible for these actions.

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Citizens need to be able to have confidence in their elected officials and civil servants. It is not just a matter of them complying with the law – they must also behave in a way that is acceptable – and citizens have a right to know more about their politicians, civil servants and the role played by lobbyists in the policy-



making process. It is important to provide this information in the most user-friendly way.

- 10 The EU should regulate financial markets (actors and products), oversee financial flows of commercial banks operating in the EU and ensure the stability of these flows. It should control this regulation via a European central financial supervisory body or give more power for this to the European Central Bank. It should introduce common terms and conditions in order to ensure the security of private savings and the operational capacity of commercial banks.

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This recommendation is important because of the need to combat bad practices of the type which have led to the current financial and economic crisis. This crisis is an opportunity to change the system and this needs to be done across Europe, to reduce differences between European countries' approaches. This is particularly to help avoid future 'boom and bust' cycles.

- 11 The EU should invest more in the quality of all levels of education. Minimum norms are needed for attractive, affordable, interesting education of a high quality, with a focus on diversity and innovation in education. This could include countering illiteracy (by at least 20% by 2020), the early learning of a European language, help for school drop-outs, improvement of the technical equipment in schools and the exchange of best practice among EU Member States.

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Better education is vital to improve people's lives. Minimum standards would make it easier for citizens to exercise their right to live and work anywhere in the EU, and a level playing field is crucial to ensure equal opportunities everywhere, and prevent social exclusion. There is a need to invest in workers for the sake of the economy. The future will be decided by today's students.

- 12 The EU should strengthen consumer protection policies, including for e-commerce. It should do this through measures such as systematic controls of such things as food and pharmaceuticals and imports from outside the EU. There should be stringent labelling which facilitate comparisons between products and commodities. The process of complaints and suggestions should be accelerated. A central control agency which can issue sanctions should also be established.

247

Safeguarding European citizens' health and to enabling them to make informed consumer decisions is essential. Consumers are vulnerable without national and EU authorities providing protection and controlling rogue companies. It is particularly important to keep up with technological change and not to 'miss the boat' on e-commerce.



- 13 For the purposes of disease prevention and the reduction of health risks, the EU should encourage Member States to place greater emphasis on health promotion. Funds should be earmarked for compulsory examination of the whole population, in accordance with the principle "prevention is less expensive than treatment". The EU should develop global disease prevention campaigns, particularly for HIV, diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases.

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European citizens should be able to enjoy a good quality of life for as long as possible as they get older. The vision of prevention being better than cure is shared by a great majority of the population. There is great concern about the risks of viruses crossing borders because of increased mobility. This recommendation will help focus on research in the health field and empower patients to make appropriate decisions in relation to their own health.

- 14 The EU should increase social protection for vulnerable members of society in all phases of life, such as elderly people, the disabled or poorer members of society, homeless and unemployed, as well as carers. It should rate countries' spending of GDP and impose enforceable targets for member states in the fight against poverty. These measures should be given particular attention in times of economic recession.

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This is urgent because of the impact of the economic crisis on jobs and to prevent social unrest at such a difficult time. Solidarity between social groups is also important and people have a fundamental right to live in dignity. It is necessary to ensure that those who cannot afford to pay for social services are helped to do so. We need to think about a better future.

- 15 In order to deal more effectively with illegal immigration, the EU should take on overall strategic and financial responsibility for the strengthening of external border controls, including the faster processing of cases and standardisation of treatment of people in transit. The EU should take measures to avoid countries on its external borders becoming over-burdened by an influx of migrants. The EU member states must ensure that illegal immigrants are not offered jobs in the grey economy.

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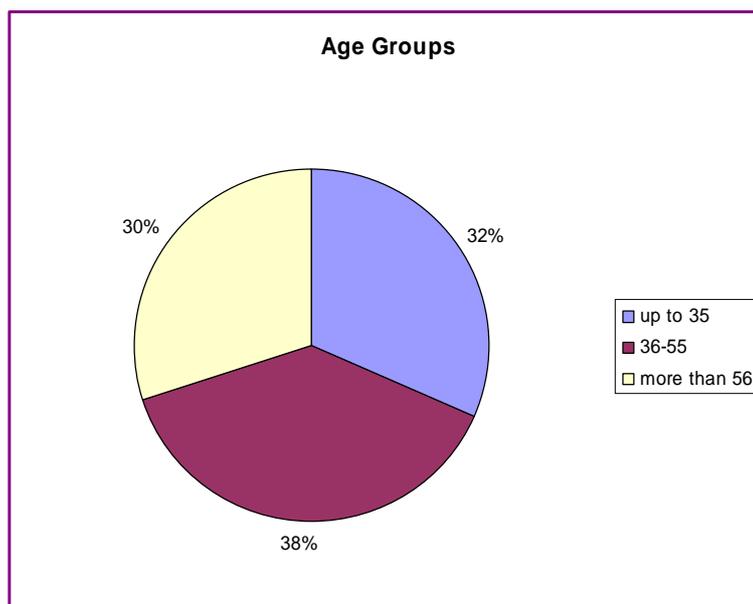
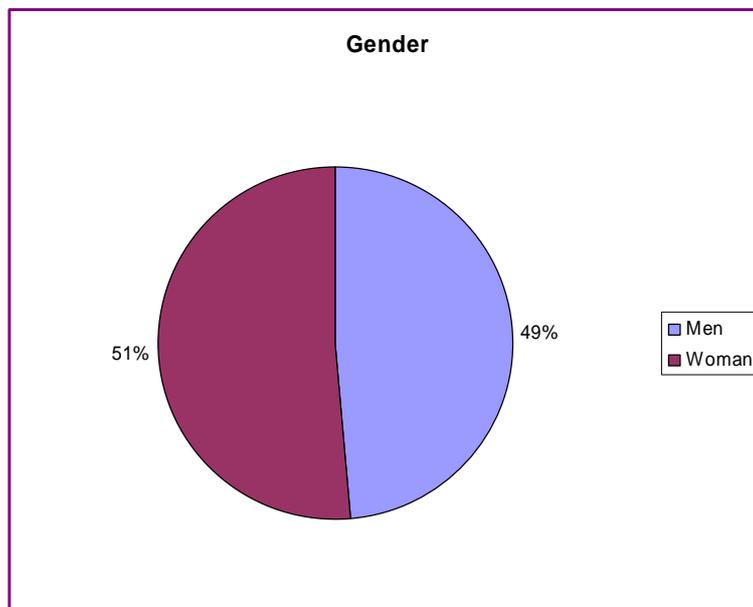
The burden on countries most affected by illegal immigration, especially border countries, needs to be shared, since neither small nor large countries can deal effectively with the problem. The treatment of illegal migrants needs to be addressed, particularly to avoid the risk that they end up in ghettos or are the subject of racist attacks. The grey economy also hurts wages and jobs in the real economy. It is necessary to act now to avoid greater problems in the future.

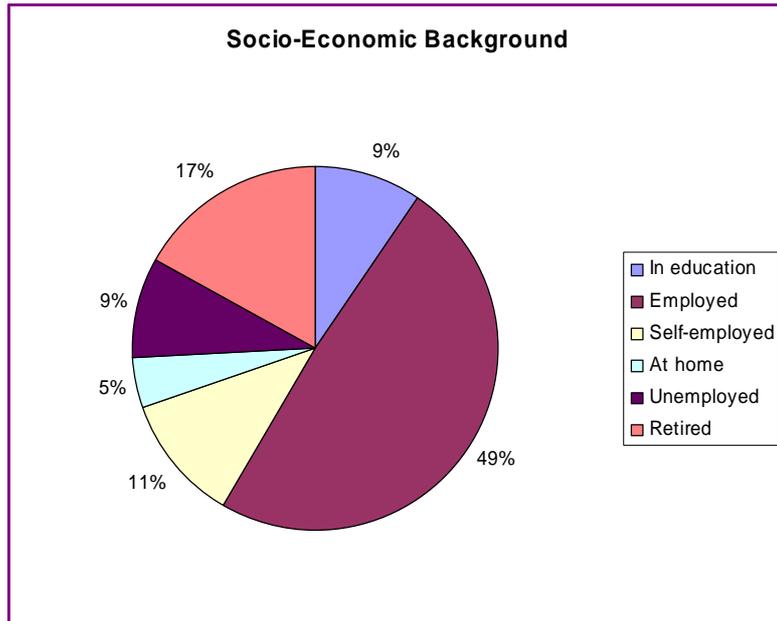


About the Participants

Demographic Information on the Participants

A total of 1605 citizens took part in the national consultations. The following graphs give some further information on the demographic background of the participants:





Country	Number of participants
Austria	43
Belgium	49
Bulgary	50
Czech Republic	52
Cyprus	30
Denmark	44
Estonia	25
Finland	70
France	100
Germany	146
Greece	43
Hungary	52
Ireland	50
Italy	97

Country	Number of participants
Latvia	33
Lithuania	36
Luxemburg	31
Malta	30
Netherlands	44
Poland	105
Portugal	50
Romania	53
Slovakia	52
Slovenia	30
Spain	99
Sweden	91
United Kingdom	100



Impressions from the European Citizens' Consultations

Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament:

"With less than one month to go before the European Parliament elections on 4-7 June, this huge exercise in consulting citizens right across the 27 Member States is making an important contribution to informing the electorate about the important role the EU plays in their daily lives. More than 100 MEPs and candidate MEPs were involved in discussing the citizens' recommendations for action with them. I'm sure that this was two-way communication with citizens, letting law-makers know which issues concern them most, and parliamentarians taking this on board and informing citizens what the European Parliament can do for them."

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission:

"European Citizens' Consultations provide a unique opportunity for the public to discuss their concerns and ideas with each other, and with policy-makers. They inform and enrich the debate on how to shape effective policies to address the challenges we face, adding to the information we get from opinion polls and consultations with stakeholders."

Luana, 30, Roma, participants at the Italian consultation:

"This is an experience in democracy coming from the people, from the grass-roots. I hope that in the future citizens can be involved in policy-making."

Michał Dowgiewiczyk, Secretary of State of the Committee for European Integration, Poland:

"It is very important not to discuss the EU as an abstract body, but as something for you... I think that these consultations will have a big importance on setting the priorities of the EU for you and for the coming years."

Astrid Thors, Minister of Migration and European Affairs, Finland:

"Progress has been made in comparison to ECC 2007, both in structure and content."

László Kovács, EU Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union:

"The EU cannot function without citizens - and it does not matter what the politicians decide, if the citizens are not satisfied. If we are giving our opinion, then no one can tell us that it was Brussels forcing it on us."

Erhard, 60, Rietberg, participants at the German consultation:

"To me, the most important question is whether our recommendations can make a difference in the EU and how big our influence as citizens will be on political decisions in Europe."

Caroline Flint, Minister for Europe, UK:

"This is part of a mammoth exercise about what the EU should... and shouldn't do."

"This is your chance... Too often there's a view that the EU takes things away rather than adding something to it."

Daphné, 36, Charleroi, participants at the Belgian consultation:

"This event allows me to feel a real citizen and to do more than just go voting."

Valdis Zatlers, President of Latvia:

"A forum like yours proves that every citizen thinks about ways of improvement – not only non-governmental organizations and politicians, but every citizen!"



Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Health:

"This event provides an opportunity for participants to express their views as to what the EU can offer them and what they believe is lacking - because we really want to open this dialogue with the European citizens."

Beatriz, 28, participants at the Spanish consultation:

"We can't think about improving our life quality without taking into consideration the countries surrounding us."

Frank Heemskerk, Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, the Netherlands:

"I absolutely disagree with those who say that international political questions are too complicated for citizens to understand. Initiatives such as this one, citizens' consultations, are more than useful."

Maria Teresa Ribeiro, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Portugal:

"The Portuguese government is proud to be associated with this consultation of citizens. We believe that Europe's economic and social future has to be build by all of us. [...] We look forward to reading your deliberations and taking them into account in formulating future policy."

Dick Roche, Minister of State for European Affairs, Ireland:

"Today is not a day for political speeches. Today is a day for political listening...We will listen with great interest – not just to what you say here this weekend but what comes out of this process."

Dimitrios Sioufas, President of the Greek Parliament:

"This effort shows that we care for the common path and the common future of Europe. This consultation will send a message to the EU Member States and the EU."

Aleksandra Gesheva, Sofia, participants at the Bulgarian consultation:

"It is an extraordinary experience - I didn't expect it! People are speaking freely in public, and not in their living rooms. I saw faith, I saw hope."

Margot Wallström, Vice President of the European Commission:

"My maybe naïve, but firm, conviction is that ECC will help the European Union to make better decisions, better anchored with citizens."



What happens with these results?

At the European Citizens Summit which was held in Brussels on May 10-11 2009, 150 citizens who attended their national consultations discussed the European recommendations, as well as the feasibility and policy relevance of their recommendations. This report was then handed over to and discussed with the heads of the European Institutions and the leaders of European political parties:

Hans-Gert Pöttering, President, European Parliament
José Manuel Barroso, President, European Commission
Mario Sepi, President, European Economic and Social Committee

Wilfried Martens, President, European People's Party
Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, President, European Socialist Party
Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, President, European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party
Philippe Lamberts, President, European Green Party

Margot Wallström, Vice-President, European Commission
Olivier Chastel, State Secretary of European Affairs, Belgium

The European Citizens' Summit also marked the start of a **comprehensive follow-up process, including regional outreach debates**, designed to actively communicate the results to policy-makers at the national and European level and disseminate the results to the broader public and civil society, following the European elections and as a new European Commission prepares to take office. This will be an important step in cementing the importance of citizen participation in policy-making and in furthering the reach of the European Citizens' Consultations 2009.



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European Citizens Summit, Regional outreach events in autumn 2009 and stakeholder outreach

Centre d'information sur l'Europe and La Netscouade

Online outreach and website design

European Policy Centre

Policy advice and fact sheets for citizens, European Citizens Summit

European Journalism Centre

Media outreach

European Citizen Action Service

Civil society outreach

Fondation pour les Générations Futures

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IFOK

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