



PRESS RELEASE

'The Europe we want': Citizens involved in the biggest-ever pan-European debate on Europe's future deliver their report to EU policy-makers

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Representatives of the 1,800 citizens who took part in the biggest-ever pan-European debate on the future of Europe today handed over their report to EU policy-makers, and called on Europe's politicians to take their views into account as they prepare to take key decisions on the Union's future.

The report, finalised just weeks before the June summit at which the EU's leaders will discuss the fate of the Constitutional Treaty, summarises the outcome of the national consultations which have taken place in all 27 EU Member States since February this year. It reveals a surprising degree of consensus on the way forward in some areas, as well as significant differences in others. The report includes:

- Calls for the EU to play a stronger role in family and social welfare policies, with citizens suggesting that it should do far more to encourage Member States to pursue active family and social policies in a wide range of areas, including health care and employment, and ensure basic minimum standards;
- Widespread support for a pan-European response to immigration and integration issues, and calls for the EU to make greater use of external relations policy tools such as development aid to tackle the root causes of migration, as well as focusing on issues such as border controls;
- Calls for the EU to be given stronger powers to develop a common energy policy and ensure that Member States live up to the commitments they have made at European level.

The national consultations debated the three topics chosen by fellow citizens from across the EU who took part in an 'Agenda Setting Event' in Brussels last October, and identified the three issues which they regarded as most important. In each case, the citizens were selected at random, taking account of the diversity of the population.

The choice of topics and the outcome of the national consultations suggest that the EU's citizens are looking to Europe to help provide answers to some of the most pressing problems they face in their everyday lives, and recognise the need for European responses to issues which cannot be dealt with at the national level alone. They also suggest that for citizens, it is the results which matter, not the arguments over who does what.

At today's event, one citizen from each Member State met European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström, European Parliament Vice-President Gérard Onesta and Jean-Luc Dehaene MEP, former Vice-Chairman of the Convention on the Future of Europe, to hand over their report.

Commissioner Wallström said: "This report shows how valuable this process has been. It confirms that we are moving in the right direction, but the citizens clearly want us to do more. Reading the report, I am struck by how creative they have been in suggesting ways for Europe to tackle these important issues. The success of the dialogue with the

citizens ultimately depends on the EU's capacity and willingness to listen, and to subsequently deliver better policy results. The European Citizens' Consultations have clearly demonstrated a good way forward."

Mr Dehaene commented: "The Convention broadened the debate over Europe's future to involve more players than ever before. This exercise has taken the process another step forward. The citizens' report should be required reading for anyone involved in the EU policy-making debate."

Vice-President Onesta echoed this, saying: "This report will enrich the debate among politicians on some of the key challenges facing Europe. In their deliberations on energy and environmental issues, for example, the citizens have shown greater ambitions than many of today's EU leaders."

Background information about the European Citizens' Consultations:

In October 2006, some 200 randomly selected citizens from all the EU's 27 Member States met in Brussels to discuss what they wanted from Europe and decide what issues mattered to them most. After two days of intense debate, they finally settled on the following three: the family and social welfare; immigration and the EU's role in the world; and energy and the environment.

Between February-March 2007, 1,600 citizens took part in a series of national consultations in each of the EU's 27 Member States to debate these three issues. In each case, they drew up a declaration summing up their discussions.

On Europe Day (May 9), one participant from each Member State met in Brussels to finalise a report drawing together the outcome of all the national consultations. It is this report which was presented to Margot Wallström, Gérard Onesta and Jean-Luc Dehaene today. It is also being sent to other key decision-makers in the EU institutions, and a series of follow-up events are planned to discuss both the content and the process which led to it.

The European Citizens' Consultations have been organised by a network of independent and non-political foundations, think tanks and civil society organisations, led by the King Baudouin Foundation and including the European Policy Centre and European Citizen Action Service. The project was co-funded by a group of 21 European foundations, including the Robert Bosch Foundation, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Compagnia di San Paolo and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. It also benefited from a large grant under the European Commission's Plan D initiative.

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More information about the project can be found on the ECC website: www.european-citizens-consultations.eu

For copies of the citizens' report, please go to: www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Synthesis_Citizens_Perspectives.pdf

For copies of the expert commentaries, please go to: www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Synthesis_Expert_Comments.pdf