

# Europe for Citizens



*On 21 June 2011, 100 people gathered in Brussels for a consultation meeting to further shape the Europe for Citizens programme for 2014 and beyond*

**Snapshots of the day**



**Introduction.** A year ago, we embarked together on something that is not very common in the European Commission, namely: building a programme with the experience of the very people using it. Today's conference was a next instalment in the same spirit, to present an overview of all the steps that have been taken since last year, to share what the Commission has taken from all its consultations, and then to check back with the stakeholders present: Have we understood your thoughts correctly? What are your reactions? Is this a good basis for what is to come?



**Setting the scene**

Ylva Tiv us, Director responsible for Citizens in DG Communication, opened the day by setting the context.

"We already met one year ago in this very place. You can see on the walls the legacy and testimony of what we achieved then, when we started to discuss the future of the programme.

"You will also see today that we have built on the results of the work we did with you then. Last year, we discussed the *purpose* and the *objectives* of the programme. Since then we have had a number of further consultation exercises to help us formulate and design the new programme. Today you will hear about the outcomes of that work.

"This will be the final consultation for this phase of preparing the next programme. Today we want to see together which *mechanisms* will allow us to achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves. We also have some ideas that we would like to test. This is an opportunity for all of you to have your say - not to stand passively by but to set your hands to the project and contribute. Very soon, the proposal will be adopted, and decisions will be made by other institutions.

"These are difficult times - times of austerity, unemployment, lower wages in all EU countries. Right now, we in the Commission are also preparing the next multi-annual financial framework, paving the way for the EU budget for 2014-20. We will soon be proposing what we would like our future budget to be spent on. We have a huge and challenging agenda for the next 7 years, and there are serious issues at stake: economic growth (infrastructure, education, research, innovation, energy, research, environment), creating a safer Europe (immigration, borders, crime, terrorism) and making sure that Europe has a voice in the World (relations with neighbouring countries, humanitarian and development aid, trade, etc).

"The Europe for Citizens programme must find its place in this complex whole. I am confident that we will, because it is more important than ever that our citizens take part in discussions and help shape the EU's policies. We have also had clear



signals that our programme must demonstrate added value - that €1 spent in the EU budget is worth more than €1 spent in an EU Member State. We must be able to measure our achievements.

“Let’s do serious work - I invite you to enjoy this day together. Let’s be realistic but mobilise your creativity and think outside the box. We are hoping for more or less the same budget for the next programming period, but must make the best possible use of the programme we have.”



## Process for the day

As the Europe for Citizens programme is about encouraging participation, the Commission has chosen to invite its stakeholders into a highly participatory process for this consultation meeting. This is part of the work to build capacity to work with large-scale participation and to capitalise on collective intelligence.

Like last year, the process was captured by a skilled team of strategic illustrators, who worked throughout the day to reflect back the essence of what was happening in the room.



## Sharing what we’re proud of

Understanding how important it is to know the impact of what is happening, and the ways in which the programme really makes a difference, our day of conversation opened around the question: *What have we achieved that we’re proud of through the Europe for Citizens programme?*

People shared experiences and stories about what they had done in their local context that had been a success. Then we heard some examples.

- Local European Radio (Nantes, France) - large impact local associative community, local radio & web presence offered in different languages. It shows us that people are interested in Europe and in multilingual approaches.

- Group working to uncover the hidden holocaust in Eastern Europe - interviewing survivors (UK)

- Bringing people together who don’t normally meet around a European theme - for the European year of Volunteering 2011

- Mobilising grassroots organisations to inform EU policy on volunteering

- Town twinning that started in 2010, with activities around citizenship and social and economic inclusion through recycling (Belgium, Malle)

- Town twinning that provided municipalities with real opportunities to establish contacts with municipalities in other countries (Albania)

- Creating better awareness of the Europe for Citizens programme - building from the local to the national to the European level, and thus creating a European spirit (Germany)

- Bridging the gap between EU and the people where they live.

## Telling the story so far

Joachim Ott presented an overview of the steps that have been taken since June 2010.

An **impact assessment** to assess the economic, social and environmental impacts needs to be undertaken by the Commission. For this, a steering group was set up with all Commission departments whose work impinges on this area of citizenship.

In parallel with the online public consultation, studies were commissioned on different aspects: the mid-term evaluation of the current programme, mobility and active citizenship. The Commission organised **focus group surveys** on town-twinning, the impact on the development of civil society, remembrance. The regular dialogue with stakeholders (“**Structured dialogue**”) and Member States (Programme Committee) has continued. In preparation for this stakeholders conference, the Commission team and the Executive Agency held a **participatory workshop** to discuss the broad lines emerging from these studies and consultations.

The **online public consultation** was held between October 2010 and January 2011. It was based on many of the ideas that came out of last year’s forum. We received 412 replies (surprisingly few) - and have to draw conclusions on this basis which are relevant for the whole EU. Broadly, the findings were as follows (the full analysis is available at [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.htm)).

- The **objectives** of the current programme were strongly supported - particularly the overarching aspects: tolerance, participation and ownership.
- On **implementation methods** - most support for more structured working patterns, interest in building capacity across the board.
- Strong support for **supporting** civil society organisations, transnational multi-partner projects



and activities clustered around specific themes. Less interest for EU-level events and research.

- On **outputs**, the greatest interest was in networking, knowledge exchange and ICT; less interest in the development of materials, polls and media events.

- Regarding **target groups** - in addition to the existing groups, there was strong support for focusing on hard-to-reach groups and the new generation of leaders

- On **priority themes**, there was strong support for ‘soft’ policy issues: values, participation, social cohesion, education.

**Focus group surveys** were held in Paris, Warsaw and Vienna. They brought stakeholders together with researchers, local and national governments, and journalists to focus on areas of the current programme. The findings of these groups were remarkably in line with what came out of last year’s stakeholder conference and the online consultation:

- the importance of **reaching out** to new people
- the need for greater impact through **capacity building**, a longer-term horizon, follow-up and experimentation
- relevant and interesting activities require programme **flexibility**
- disagreement over whether the **focus of remembrance** should be restricted to Nazism and Stalinism
- **strategic networking and multipliers** are crucial in order to bring target groups together and to establish contacts with policy-makers
- **connecting EU/transnational and local level** through involvement of national civil society organisations
- better **dissemination of results** through prioritised tools, social media and strategies

The Stakeholder Forum of June 2011 is an opportunity for us in the Commission to get your views as our partners and beneficiaries on the concept that has been born out of the consultations in 2010 and 2011. Our new programme will be a bridge between the legal concept of citizenship (Treaty on European Union, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) and a society/value-based concept. We see two clear strands: (a) participation and (b) common values/remembrance, with an overarching concern for optimising results which would link the two strands.

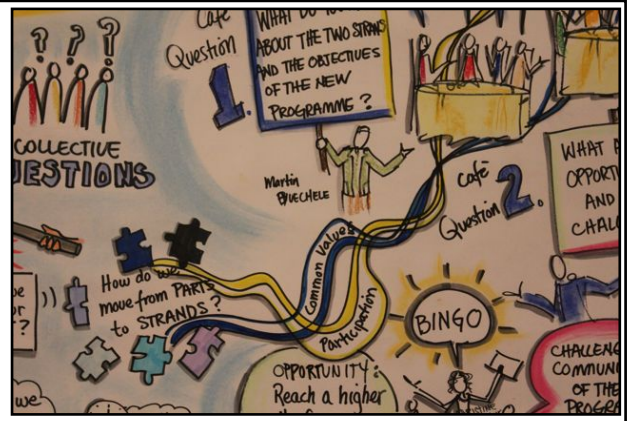
## Clarifying questions

After Joachim's presentation, participants had the opportunity to formulate questions to clarify their understanding of what they had heard. Questions were answered by the whole team.

**• Why is there a need to change the current programme in the first place?** *The change is in the move away from clusters of semi-independent activities - town-twinning, support of civil society operations and projects, towards the two strands that we have identified as the two core elements of citizens' policy, namely: participation and common values/remembrance. We believe that grouping the different activities carried out under the current programme around these strands of a future programme can open up new opportunities for synergies and linkages, so the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. Many have asked us why we want to change a programme that's working. The answer to that is that we're trying to do more and better with the same resources. Under the current programme, we are reaching out to 1 million*

We see two clear strands:

- Participation
  - Common values/remembrance
- with an overarching concern for optimising results



**• Where's the exchange between transnational activities?** *Exchange is taking place at many levels: people, ideas, practice, approaches. Also exchange is more of a means than an end. The objectives we have proposed are about the programme's purpose.*

*that don't need extensive statistical research, but that are directly relevant to our core mission.*

Since there was not enough time to address all the questions that arose at the different tables, those that remained unanswered were posted on the wall and taken away by the Commission team at the end of the day, to inform their next steps.



The objectives of the new programme could be:

- Culture of participation and support of civil society
- Linking participation with policymaking
- Ownership and belonging to the EU / remembrance and shared memories
- Knowledge-building / research, exploring new ways of participation
- Building capacity to engage in democratic life

## World Café: So, what do you think?

Having clarified some outstanding questions, after the coffee break we gathered in small groups around coffee tables to tackle the question: *What do you think about the proposed strands and objectives of the new programme?* Using the World Café format, we changed tables a few times to mix up and further enrich our conversations, before being invited to consider: *What are the opportunities and the challenges that we see now for the next programme?*

*citizens across the EU, we want to reach more! Consider this as fine-tuning of a successful programme - you will still be able to do what you are doing, but we want to improve the framework to keep down costs and increase impact.*

**• What is the relative importance of the five objectives? Do they all have the same weight?** *All the objectives have the same weight - the programme is about all these things. However, the overarching objective that embraces all the others is to create the conditions to allow citizens to really participate in the democratic life of the EU. By doing this, we aim not only at strengthening citizens' adherence to the EU, but to European democracy as such!*

**• How can we really link participation with policy-making? How can the programme support this?** *We need to find a balance between bottom-up (input from citizens) and top-down (priorities set by politicians and decision-makers). How can we make the two agendas meet? We see the need to safeguard enough space for bottom-up approaches, bearing in mind that they will bear more fruit if they meet the political agenda and are brought at the right time. The programme needs to be meaningful. Dialogue is not just for talk. It's about helping to shape something real - we would like to use the programme as a transmission belt for that.*

**• Will there still be support for municipalities? What about the educational aspect (schools and young people)? Where do they fit in?** *The vast majority of our projects currently involve municipalities. They are at the core of the programme - town twinning is where we really see the culture of participation happening. Education is clearly an aspect of capacity building.*

**• Will 'new ways of participation' be the only focus of research?** *We need to focus on areas where we have "exclusivity", and avoid overlaps and double funding of certain types of activities. The*



*Commission's Education and Culture DG is working on citizenship education, we are liaising with them on this. Similarly, resources are available from DG Research for many topics. We propose to focus on topics*

In order to move the conversations from the small tables into the room and make our collective findings visible, the hosting team collected and clustered the opportunities and challenges as they were spoken from the tables out into the room. Succinctly, this is what we saw:

## Challenges arising for us now

**• Balance** - How to achieve a balance between town twinning and CSOs projects; between small and big projects; between objectives and resources; between the different regions, especially between the periphery of the EU and the centre?

- **Communication** - How to make the programme more visible, showcase the best projects, reach out to more citizens?
- **Engagement** - How to invite equal participation from all Europeans? How to overcome citizens' indifference?



indifference? How to bring Europe closer to its citizens?

- **Linking participation with policy-making** - How can citizens' interest be maintained and translated into policy action? How to restore/strengthen the link between citizens and their representatives? How to link the programme with the European Citizens' Initiative?

- **Common values** - How to define common values? How to include diversity within the narrative of common values? Should we rather think in terms of 'inclusive society'?

- **Programme management** - How to meet the need for longer term impact beyond supporting projects for just one year? How to improve

collaboration between local authorities and CSOs? How to prioritise among such diverse projects? How to square lack of means with the programme's ambitious objectives? How to promote projects that contribute to overcoming common problems? How to keep the programme simple and flexible with such a diverse range of stakeholders?

- **Measuring impact** - How do you measure participation? How to develop qualitative assessment tools, since quantitative tools aren't enough?

### Opportunities arising for us now:

- For **outreach** - opportunities to reach more citizens, share best practice, share experience with candidate countries.
- To **influence key actors** - reaching EU policymakers through town-twinning networks;



using existing structures to bring European dimension to local engagement that's already happening.

- For **collaboration and partnership** - between NGOs and municipalities, between civil society organisations around Europe.

- For **cross-fertilisation** - focusing on themes brings different types of stakeholder together.

- For **more conversations** - through dialogue processes that allow citizens across Europe to discover what they have in common, creating the potential to achieve a meaningfully open, inclusive European society.

- For **optimising and measuring impact** - involving as many channels as possible; picking up the added value of each project and gathering qualitative feedback from those positively affected.

- To **use technology** - for new forms of participation; more stakeholders can participate in decision-making.

## Getting specific: Ritual Dissent and Assent

The afternoon was spent in a process called Ritual Dissent, engaging intensively with seven topics previously identified by the Commission team as areas that needed further sharpening and design. The discussion was intense, and the results were presented in plenary:

- **The setting of annual priorities (including link with policy-making)** *Do we really need priorities? If so, who should decide? Top down? Bottom up? A hybrid of both? How detailed do the priorities have to be?*

The exercise focused on the link between participation and policy making. A more focused approach is needed to increase the impact of actions under the future programme. The group considered whether thematic priorities are needed, how detailed they should be and who should set them (should the approach be top-down, bottom-up or a mixture of the two?). All the groups consulted showed a clear preference for a bottom-up or hybrid approach which would not only bring in the views of NGOs to the Institutions, but also bring the local, regional and national level to the EU. The regular dialogues with stakeholders and with the Member States were identified as the best fora to achieve this. There was consensus that priorities should have a longer-term 'validity' and should not be completely abandoned after one year - even in the case of European Years, which were recognised as natural priorities. Recommendation/advocacy is just one of many ways in which the results of projects can materialise.

- **Balance between operational & projects grants** - *should a share of the budget be reallocated from project grants to operating grants? What might that mean for the programme?*

There was consensus in the discussion that both operating grants and project grants are needed. In the case of operating grants, there was a strong preference for the multi-





annual grants. They provide sustainability and allow for better forward planning. By offering a medium-term perspective, they also make it easier to attract staff. The group also strongly advocated flexibility with regard to the amounts available – for both types of grant. Both small and large amounts are needed. The possibility of introducing start-up grants was welcomed, but with a caveat against too many very small grants. One issue that remained unresolved was whether the proportion of operating grants should be increased at the expense of project grants. Opinions were divided on this. Nor was there any clear consensus on whether it should be possible to combine an operating grant with project funding.

• **Capacity-building** - *should a future programme develop a specific line for capacity building to support the development of the skills needed to enhance the value and impact of projects?*

The result of the discussions underlined the need to keep capacity building as a transversal element of all actions, combining it with the review of the current 'support measures', strengthening and re-focusing it and renaming it to 'Capacity Building'. Potential activities under this measures would include peer-to-peer exchange, training for trainers and the development of a database on the organisations/ projects funded by the Programme.



• **Dialogue with stakeholders** - *should the current "structured dialogue" become an integral part of the programme? Who should be involved?*

There was clear support for making dialogue with stakeholders an integral part of the programme (thus making it a compulsory activity for the Commission), on condition that it would be financed not from the projects' budget, but from Action 3. The current approach, known as 'structured dialogue', should be enhanced, building capacity to create a community of practice, which would become both a 'collective brain' for the programme, and an influencing body able to impact policy developments. Concrete suggestions included having it more content-oriented, making it more open, finding ways to dialogue at national level (PECs, Presidencies), organising joint meetings with PECs, Programme Committee to foster more interaction, and invite the

participation also of "non beneficiaries" (academics, experts, foundations, national funds, private companies).

• **Measurement of impact**

This group was created and led by stakeholder initiative. The discussion focused on what kind of impact the EU is looking for, and how this could be measured. It was agreed that a distinction must be drawn between what can and cannot be measured – example of the latter being opinions, awareness-raising, tolerance, open-mindedness. And then there is impact that grows only in the longer term - invoking a sense of European identity, for example, does not happen overnight. Impact indicators should be defined, and the EU should provide the benchmarks. Measuring tools/methods are needed - these should also include methods for self-evaluation.



• **Better exploitation of results** - *how could the future programme ensure better use and dissemination of results, multiply effects, increase impact? What activities could most effectively build on results?*

Optimising results has to be done both at programme and project levels. There was consensus that the keys to better use and dissemination of results are well-defined themes, a good match between the needs of the citizens and the priorities of the Programme, identifying concrete results, improving quality and sustainability and developing evaluation processes. It emerged from the discussion that the value of high-visibility events is questionable, but that decision-makers

(particularly high-level ones) should participate more in projects. The importance of traditional



media (TV, radio, newspaper) should not be neglected and presence in the new social media should be ensured. Databases of existing projects, tools for identifying potential partners and for capitalising on collective learning (e.g. exchange of best practices) can increase impact.

• **Scope of Memory & Remembrance** - *should the scope of this action be broadened. If so, which areas should be covered?*

There was an overwhelming consensus that the scope of Action 4 (Active European Remembrance) should be broadened. There was no clear indication as to what new specific events or periods (other than Nazism and Stalinism) it should include, but there was strong indication that these should be the 'defining moments' of modern European history relevant to all EU countries. It was suggested that the European Memory part of the future programme should encourage and promote critical reflection on history and contribute to a grass-roots construction of shared European memory rather than one imposed from above.

**Closing the day**

At the end of the afternoon, the group came together in one big circle to close the day. A number of participants shared their impressions of the day - what surprised them and what they would take away with them:

- "I didn't



believe Commission officials could be so open, friendly and funny!"

• "I was amazed and impressed by the methods we used."

• "It's so good to meet people from different types of organisation who are also doing this work."

Ylva Tivéus closed the day by thanking those present for their active participation and summarising what was still to come: "Every one says that the EU works slowly. To some extent, this is correct. right. But that is the price we have to pay to arrive at well conceived proposals where enough time is given to seriously involving stakeholders and the formal decision-makers. We have 2.5 years to go before the new programme starts. In November the Commission's proposal will be adopted. This will be followed by negotiations in the national parliaments, the European Parliament and the Council.

Europe needs active citizens, and this programme offers a means to do just that - to participate in order to shape the political agenda. This is something worth getting engaged in!"

### The day after: Making sense together...

The day after the meeting, the Commission team and the hosting team came together to collect, structure and discuss the very rich contributions made by the forum. This material will now be further analysed and fed into the work on the drafting of the future Europe for Citizens.



## Next steps 2011-2014



Directorate-General Communication

