

Information note from Vice President Wallström to the Commission

Plan D - Wider and deeper Debate on Europe

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1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2005 the Heads of State and Government called for a period of reflection, enabling a “broad debate to take place in each of our countries, involving citizens, civil society, social partners, national Parliaments and political parties”¹.

The Commission wanted to take this opportunity to push for more democracy, dialogue and debate, and decided to launch Plan D. “The period of reflection should, in a first stage, be used for a broad and intensive debate on European policies. Any vision of the future of Europe needs to build on a clear view on citizen’s needs and expectations”².

Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate is an initiative and a process in its own right. Nevertheless, it dovetails with the Action Plan on communicating Europe³ which seeks to improve the way that the Commission presents its activities to the outside world. It is also linked to the White Paper on European Communication Policy⁴, which has started a broad consultation on Communication Policy. It should be noted that Plan D does not replace the Commission’s normal procedures for consultation on the policies it promotes in various sectors.

A first assessment of the initial period of reflection and progress with the 13 measures recommended in Plan D was presented to the June 2006 European Council⁵.

The Heads of State and Government expressed gratitude to the Commission for having contributed to the reflection period in the context of Plan D, and noted that the EU’s commitment to becoming more democratic, transparent and effective goes beyond the period of reflection. It is also noted that “reinforced dialogue with the citizens requires adequate means and commitment”⁶.

One year after implementing Plan D it is time to take stock and further widen and deepen the debate on Europe.

¹ Declaration by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the European Union on the Ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe; European Council, 16-17 June 2005; para 4.

² COM (2005) 494 - 13 October 2005

³ SEC (2005) 985 – 20 July 2005

⁴ COM (2006) 35 – 1 February 2006

⁵ COM (2006)212 - 10 May 2006

⁶ Presidency Conclusions, European Council, 15-16 June 2006; para 3.

2. PLAN D – A FRAMEWORK FOR CITIZENS DIALOGUE

The purpose of Plan D is to give citizens better understanding and ownership of EU policies – to help create a citizen’s Union. Plan D and its 13 measures (see annex 1) should therefore continue to be seen as a toolbox for stimulating a broad discussion among citizens and with the EU Institutions. Member States are the main responsible for organising debates at national, regional and local level. The EU institutions play a supportive role in this effort.

Plan D aims at involving citizens in policy substance and to increase ownership. It offers ways and means by which the Commission could bring various policies to the citizen’s attention, generate debate and provide a channel for citizens’ concerns to be brought to the attention of European decision makers.

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.

Plan D is an ongoing, rolling programme. The Commission is continuing it not only because the June 2006 European Council decided to extend the period of reflection⁷, but also because the Commission is determined to continue to stimulate a Europe wide public debate and to deploy fully the 13 initiatives to support such a debate. The Commission is also open to introducing new measures whenever that is deemed appropriate⁸.

However, a continuation of the period of reflection clearly requires the Member States, the Commission, the European Parliament and the other EU institutions to concentrate and focus their efforts on a few selected measures for the period leading up to the June 2007 European Council. Furthermore, the Commission has already undertaken to “supply the Council with further data, analysis and stocktaking of its continued efforts in this regard”⁹. This “fine-tuning” does not in any way change the commitments in other actions launched through Plan D in October 2005.

Section 3 of this note takes stock of the reflection period so far, while section 4 builds on this reflection and suggests possible areas on which to focus. Section 5 elaborates on the available means, while section 6 lists the conclusions.

3. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PERIOD OF REFLECTION.

The period of reflection so far has allowed for a comprehensive overall assessment of the national debates and lessons to be learnt. In May 2006 the Commission summarized the debates in a Communication to the Council on the Period of reflection and Plan D¹⁰.

On the positive side it can be noted that people are interested in discussing the question of the challenges facing Europeans and which areas Europe should act in. However, the intensity of the debate on the future of Europe has varied considerably between the Member States. The debate would clearly benefit from more initiatives being taken in all 25 Member States. Annex 2 presents a comprehensive stocktaking of the Plan D actions implemented by the

⁷ Presidency Conclusions, European Council, 15-16 June 2006; para 42.

⁸ COM(2006)212; 10 May 2006

⁹ COM(2006)212; 10 May 2006

¹⁰ COM(2006) 212, 10 May 2006.

Commission, other EU institutions and the national authorities between October 2005 and October 2006, including examples of best practices.

3.1 Generating outreach

In addition to the special Eurobarometer survey on the Future of Europe¹¹, the Commission Representations and some Member States have carried out quantitative and qualitative national surveys on public opinion and attitudes to the EU.

In March 2006 the Commission launched an on-line “Debate Europe” forum http://europa.eu/debateeurope/index_en.htm which has already received 19.000 comments and over one million page views (hits). People from most EU countries and beyond are participating in the discussion. The main challenge is to get young people and women more actively involved.

The Commission has also initiated projects to promote cross-border public discussion. Six trans-European projects have been selected for Commission support and will be running during 2006 - 2007, the first having been launched on 6 October.

To further improve direct contact with citizens, President Barroso, Vice-president Wallström and the Members of the Commission have undertaken a series of visits to the Member States. The aim has been to meet not only national leaders, but also parliamentarians, citizens, NGOs and the media. A special focus has been put on the regional and local level. The visits have raised a great deal of public interest and have had considerable coverage in the national media.

The Plan D ambition to generate outreach has proven successful in many areas. Although details are further elaborated on in the annexes, it is worthwhile highlighting a few. The Commission Representations

- reported the success of initiatives targeting young people, or special segments of the population,
- stressed the importance of discussing Europe at local level and the useful role of the decentralized EU networks,
- noted the success of showing Europe in a concrete way, using innovative and creative initiatives,
- highlighted the importance of involving audiovisual media to maximize the impact of these events, and the interest of people in hearing about and discussing real examples of EU at work.

The Round Tables organized by Representations and Member States involving civil society, communication specialists, academics, authorities and the public at all levels, have been very successful in creating transparency and networking, and as a source of ideas for projects and partnerships. The Youth events organized under each Presidency with Commission support are also a good example of dialogue and consultation with young people.

¹¹ Eurobarometer 65.1 on the Future of Europe – May 2006

While there is no standard model for the organization of public discussion in the Member States given the diversity of their population and the different local sensitivities, it is essential to launch innovative and creative initiatives capable to excite and involve people. The principle of going local - in particular relying on the work of the EC Representations- has proven to be the best approach. Particularly successful are discussions that are linked up with the national and local media and that involve not only civil society organizations but also local and national authorities.

3.2 Partnerships with the European institutions and bodies, with the Member States and strengthened relations with the national Parliaments

Plan D has further enhanced the positive cooperation among the EU Institutions, both centrally and locally. A commitment to closer cooperation was agreed by the Inter-institutional Group for Information in Strasbourg on 17 January 2006.

The interparliamentary forum organised by the European Parliament and the Austrian national Assemblies on 8-9 May 2006, as well as a number of European Parliament committee initiatives, brought a new momentum to a broadened discussion of European issues between parliamentarians. The Commission's initiative to transmit all its new proposals and consultation documents directly to the national Parliaments and inviting them to react, improves the foundation for such discussions, as well as the possibility to better anchor European affairs in the national democratic traditions and political parties. The European Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions gave favourable and constructive opinions on Plan D, highlighting the need for a decentralized approach and ensuring that the voices of representatives of civil society are heard. Both institutions have set up structures ensuring that regions and social partners are involved and that their views are taken into account in formulating EU policies.

There is a need for close, regular and structured co-operation between the EU Institutions and bodies and the Member States, but also – perhaps more importantly – with civil society, social partners and political parties.

4. LOOKING AHEAD: – ACTIONS TO BE WIDENED AND DEEPENED IN 2007 AND BEYOND.

The prolonged reflection period puts special demands on timely and determined delivery of certain Plan D measures. The following presentation keeps to the structure of the original Plan D, with elements already agreed underlined and measures requiring special attention highlighted in boxes.

4.1. Stimulating a wider public debate.

The Commission intends to continue the visits of Commissioners to Member States. This will require a significant effort to plan these visits so as to maximise their effects and ensure that the EC Representations are able to collaborate to their best. A special effort will be made to include a regional element. Along the same lines, Commissioners will remain available to national Parliaments.

A special effort will be made to open up the Commission Representations, possibly in close co-operation with the European Parliament's Information offices. An important part of this network of outlets is the EU co-funded Europe Direct Centres. The Commission stands ready to give the necessary support for developing these into proper meeting places.

*The Commission will help promote public discussion through the joint Commission / European Parliament offices. This will help developing the establishment of real meeting places (**European Public Spaces**) for the European citizens where the Commission and the European Parliament could host cultural and political events relating to Europe. Following an initial feasibility check by the Commission and the European Parliament by spring 2007, implementation could be initiated with pilot projects to demonstrate the added value for the citizens as well as for other stakeholders to establishing a “human bridge” and a “Europe of faces”.*

Although Round Table debates have taken place both at European, national and regional level the Commission would like to establish closer co-operation with civil society by having Round Tables for Democracy. Synergies must be sought between different Commission initiatives and action taken by other EU institutions. The Commission is already anticipating EU level debates within its Youth programme, promoting Young Peoples active European Citizenship¹²

*By the use of its Representations the Commission shall in the months to come organise **European Round Table Debates** on priority issues as outlined in the annual Work Programme for 2007, consolidating 50 years of delivery¹³ and deemed to be of high public interest in each Member State. It shall be ensured that these fora bring together citizens, politicians, historians, academics and the social partners. Whenever possible, modern media techniques should be used to ensure interaction with a larger number of citizens.*

4.2. Promoting citizens' participation in the democratic process.

The consultation ending in the autumn on the White Paper on Communication and on the Green paper as part of the European Transparency Initiative will undoubtedly produce a wide range of suggestions on citizens' participation. The Commission will also maintain an open dialogue with national Parliaments, not least through transmitting all its new proposals and consultation papers directly to them, inviting them to react so as to improve the process of policy formulation.

Experience is also being gathered from the European Civil Society projects launched in October 2005 and partially financed by the Commission in 2006. The Commission will participate and assist when possible and appropriate in these initiatives which will be carried out through targeted stakeholder conferences. Three out of six projects are pan European, covering all 25 Member States. The Commission's intention is not only to promote debate but mainly to listen carefully to the results of the projects with the aim of inspiring policy makers and integrating this feed-back into EU policies at the highest possible level.

¹² COM (2006) 417 – 20 July 2006 – Youth Participation & Information.

¹³ COM (2006) 629 – 24 October 2006

*The Commission shall encourage the organisation of **Civil Society initiatives**, also when linked to major EU events. In order to fertilise the ground for creative local Citizens Initiatives, in particular among the youth and women, the Commission will help its Representations to offer financial **support to Civil Society initiatives in Member States** focussing on the dialogue on Europe and EU priority issues as outlined in the annual Work Programme. Besides providing financial support to specific civil society projects, the Commission will continue its efforts aimed at ensuring high quality consultation and dialogue with civil society & national Parliaments*

To increase openness the Commission will pursue its European Transparency Initiative and in this context welcome the Council's efforts to render meeting and results more accessible to the public. Furthermore, the Commission follows closely, and stands ready to contribute to the European parliament's survey, carried out with national Parliaments, on increased voter participation and how to improve turnout in elections.

4.3. Tools to generate a dialogue on European Policies

The Special Eurobarometer on the Future of Europe which was carried out during spring 2006 yielded substantive information that could be compared with the data gathered from the media, the EC Representations, The Europe Direct Networks, political parties, NGOs and the Social partners, and with the discussions on the Debate Europe web site.

*In order to ensure an open-minded and progressive dialogue and to identify trends, the **Eurobarometer** Survey on the Future of Europe should be replicated in 2007 .*

Debates organised by member States, The European Parliament the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, have already provided valuable input to the period of reflection. Other important tools to be promoted are the focussed use of Audio/Visual means including the Internet. The success on the web dialogue "DEBATE EUROPE" is undisputed and should spill over into the way the Commission use the internet.

*The Commission shall re-launch the debate on the **Internet**, allowing citizens to choose the subject which concern them and linking discussions to topical subjects from the Commission's agenda or other major policy events. It is seen as important to increase the involvement of all Commissioners and other representatives from the Institutions, and to ensure proper follow-up to the listening exercise. Furthermore, without duplicating the Commission European Youth Portal, the new forum will especially aim to reach more young people and women, who are currently under-represented in the discussion.*

5. MEANS

5.1. Finance

In 2006, Plan D is being financed through the PRINCE budget heading. An amount of €9 million has been mobilized of which about 4.5 millions are managed at central level and the rest through actions by the Representations in the Member States. It is worth noting that the major part of these payments will be done during 2007 when the projects approved in 2006 will actually be carried out.

In 2007, an initial amount of €3 million has been assigned to Plan D. With this amount the Commission intends to finance, *inter alia*, regional and national projects devoted in particular to the youth and to women. This complements the amounts allocated in 2006 to decentralized actions (4.5 millions).

5.2. Human Resources

The Commission will continue the "pilot" Representations scheme, as decided in the 2005 Action Plan to Improve Communicating Europe by the Commission¹⁴. Already during its first year, this "pilot" has led to a quantitative and qualitative jump in activities. The excellent feedback received on the outcome of these actions underlines the need for an adequate human resources support at decentralised level. A full report on the "pilot" Representations is foreseen at the end of 2006.

In the APS 2007, the Commission has proposed to continue during one more year the "pilot" Representations scheme, as decided in the 2005 Action Plan to Improve Communicating Europe by the Commission.

6. CONCLUSION

As outlined above, the prolonged reflection period necessitates a particular focussing on certain Plan D measures. The Commission remains committed to all 13 measures launched through Plan D in October 2005, but intends to put special focus on:

- Supporting the development of **European Public Spaces** and maximising the citizens' accessibility to EU public spaces.
- Supporting the ongoing **debate** in Member States, for example by organising national European Round Table Debates on priority issues as outlined in the annual Work Programme for 2007, and deemed to be of high public interest in each Member State, ensuring a continued close **dialogue** with **civil society and national Parliaments**
- Providing financial **support** for national and regional civil **society initiatives** focusing on youth and women.
- Replicating the **EUROBAROMETER** survey on the Future of Europe in 2007.
- Re-launching the **Internet Debate**, allowing citizens to choose the subject, which concern them and linking discussions to topical subjects from the Commission's agenda or other major policy events. A special effort will be made to address the women and the youth audiences.

Obviously, stepping up the dialogue with the citizens will require adequate means and commitment. The Commission shall accordingly continue its own efforts while at the same time supporting and encouraging "dialogue" initiatives from the EU Presidency, Member States and other EU Institutions. Sharing and building on best practices are key elements.

The Commission therefore intends to finance and in other ways provide assistance, linked to the measures mentioned above. The June European Council in 2007 will provide the opportunity for a new feedback on the debates held at EU level during the extended reflection period.

¹⁴ SEC (2005) 985 – 20 July 2005

Annex 1 – the 13 measures of Plan D

MEASURE	ACTIVITIES OCT 2005 – OCT 2006	REINFORCEMENT OF MEASURES
<p>1. Priority Visits by Commissioners to Member States</p>	<p>In the period 305 Commissioner visits have taken place to Member States. A significant number of these visits have included Plan D elements. Of these 5 were Priority visits (including the President, the Vice President & the National Commissioner) = Czech Republic, France, Austria, Slovenia and Denmark</p>	<p>Activity continues. Increase the number of visits. Involve to a larger extend the regional media.</p>
<p>2. Ensure Commissioners availability to national parliaments</p>	<p>Over 100 meetings between Commissioners and national parliaments</p>	<p>Activity continues</p>
<p>3. Representations open to the public</p>	<p>All EC Reps organise monthly or weekly open doors for press briefings, conferences, and thematic presentations- Open door on 13 October 2005 in all EC Rep’s for press conferences and presentation of Plan D to media.</p>	<p>Deepen the process. Ensure the appropriate synergies of having joint European Parliament / Commission offices. As pilot projects in some MS, establish new meeting places (both virtual and real) – to host cultural and political events relating to Europe, by setting up a network of European public spaces in the Member States.</p>
<p>4. Utilising the Europe Direct Centres for regional events</p>	<p>Follow-up by Representations. Based on Call for proposal from 2004. Activities performed including Plan D measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission to promote the Europe Direct Centres. • Offer training and relevant information packages to the centres • Supplement existing networks with additional centres in 2007 • Improve Commission in-house knowledge and use of the Europe Direct Centres

<p>5. Create European Round Table for Democracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Fora organised by EESC – “Bridging the gap” • Meeting organised between VP Wallström and Civil Society NGO’s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to co-operate with other institutions. • Intensify the meetings between the Commission its Representations and Civil Society NGO’s
<p>6. European Goodwill Ambassadors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria defined. Some initiatives have taken place at national/local level • EC Rep’s consulted. No formal appointments. 	<p>European Goodwill Ambassadors to be considered in the light of the 50th anniversary celebration.</p>
<p>7. Promote more effective consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 months consultation process on the White Paper on Communication. End of Sept 06. +/- 600 contributions were received. • Green Paper as part of European Transparency Initiative: lobbying activities, feedback on the Commission’s minimum standards for consultation and the publication of beneficiaries of EU funds. Consultation concluded in August 2006: 160 contributions received. The Commission will adopt a Communication on the follow up early 2007. 	<p>Follow-up to the consultation results. Communication stakeholder conferences planned for Madrid, Bergamo, Berlin and Helsinki.</p>
<p>8. Provide support for European citizens projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 Citizens' Fora organised in 5 pilot countries by the European Parliament • Commission Call for proposal to select projects aiming to organise trans national citizens debates. Received 30 project applications. 6 projects will together receive a total grant of about 4,5 million Euro. The first project was launched on 6 October 2006. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow closely the projects from the Call for Proposal, materialising in 2006 - 2007. • Create transparency and synergy by including Plan D priorities in existing citizens to citizens’ projects • Consider new national and regional call for proposal in 2007 via EC Representations
<p>9. Ensure greater openness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council committed to open more meetings • Green Paper as part of European Transparency initiative. Consultation concluded in August 2006. 	<p>Measures to continue</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed dialogue with national parliaments through communication of Commission proposals and processing of national parliament opinions. • Open lists on Committee's and grants available to the public on the central Web portal of the Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/public_contracts/index_en.htm 	
10. Increased voter participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP main responsible • IGI Technical group created in 2006 • The EP has finalised a survey with national Parliaments on "<i>how to improve participation at elections</i>". 	Provide the necessary follow up and support the European Parliament's efforts
11. Produce specific Euro Barometer on the <i>Future of Europe</i>	Special Eurobarometer made public on 6 May 2006	Survey to be replicated in 2007
12. Create Internet debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Website: "Debate Europe" was launched on 27 March 2006. On 10 October 2006, the "Debate Europe" website has won the <i>European eDemocracy Award</i> for 2006. • +/- 2.000 visitors per day • 19.700 written contributions 1.091.466 hits between April and October 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-launch the debate on the Internet allowing citizens to choose the subject which concerns them and linking the discussion to topical subjects • New software being developed by DIGIT should become available at the end of 2006
13. Establish targeted focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised Spring Day for Europe (2005 budget). 7 – 17 years old pupils. 7.500 Schools participated. • Call for proposals intended to finance citizens' projects in all Member States. 6 proposals selected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-launch of "Spring Days for Europe" in the context of Treaty of Rome celebrations in 2007 • Stakeholder conferences • Results of citizens' projects to be properly disseminated and, where appropriate, fed into the policy making process.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Directorate A – Strategy
COMM. A.2. Communication planning and priorities

Brussels, 22 November 2006

Annex 2

PLAN D – Inventory of measures implemented by the European Commission

October 2005 – October 2006

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1. MEASURES INTRODUCED SINCE 2005

1.1. Stimulating a wider public debate

1.1.1. Visits by Commissioners to the Member States

Since the adoption of the Communication COM(2005)494 final¹, the members of the European Commission have made a total of 305 visits to all Member States. The purpose of the "Plan D visits" is to allow meetings between Commissioners and representatives of national governments and parliaments, local authorities, the media and civil society, in order to have an exchange of views with a real cross-section of society.

45 of these visits can be seen as part of Plan D in the broad sense, since the Commissioners concerned met a broad spectrum of national, media and civil society representatives. However, five of these visits were Plan D priority visits², in the strict sense: they involved President Barroso, Vice President Wallström and the Commissioner of the Member State in question. For two days, they meet with representatives of the national government, parliament, the media, regional politicians, civil society organisations and young people.

1.1.2. Commissioners' availability to the national parliaments

In 2005, the number of contacts with national parliaments or visits conducted by Commissioners is more than 100. Since the adoption of Plan D Commissioners made more than 50 further visits to the national parliaments of nearly all Member States. In some cases this was the first time that national parliaments had hosted the President of the Commission or Commissioners at a plenary session.

In its Communication to the European Council "A citizens' agenda-Delivering results for Europe"³, the Commission announced its intention to transmit all its new proposals and consultation papers directly to the national parliaments, inviting them to react so as to improve the process of policy formulation. At its Summit on 15-16 June, the European Council welcomed the Commission's commitment. Since September 2006 proposals and

¹ Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan D for democracy dialogue and debate.

² **18 November 2005: visit to Czech Republic** - Meetings between JM. Barroso, M. Wallström, Spidla with media, NGOs, regional representatives, students.

24 January 2006: Visit to France by President Barroso, Vice President Wallström and Commissioner Barrot. Meeting with the French National Assembly.

26-28 January 2006: visit to Austria for the Austrian Presidency event "*Sounds of Europe*"-Meeting between President Barroso, Vice-President Wallström, Commissioners Ferrero-Waldner and Figel' with students, media, regional representatives and artists.

1-2 March 2006: visit to Slovenia by JM. Barroso, M. Wallström, Potocnik - Meetings between Barroso and the Slovenian Prime Minister and the President of the Republic; Meetings between, Wallström and Potocnik and Team Europe members; NGOs; Public debate by Wallström and Potocnik with students; Visit by Wallström and Potocnik to local authorities; Live TV debate; press conferences.

18-19 May 2006: visit to Denmark by JM. Barroso, M. Wallström, M. Fischer-Boel – Meeting with the Danish Parliament's European Affairs Committee — Interviews and comprehensive TV, Radio and press coverage-Round Table: Presentation and discussion of the reflection period debate - Address at the University of Copenhagen.

³ COM (2006) 211 – 10 May 2006

consultation papers have been transmitted to the national parliaments by e-mail in the language version(s) they ask for. A special internal procedure has been put in place for handling the parliaments' opinions. This procedure will ensure that the national parliaments' contributions are taken into account in the process of assessing the Commission's initiatives, as it will add to the broad consultations already in place. The procedure does not change the existing legislative procedures provided for by the Treaties concerning the European Parliament and the Council, which will be kept fully informed of communications between the Commission and the national parliaments.

On 8 and 9 May 2006 the European Parliament organised a conference for representatives of the European and national parliaments, co-chaired by the President of the European Parliament and the Chairs of the Austrian national Assemblies with the participation of the Presidents of the Commission and the Council. Four working groups were organised: the European Union in the world and the EU's borders; globalisation and the European economic and social model; freedom, security, justice; future financial resources of the EU.

The national and European parliamentarians welcomed this new form of conference and useful dialogue on how to move forward in Europe, underlining that since the Council tends to maintain national positions, it is up to the European Parliament and the national parliaments to seize the opportunity to bring the process forward. A first follow-up conference of the same format will be organised on 4 and 5 December 2006.

1.1.3. Representations open to the public

The Commission Representations organise weekly or monthly open days for conferences and thematic presentations to enable the general public to find out more about the European Union and the different sources of information available.

The Representations offer the general public various specific services, (e.g. *Citizens Service* in Germany open five days a week), guided tours of the Representation, bookshops/information points on the same premises, and organise exhibitions relating to the European Union. Several hundred people monthly visit the Representations. These visits are particularly useful to increase EU knowledge and awareness.

On Europe Day, 9 May 2006, all the Commission Representations also organised open days and, in cooperation with the European Parliament, introduced various measures to raise the profile of the European Union.

1.1.4. Utilising the Europe Direct Centres for regional events

The Europe Direct Relays have a key role to play in the success of Plan D: They enable an important section of the population to be reached at regional or local level. The Relays have therefore been encouraged to inform the Commission systematically of any events they might organise. A website was launched in April 2006 enabling them to transmit this information in real time⁴.

⁴<http://ednetwork.ec.europa.eu/europedirect/default/live/members.html?lenya.usecase=login&lenya.step=showscreen>

1.1.5. European Round Tables for Democracy

The Commission Representations in Helsinki, Paris, Berlin, Madrid and Rome have set up individual Round Tables for Democracy:

- In Paris, the Representation set up think tanks « *A l'écoute des Français* » which dealt with Education, the World of Work, Young People in Europe; the Citizen in the decision-making process in Europe, the World of Communication. Twelve meetings have taken place so far;
- In Madrid, the series of debates « *Las tertulias europeas* » focused on the European model of society, the European borders and energy;
- In Helsinki, open discussions focused on the EU and sustainable development and on Europe in the framework of global competition;
- In Berlin, in May 2006, Round Tables were organised for NGOs in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- The Representation in Rome and the regional Representation in Milan have set up a forum for dialogue and reflection (Agora) on democracy in Europe and the Communication on the project for Europe. There have already been two plenary sessions, three thematic groups have been set up and a consultation process on the Commission's Communication White Paper has been launched.

In addition to this, Vice-President Wallström took part, together with three hundred participants, in the Round Table organised by several European civil society organisations⁵ on the subject of "*Plan D and the right of citizens to know*".

1.1.6. European Goodwill Ambassadors

The Commission's position on establishing Goodwill Ambassadors will be finalised in light of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

1.2. Promoting citizens' participation in the democratic process

1.2.1. Promoting more effective consultation

The White Paper on a European Communication policy adopted by the Commission on 1 February 2006 will lead to a more concrete action plan at the end of the six month consultation period during which all stakeholders and all European citizens interested have been invited to submit their comments by the end of September 2006. More than 600 contributions were submitted through the web site set up for this purpose, or through normal

⁵ The conference "Plan D and the citizens' right to know" was organised by the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) with the support of Friends of Europe, Journalists@YourService and EurActiv.com on 7 June 2006 in the European Parliament. The debate aimed at benchmarking the national and European contributions to the Commission's Plan D and to review the state of play after the one year "period of reflection" on the failed ratification of the Constitutional Treaty.

correspondence. They mainly concern more involvement of citizens in the decision-making process, education in civics and new technologies. The outcome of this consultation will be one of the sources used for the final report planned for March 2007.

1.2.2. Support for European citizens' projects

On 27 March 2006, the Commission launched a call for proposals to provide financial support for projects aiming to organise trans-national citizen events (i.e. involving at least 4 or 5 Member States for each project). The aim is to encourage initiatives on the part of European organisations promoting public participation in debates on EU-related issues. Six projects were adopted for a total of four and a half million Euro. They are scheduled to begin during autumn 2006:

- "*Tomorrow's Europe*" presented by the Notre Europe Foundation⁶ ;
- "*European Citizens Consultations*" presented by the Roi Baudouin Foundation⁷;
- "*Speak up Europe*" presented by the International European Movement⁸;
- "*Our message to Europe*" presented by *Deutsche Gesellschaft*⁹;
- "*Radio Web Europe*" presented by Cenasca¹⁰ ;
- "*Our Europe -Our Debate - Our Contributions*" presented by Europa Haz Egyesulet¹¹.

The Commission will ensure that the results of these projects will be properly disseminated and, where appropriate, fed into the policy making process.

1.2.3. Greater openness

The Commission welcomed the conclusions of the Council of 21 December 2005 which committed the Council to an increasing number of public sessions, thus improving openness and transparency. The Commission has also set up a public register of groups of experts that help to draw up proposals for legislation and give opinions on the Commission's policy initiatives. This register has been accessible online since November 2005. In addition, as part of the European Transparency Initiative launched in November 2005¹², on 3 May 2006 the Commission adopted a Green Paper to launch a debate on lobbying, on the introduction of the legal obligation on Member States to publish information on beneficiaries of funds under shared management as well as on the Commission's consultation practices. The Green Paper also underlines general principles and minimum standards for consultation.

⁶ <http://www.notre-europe.eu/>

⁷ www.european-citizens-consultations.eu

⁸ www.europeanmovement.org/

⁹ www.deutsche-gesellschaft-ev.de

¹⁰ <http://www.cenasca.cisl.it/entra.htm>

¹¹ www.europeanhouse.hu/e/

¹² All information related to the European Transparency Initiative are available at the following address: <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/eti/index.htm>

1.2.4. Increasing voter participation

On 17 January 2006, at the meeting of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI), Vice President Wallström stressed the need to find out the reasons for the low level of participation in European elections. On 25 April 2006, the European Parliament sent a survey to the national parliaments to ascertain the political and technical measures in place at national level.

1.3. Tools to generate a dialogue on European policies

1.3.1. Special Eurobarometer on the future of Europe

A quantitative and qualitative survey on the « *The Future of Europe – the EU listens to its citizens* », was conducted in the 25 Member States in February and March 2006. The Eurobarometer was published on 5 May 2006¹³ and served as concrete and valuable input to the Commission's 10 May 2006 communication to the European Council¹⁴.

1.3.2. Internet

Since the launch of the discussion forum "DebateEurope"¹⁵, on 27 March 2006, around 20.000 contributions have been submitted by citizens. On average, the website is visited by 2.000 people per day. The discussions published on the site, available in the 20 official languages of the EU and in Catalan, are mostly in English. 90% of participants are men aged between 18 and 44. The issues discussed include social well-being, capitalism and globalisation; the future sources of energy; the Constitution and the future of the EU; the democratic deficit; relations between the EU, the United States and China; the accession of Turkey.

Furthermore, on 10 October 2006, the "Debate Europe" website has won the *European eDemocracy Award* for 2006¹⁶, emerging as the winner from 50 nominations. The criteria for the award combined innovation, usability, content and diversity of technology and tools strengthening participative democracy in Europe. The European eDemocracy Award¹⁷ is presented annually in the framework of the World e-Gov Forum (formerly the Worldwide Forum on eDemocracy).

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_fr.htm

¹⁴ COM (2006)212 – 10 May 2006

¹⁵ <http://europa.eu/debateeurope/>

¹⁶ http://www.forum-edemo.org/article.php3?id_article=692

¹⁷ **The World eGov Forum** is dedicated to enhancing the relationship between citizens and the public sector through ICT and to facilitate good practice exchange:
<http://www.forum-edemo.org/?lang=en>

1.3.3. Targeted focus groups

In January, the 2006 «Spring Day in Europe» campaign was launched. With the active participation of Commissioners, its aim is to stimulate interest in Europe and discussion about the European idea among young people. On 10 May 2006, 7 501 schools were registered in Spring Day in Europe.

In the Commission Representations in the Member States, 1.969 debates were organised for specific categories of the population. The category most targeted by the conferences continues to be the media (334 conferences), followed by students, NGOs and local authorities.

2. PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Smooth cooperation and synergies were at the heart of the meeting of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) on 17 January 2006. The meeting allowed this partnership to be translated into practical and concrete actions. As a result, members of the group and staff of the EU institutions and bodies took part, for example, in visits to the Member States and contributed to the on-line forum « *DebateEurope* ». They also promoted and participated in activities in schools through the « Spring Day » initiative. Many events to mark 9 May in the Member States were organised jointly by the Commission Representations and the European Parliament offices.

The European Parliament organised citizens fora, considered to be a key contribution to the period of reflection. 15 initiatives took place in 5 pilot countries between March and May 2006. In addition, in close cooperation with the Austrian Parliament, the EP organised the inter-parliamentary forum with the national parliaments in Brussels, which was attended by President Barroso.

The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have also been strong partners in implementing Plan D, making full use of their contacts at local and regional level with the local authorities in particular and the social partners and civil society.

The European Economic and Social Committee has through its organisation of stakeholders' fora, further sought to enhance the listening exercise. The first forum was held in Brussels on 7 and 8 November 2005, in close cooperation with the Commission services and the second, held in Budapest on 9-10 March 2006, was a conference on the Lisbon Strategy and the role of organised civil society. Finally, the third forum, in Malta, was a decentralised stakeholders' forum on "bridging the gap", on 20-21 July 2006.

The Committee of the Regions organised panels in June 2006 on information and communication policy. A forum for representatives of regional and local media and their associations took place at the same time. Finally, the Committee of the Regions published a sample of best practices in how to put Europe across at regional and local levels.

3. KEY ACTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN D

It should be remembered that it is primarily up to the Member States to organise debates at national, regional and local levels. The role of the Commission, as regards Plan D, is to assist the national authorities with a view to structuring the debate. Since October 2005, Member

States have therefore launched a number of initiatives whose success deserves to be mentioned. The Commission's Representations and the Europe Direct Relays have also set up innovative consultation and listening mechanisms to improve communication between Europe and its citizens.

3.1. Projects of the Commission's Representations: selected examples of best practices

3.1.1. Information for better communication: general information campaigns

3.1.1.1. Presenting Europe in a concrete way

In January 2006, the Commission's Representation in Finland launched an information campaign entitled « *101 ways in which the EU has improved your life* ». This initiative has presented concrete examples of Community measures which have been beneficial to citizens. These examples, published on the Representation's web site¹⁸, have also been used in its magazine, 30.000 copies of which have been distributed to schools, libraries, etc. A compilation of these measures will be published in a book in spring 2007, which will be available to the public free of charge in the Europe Direct Relays in Finland and at the Representation's information point.

3.1.1.2. Strengthening relations with the national and local media

In Latvia, the Representation has produced a number of weekly radio programmes, each lasting 30 minutes¹⁹. 54 broadcasts were scheduled between September 2005 and March 2006, treating subjects as, for example, energy, rural development, sugar reform, labour market, safety at work fisheries policy. The programmes have had the advantage of explaining the issues to a wide audience, as well as hearing the concerns of citizens through interactive discussions between the listeners and the experts present.

The information broadcast at local level is of key importance. The local press is therefore an essential instrument in ensuring that European citizens know what is happening. The Representations in Rome and Milan therefore cooperate closely with the local media²⁰. This initiative has been conducted in cooperation with the Europe Direct Relays and the members of Team Europe, both of which have the expert knowledge required to keep the press informed.

As an example of efforts made by Representations to stimulate a wider debate, the Representation, in Denmark, has launched a daily electronic service giving access to all EU issues covered by the national press. In few days, this service attracted several hundreds of people.

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/finland/news/press/101/index_fi.htm

¹⁹ *Klātienē ar klausītāju* (Together with a listener) in Latvian : September 2005-March 2006
Broadcasting of radio programmes in Russian: October 2005-March 2006

²⁰ The Regional Representation in Milan has met around 40 editors of regional newspapers. Following this collaboration, most of newspapers regularly publish articles relating to the EU.

3.1.2. Information for better communication: specific information days

3.1.2.1. Initiatives launched under « Europe Day»

The initiatives of all the Representations on Europe Day 9 May 2006 were a major success, in terms of raising the EU's profile. Most of the events were organised in cooperation with the European Parliament and national authorities, and were the subject of an intense public debate about the future of Europe, which received wide media coverage.

The debates gave rise to discussions between the members of the Commission Representations, MEPs, national MPs and local authority representatives on the future of Europe, and enabled the Commission to explain the « Citizen's Agenda » to all present. Particular interest was shown in institutional matters.

Each year Europe Day offers a unique opportunity to bring the EU closer to the people. Making the European Union visible to a larger part of the population means external activities, which can be seen and accessed by everyone, in the presence of the local media. The presence of European representatives (Commissioners, MEPs) and national and local representatives is essential to give added value to these initiatives. In order to reach out at the local level, co-operation with the regional authorities (contacts with mayors) and the Europe Direct Relays is essential.

To ensure that this kind of initiatives reaches the wider a population, the Representations also organised events on symbolic dates (eg.: on the 20th anniversary of the death of A. Spinelli a ceremony was held in Italy, in the presence of European and national representatives), and exhibitions relevant to the European Union (eg: in Northern Ireland, more than 50 public, private and voluntary organisations set up exhibitions to provide information about the EU). Furthermore, the positive outcome of the more entertaining events in 2006, could serve as a benchmark for future activities.

The Representation, in Cyprus took the initiative, on the occasion of Europe Day, to contact the Union of Municipalities of Cyprus and to co-sponsor individual events simultaneously at 15 municipalities throughout the country, with the participation of famous figures at each event taking the role of EU correspondents or “ambassadors”.

3.1.3. Debate: consultation of civil society organisations and think tanks

3.1.3.1. A mix between civil society organisations and European, national and regional representatives is necessary

The think tank «*A l'écoute des Français (listening to the French*», set up by the Representation in Paris, is an innovative listening exercise involving politicians and representatives of civil society (young people, the education world, enterprise, local authorities, communication professionals). Four plenary sessions and 25 meetings of groups have been held between Octobre 2005 and September 2006. The discussions were fuelled by Eurobarometer surveys and aimed at the general public, the world of education and the social partners.

In Hungary, the conference held in June 2006 on the European Transparency Initiative reflects the need to facilitate the involvement of interest groups and representatives of the European Institutions.

In Greece, the coordination of regional discussion fora between the Representation and the Greek national authorities gave the civil society organisations a direct channel to express their views on European issues.

In Malta, consultations with the regional organisations and authorities have led to the drafting of a report listing recommendations and discussions of the Maltese organisations. The report was presented to the national authorities and to the Commission.

3.1.4. Debate: dialogue with young people

All the Commission's Representations stress the success and impact of the initiatives aimed at young people. This dialogue was established through conferences dealing specifically with the problems faced by young people, and the EU's policies to remedy them²¹. The presentation of the Commission's programmes on training possibilities for young professionals attracted large numbers of participants. For instance, the Representation of the Commission in Berlin has organised since 2002 in collaboration with Deutschlandradio Kultur the event series "tonart.e - let's speak about Europe" covering topical European issues. Since 2002, 3500 young people have discussed with politicians, with representatives of the economy, well-known scientists. Topics range from European Values, the European Constitution, Enlargement, Migration and Integration, Jobs in Europe.

The operation « *Spring Day for Europe* » attracted a high level of participation of young people in all Member States (debates; discussions via Internet). The involvement of Commissioners, MEPs, national authorities and parliaments in the debates and speeches further increased the number of participants, as did broad media coverage.

The Representations regularly organise open days for young people as part of their school programme. Events set up for young people during each Presidency, with the support of the Commission, are also excellent examples of dialogue and consultation with youth.

3.1.5. Debate at local level

The regional Representation in Marseilles has introduced campaigns entitled « *Brussels on the ground* ». The arrival in Marseilles and in the PACA (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) region of Commission officials met with real success at local level, with discussions of concrete issues directly affecting the region and their important impact on the general public (maritime affairs, environment and LIFE programme; European Employment Exchange).

3.2. Projects of the national authorities: example of best practices

²¹ In April 2006, the Representation in Sweden organised a conference «*How are children protected in Europe?*» In London, conference «*How can Europe modernise its universities?*»

Member States' authorities have introduced projects designed to stimulate debate on the European Union. In general, the initiatives introduced directly by the Governments, or through projects introduced by civil society, have aimed at giving Europe a concrete image and bring it closer to the citizen.

3.2.1. Consultation of citizens

3.2.1.1. Presence of European and national representatives

Debates and panels organised by the national authorities in order to speak about the European Union in concrete terms (environment, research and development, security) have reached a large cross-section of society. For example, in Denmark, as part of the NGO-run « *Citizens' Agenda* » project, a number of debates were held, including a televised consultation of a representative panel of citizens, organised by the Danish Parliament. The concerns expressed at the debates, supported by the 400 participants, who discussed the issues in *workshops*, were presented to the European and national representatives.

Some Member States have organised similar kinds of debates since a few years. One example is Ireland, where the National Forum on Europe was set up by the Government in October 2001, following the negative vote on the referendum on the Treaty of Nice. Since then, the National Forum on Europe has encouraged and promoted public debate on the EU. The Forum, a neutral public political platform where all opinions can be exchanged and analysed, has been a success. The venues for the discussions, the organisation of meetings at local level and the presence of political representatives to lead and fuel the debate, have made the Forum a success.

The German Minister of Foreign Affairs set up a Round Table comprising civil society organisations (80-100 organisations were represented), communication experts and public bodies, at all levels (Länders, municipalities, Commission, Parliament). Several sessions have taken place since and covered issues such as, obstacles in European communication, the communes and Europe, youth and school, continuing vocational training in Europe. The Round Table is used to create transparency in participants' dealings and for networking. It also serves as source for ideas for the projects adopted by the coordination cell of the Management Partnership.

A number of Member States have financed projects involving citizens through calls for proposals and also funded projects conducted by organisations which are critical of the EU.

3.2.1.2. Partnership with the existing networks

In Malta, Hungary and Latvia, the national authorities conducted large-scale communication campaigns using the European Commission's existing networks (Europe Direct Relays; members of Team Europe) to ensure a broad dissemination of the information. The use of events at local level visited by large numbers of citizens (festivals, etc.), with local media coverage, contributed to the success of the debates. In Hungary 727.000 people were reached by the Governments campaign in the country's regions. 200 interviews and articles on different events were published in the press.

3.3. The Europe Direct projects: example of best practices

3.3.1. Key elements

3.3.1.1. *The speakers*

Generally speaking, the presence of high level speakers (national and/or European representatives) should not be underestimated, particularly when coupled with sufficiently broad publicity at local level. This has many times proved the key to the success of the projects, conferences and exhibitions set up by the Europe Direct Relays.

3.3.1.2. *"Fun" activities*

In France, the Representation introduced a methodology for listening and feedback in the French regions:

- three types of documents produced in situ by the Europe *Direct* Relays and analysed by the Representation, which regularly draws up reports
- nearly 3000 responses from a street survey on the expectations of the French with regard to Europe,
- forms completed after events/activities organised by the Relays to obtain feedback and find out about the expectations of citizens,
- regional press files, in order to analyse the results, the quality of the information and the perception of Europe.

A new teaching tool has also been created through an exhibition produced by young people : « L'Europe dans ton quotidien (Europe and your daily life) ». Its underlying themes are examples of the daily life of a European family and projects conducted in the region, thanks to European co-funding. The young people learn about the EU, how it operates and its policies. The project was presented on 9 May. The exchanges of experience and information have been very much appreciated.

A role-playing game «*In the shoes of an MEP*» has been played in secondary schools. It allows for ideas to be exchanged and teaches the pupils how to defend their views and gain an insight into the institutional mechanisms and their implications.

In Austria, all Relays set up a joint project « *Learning by playing (Europaspiel 2006)* ». In this framework, 48.000 copies of an information brochure aiming to explain the EU to young people between 10 and 15 have been produced.

To conclude, this is a non exhaustive list of examples aimed at showing the success reached by some of the operations already set up at local level. Many other creative initiatives have been and will continue being implemented and reported by the Commission Representations in the Member States.