



## THE FUTURE OF EUROPE The Citizens' Agenda

PLAN D 2006-2007 CITIZENS' PROJECTS CONCLUDING CONFERENCE – BRUSSELS – 07/08/09 DECEMBER 2007

### The future of Europe-the citizens' agenda

#### **Open letter to the EU Heads of State and Government, the National Parliaments, the European Union Institutions and European Political Parties**

Brussels, 9 December 2007

Next week the Heads of state and Government of the European Union will sign the Lisbon Treaty. The EU celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. Since 1957, the European Union has progressed from economic cooperation to a political union that affects the lives of almost 500 million citizens. This evolution also brings responsibilities for the political leaders of Europe. The permissive consensus that existed at the beginnings has to be turned into an actively earned consensus in dialogue with the European citizens.

Associating citizens to the European construction is more than ever a fundamental issue. If we do not want the citizens to desert once more the European elections in 2009, political leaders need to regain citizens' trust and confidence in the European project and show they care about citizens' involvement in the decision-making machine.

Plan D launched by Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström responded to this challenge in a novel manner. It co-financed a series of projects to learn how ordinary citizens can be involved in the EU decision-making and how they view the EU's future. This exercise responds to a basic value of the EU in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: active citizenship.

The European Movement International, the King Baudouin Foundation, Notre Europe, Deutsche Gesellschaft, European House Budapest and CENASCA-CISL, with a large network of partners across Europe have engaged actively in Plan D. A series of grass roots debates, consultations, polls and events aimed at consulting citizens on their visions of Europe have been carried out in a number of Member States, while deliberative polling and consultation has taken place on a pan-European scale.

Thousands of citizens took part in those projects throughout the European Union in 2007. Over 250 of them have assembled in Brussels on 8 and 9 December to debate on the major concerns which have emerged through Plan D. There was a clear consensus among participants that more opportunities of this kind should be provided to involve citizens in the debate over Europe's future.

They have structured these concerns into three themes:

1. The human aspects of globalisation
2. Enlargement, political integration and EU citizenship
3. The EU's role on the world stage.



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They have consolidated their conclusions into a single set of recommendations (annexed to this letter).

They have debated those recommendations with decision-makers representing the EU institutions as well as the present Portuguese and future Slovenian Presidencies of the EU:

- Mrs. Margot Wallström, Vice-President, European Commission.
- Mrs. Jillian van Turnhout, Vice-President, European Economic and Social Committee.
- Mr. Ivo Opstelten, Mayor of Rotterdam, Member of the Committee of Regions,
- Mr. Pierre Jonckheer, Member of the European Parliament
- Mr. Valter Lemos, Portuguese Secretary of State for Education,
- Ambassador Igor Sencar Permanent Representative of Slovenia.

They call on the European political parties to address those recommendations in their programmes and to discuss them with citizens in view of the elections to European Parliament in 2009.

They call upon the EU Heads of state and Government, both in their capacity as European but also national leaders, to heed those recommendations and thereby encourage the development of active European citizenship, without which there cannot be a truly political Union.

They call for the dialogue with citizens on European issues to be continued and deepened in the future.

The participants to the conference on  
"The future of Europe-the citizens' agenda"



### Twenty–seven recommendations

1.

As work is considered a crucial dimension for individual emancipation, the **welfare systems** should protect citizens' life conditions during periods of transition for example by providing people with an unemployment indemnity when changing jobs.

2.

Citizens expect more action from the EU in the area of **social policy and social cohesion** in order to fight the black market, reduce salary gaps, promote gender-equality, ease unemployment and to make it attractive to work longer before retiring.

3.

The EU should promote **equal rights, comparable standard of living** in all EU member states and foster equal opportunities through harmonised social and economic policies and a welfare model for all member states.

4.

The Member States and the EU should make sure that **migrants** enjoy equal rights and opportunities and have access to education and work if they observe the laws, rules and values of the host country and commit to learning the language.

5.

The **European migration policy**, so far based only on restrictive measures, should adopt a more sophisticated approach aiming at the social and economic development of the involved countries. The EU needs to clarify its approach to economic refugee status.

6.

**Migration** needs to be acknowledged as one of today's most pressing issues, and cannot be tackled without a coherent development aid strategy.

7.

The EU should ensure that part of each country's national curriculum, in both **schools and universities**, requires a section on Democracy and European Citizenship, to ensure a greater understanding of the EU, its history, and its opportunities.

8.

The EU should show more commitment to **educational promotion** in general but also specifically regarding European issues, e.g. through the expansion of existing educational EU programmes or the establishment of new EU programmes as well as the incorporation of the European integration process as a central topic in the national school curricula.

9.

**Exchange projects** need further support to encourage young people to recognise the importance of their EU citizenship in the global context.

10.

The EU should help preserving, appreciating and respecting the **diversity** of peoples, knowledge, customs and languages identities - while recognising common and shared European values.



## THE FUTURE OF EUROPE The Citizens' Agenda

11.

Integration strategies such as the **educational policy** incorporating the EU into school curricula will favour the development of a European identity.

12.

The EU should prioritise creating and communicating a new **'memory' about Europe**, to move away from the stereotypes associated with certain countries and history, so that all citizens can be valued and we can understand each other better.

13.

The EU should increase opportunities for a more active, **direct participation of European citizens** from all walks of life in policy-making through regular citizen Plan D-type participatory projects, debates, public hearings, etc. at EU but also at regional and national levels. More transparency-more influence for European citizens!

14.

The EU should make sure that the **current citizen recommendations** are considered and discussed not only by the EU but also national policy-makers or become part of existing policy-making processes (e.g. impact assessments, public consultations). The EU should not only listen but also learn.

15.

The EU should become more interactive, citizen friendly and inclusive, recognising the growing significance of **regional approach and identity**. New and innovative information technique should be used to improve communication with citizens especially young people. Specific attention has to be paid to the frequently neglected gender issues.

16.

**Climate change and energy security** cannot successfully be dealt with at the national level alone. The EU should 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.

17.

In a global world, it makes sense for the EU to take greater responsibility than today in the fields of **military action, foreign aid and diplomatic relations**. The EU should be able to speak with one voice on a global level to defend its values.

18.

The EU can be more efficient than national governments in **security, police and struggle against drugs traffic and cartels**.

19.

The EU should lead the world in **protecting the environment** and promoting clean energy.

20.

Europe should develop a strong voice on the global stage with **common foreign and security policies that promote peace**, security in regional conflicts democracy and the respect for human rights providing for a strong role model across the world, whilst recognizing the importance of the nation state.



## THE FUTURE OF EUROPE The Citizens' Agenda

21.

The EU should show **a united front in international affairs**; the current practice is influenced too much by national short-term interests and considerations.

22.

The EU should tackle the impact of Europe's energy use on both the economy and the energy and foster the transition to environmentally clean, safe and sustainable energy sources.

23.

European citizens want the EU to **take the lead when it comes to social, energy and environmental standards** on a global level.

24.

The EU should develop **specific educational and action-oriented programmes for citizens on global issues** such as trade, energy and the environment.

25.

The EU should **coordinate its aid programmes with NGOs** engaged in humanitarian work to bring timely and efficient relief to crisis regions or to promote sustainable development.

26.

The EU should **lower barriers to international trade** as, overall, freer trade benefits developed and developing countries.

27.

The EU should show **more commitment in the fields of international peacekeeping** as well as humanitarian aid during catastrophes.