

European Citizens' Consultations

Irish Citizens' Perspective on the Future of Europe

National Consultation in Ireland
Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin
10 - 11 February 2007



The National Citizens' Consultations are part of a pan-European dialogue project called the "European Citizens' Consultations". Each of the 27 national events is coordinated and organised under the responsibility of a national partner, independent non-for-profit organisations all over Europe. The consultations at national level are co-funded by national foundations.

The European Citizens Consultations are organised by a group of independent organisations led by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium) in collaboration with European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), the European Policy Centre (EPC) and the Network of European Foundations (NEF). They are supported by Compagnia di San Paolo, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Robert Bosch Stiftung and co-funded by the European Commission.

Consultations Européennes des Citoyens

Faites entendre votre voix

Rozhovory s občany Evropy

Nechte zazníť svúj hlas

Europæiske borgerkonsultationer

Lad din stemme blive hørt

Europese Burgerberaadslagingen

Laat uw stem horen

Euroopa Kodanike Foorum

Tehke oma hääl kuuldavaks

Euroopan kansalaisten konsultaatiot

Saada äänensä kuuluville

Europäische Bürgerkonferenzen

Bring deine Stimme ein

Διαβουλεύσεις των ευρωπαίων πολιτών

Κάντε τη φωνή σας να ακουστεί

Comhairliúcháin na Saoránach Eorpach

Ag Cinntiú go mBíonn do Ghuth le Cloisteáil

European Citizens' Consultations

Making your voice heard

Eiropas pilsoņu debates

Izsaki savu viedokli

Consultarea Cetățenească Europeană

Spune ce crezi

Граждани за Европа

Твоят глас е важен

Európai Polgárok Konzultációja

Hallatjuk a hangját

Consultazioni Europee dei Cittadini

Fai sentire la tua voce

Debata obywateli Europy

Niech nas usłyszą

Consultas aos cidadãos europeus

Fazendo ouvir a sua voz

Konzultácie s občanmi Európy

Využite svoj hlas

Posvetovanja z evropskimi državljani

Naj se sliši vaš glas

Consultas a la ciudadanía europea

Haz oír tu voz

Europeiska medborgarråd

Gör din röst hörd

Pasitarimas su Europos piliečiais

Tegul jus išgirsta

Il-konsultazzjonijiet tač-ċittadini Ewropej

Semma lehnok



European Citizens' Consultations
Making your voice heard



The European Citizens' Consultations

The European Citizens' Consultations provide the **first-ever opportunity** for members of the public from all Member States to debate the future of the European Union **across the boundaries of geography and language**. Citizens reflecting the diversity of the population have been chosen randomly to take part in the deliberations. They identify common ground and make recommendations to policy-makers. The results aim at inspiring European as well as national institutions as they prepare to take decisions on the next phase of Europe's development.

The consultations create a **truly European discussion**, bringing citizens together at European events and linking simultaneous national debates on a shared agenda of broad ideas and visions set by the citizens themselves. The debates ensure that every voice is heard through an **innovative combination of professional facilitation and modern technology**.

The European Citizens' Consultations process is driven by a consortium of independent and non-political European foundations and civil society organisations led by the King Baudouin Foundation and co-financed by the European Commission's Plan D.

The Agenda-Setting Event

The Agenda-Setting Event was the first stage of the ECC process. Randomly selected participants from all European Member States met in Brussels to **set the agenda for the following dialogue process**. The following three topics were selected by **eight citizens from each of the Member States**:

- 1) Energy and Environment: The environmental and economic impact of Europe's energy use
- 2) Family and Social Welfare: The social and economic conditions for Europe's families
- 3) EU's Global Role and Immigration: The European Union's role in the world and the management of immigration

National Citizens' Consultations

At the heart of the project are the National Citizens' Consultations – simultaneous, interlinked debates in all 27 Member States. From February to March 2007 they debate the three topics identified at the Agenda Setting Event and identify common ground to recommend broad policy directions in "National Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe". Each consultation has five to ten other consultations in other Member States happening at the same time following a shared timetable. Within this timeline there are pre-defined integration points with the other national consultations. At these points in time the consultations exchange their results and thereby enable a European dialogue across locations and languages.

The Consultations are organised by national partners and supported by a European coordination team. National Citizens' Consultations do not work according to a one-size-fits-all approach. They are shaped by a broad consortium of national foundations and non-profit organisations from all over Europe that adapt the events to their respective national contexts. While all consultations follow the same basic format,



the size of these events varies between a minimum format of 30 participants and up to 200 participants and additional follow-up activities, depending on additional support that can be mobilised in each country.

The European Citizens' Consultation in Ireland

The Irish Citizens Consultation involved sixty citizens who gathered in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin on 10 and 11 February 2007 to develop the Irish perspectives on the future of Europe. The citizens were randomly selected by a market research company directed employed by the King Baudouin Foundation to ensure that different age groups, all educational levels, gender, and a geographical spread was represented in accordance with the population profile of the National Census 2002.

The event was organised by the National Forum On Europe. The role of the Forum is to provide a neutral public space for debate and discussion on issues relating to the European Union and Ireland's role in the Union. Its members consist of all the political parties in the Oireachtas and over forty bodies representative of civil society and the social partners.

The Consultations took place in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin. The Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD formally opened the Consultations on Saturday 10 February 2007. For further information about the event see www.forumoneurope.ie or www.european-citizens-consultations.eu

This report is a short record of the outcomes of Irish Citizens Consultation and was distributed at the end of the event. A full report will be available on www.forumoneurope.ie or from the National Forum On Europe, State Apartments, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2. Ph: 01 -670 500 or Fax: 670 5877.



National Perspective

1) Energy and Environment: The environmental and economic impact of Europe's energy use

"We want to live in a Europe with a common energy policy that aims to become much less dependant on fossil fuels, especially oil.

Europe should work to create its own EU alternative fuel supplies through a mix of renewable energy sources including biofuels, wind, tidal, wave and solar energy with an emphasis on local and geographical attributes. We want the EU to promote the development of a pan European energy grid among all Member States. We would like the EU to develop an external energy policy to promote our aspirations such as sustainable energy future. Specifically we want pressure put on the US to sign up to the Kyoto/post Kyoto agreements. This common energy policy would also allow the EU to be a more effective negotiator with our energy partners on the international stage.

The EU should also set tough energy efficiency standards and promote better use of resources through greater emphasis on the longevity and recyclability of products and better building design. Industry should be penalised for non-conformity with EU regulations on energy efficiency. Emission levels should be reduced and there should be a more proactive and integrated public transport policy.

We also want more incentives (and possible taxes for example an environmental tax on air transport) in Europe to achieve greater awareness of our ecological footprint and we want more environmental research, education and information including labelling. To promote these policies there should be shorter and longer term binding targets, a mixture of incentives and sanctions and proper implementation and enforcement."



2) Family and Social Welfare: The social and economic conditions for Europe's families

"We want to live in a Europe that prioritises the well being of each individual and cares for the most vulnerable especially the sick, those with disabilities and exceptional needs, the elderly, children and their parents. A Europe where the social and economic conditions for its families are improved."

"While welfare issues are the prime responsibility of each Member State, the EU should help Member States learn from best practice especially in helping families reconcile work and family life, including child care; providing support for the elderly, including pensions and care services; cooperating to ensure better planning and housing; ensuring better access to health care by, for example, opening competition, by harmonisation and by professional cooperation within the health services across Europe; and cooperating to reduce welfare fraud. Member States should also be supported in ensuring access to rights and entitlements, including effective provision of information using all media.

Each year Europe Day (May 9th) should have a people theme focusing on issues such as a celebration of culture, family life, child protection etc. It should be a community wide festival celebrated on a non-work day."



3) European Union's Global Role and Immigration: The EU's role in the world and the management of immigration

"We want to live in a Europe that provides equal opportunities and a good quality of life for the peoples of Europe now and in the future.

This can be achieved through the promotion of education, sharing of experiences, integration and the fostering of cultural diversity. Ghettoisation should be avoided. The EU should assist all Member States in managing and securing its external borders."



How were the results achieved?

The result of the national consultations is a combination of carefully facilitated table discussions among citizens, the exchange of results across locations and the prioritisation of their ideas through voting mechanisms. At each event, groups or tables of citizens discussed the agenda items with the help of a table facilitator who kept the discussion going and made sure that every voice was heard. Results were shared between the participants and with the citizens of the other countries holding their consultations on that weekend, at pre-defined points in time during the weekend. No prior knowledge of the three specific topics was required. Citizens were chosen in random selection and based on demographic criteria that ensured diversity.

	Setting	Activity
Day 1: Morning	Plenary	Welcome / Introduction: Citizens obtain information on schedule of the day, process as a whole, their role, and the format of expected outcomes.
	Plenary	Information sharing: Citizens share demographic data (gender, age, profession etc.) among themselves and across locations
Day 1: Afternoon	Table groups	Generating objectives: Citizens are split into three groups (one per topic). For each of the 3 topics, all citizens complete the phrase "In 2020, I would like to live in a Europe that...". Their input is recorded on cards and put on a pin board.
	Table groups	Grouping objectives: In each group, citizens try to group or categorise these ideas and to name this category. They thereby condense the variety of ideas to several strong objectives.
	Table groups	Challenging the objectives: Resource persons, i.e. experts, join the groups. Citizens try to detect problems or trade-offs regarding their objectives. Experts complete missing challenges.
	Rotation	Citizens visit other groups to learn about the objectives they came up with
	Plenary	Vote on preferences: Each citizen is given 15 votes (5 for each of the 3 topics) to express which of these objectives he/she consider most important. This serves as a rough guideline to help citizens focus their subsequent discussions
	Tables groups	Formulating an achievable vision: Based on their objectives, trade-offs and the results of the opinion snapshot each group is asked to come up with one achievable vision on the Europe they would like to live in.
	Table groups	Role of the EU: Citizens define whether they see a role of the EU or not in achieving this vision.
Dinner and Party		
Day 2: until early afternoon	Plenary	Presentation and sharing of results: Citizen representatives present the results (vision, definition of the EU's role) of their group. They then learn what the groups in the other countries have come up with.
	Rotation	Content feedback : Citizens visit other groups and obtain and exchange feedback on the results.
	Table groups	Editing: Citizens work the feedback into their results. Last chance for final amendments.
	Plenary	Confidence in outcome: After being presented the final results, citizens vote to express whether they are satisfied or feel comfortable with these results.
	plenary	Closing Ceremony / End of National Consultation



About the participants

The Irish citizens were randomly selected by an independent market research company (TNS MRBI) to reflect Irish society as a whole.

Demographic information on participants :

Female	29	50,9%
Male	28	49,1%

<25	9	17,3%
<35	16	30,8%
<45	6	11,5%
<55	10	19,2%
<65	5	9,6%
65 or better	6	11,5%

In education	5	8,2%
An employee	25	41,0%
A Civil Servant	9	14,8%
Self Employed	2	3,3%
Full-time household/duties	5	8,2%
Retired or between jobs	12	19,7%
Other	3	4,9%



Impressions from the Irish Citizens' Consultations

"You have been selected as representative of Ireland today - a cross section of men and women, young and not so young, urban and rural. And you are here to look at the future and try to work out what kind of European Union you want in 2020. In other words, what kind of Ireland you and your democratic representatives should be working for. The outcome of these two days deliberations will be a very significant input into all our thinking about, and work for, the Europe of the future."

The Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern, TD

"It's a hard and very interesting job: we know the final goal – in our case, we're trying to save the planet – and discussing it shows us the complexity of the topic, the very different aspects and the sacrifices we have to make. Will this event have an influence on my daily life? Well I don't drive a car anymore, but yes, it will."

Mary, 80, from Dublin and the happy grandmother of 12 grandchildren



"I'm very glad to be here, I learned a lot. I discussed the environmental topic and yes, it will have an influence on my daily life. Just last night, in my hotel room, I thought back to our discussions and switched the lights off."

Ann, 63, from Meath is retired



"These discussions are a breath of fresh air for ordinary people like us. We don't often get a chance to express our opinion. We're representing Irish people, the microscope is on us. Hopefully, they'll take on board our findings."

Paul, 45, is a student in social studies and the owner of a tourism agency

"It is your input and debate that makes this conference so unique and stimulating"

"To promote debate on European issues at national level, it is essential for Governments to forge partnerships, within their own societies. This will enable Europe to come alive and this is the reason that events such as this consultation are so important for a common understanding of the EU."

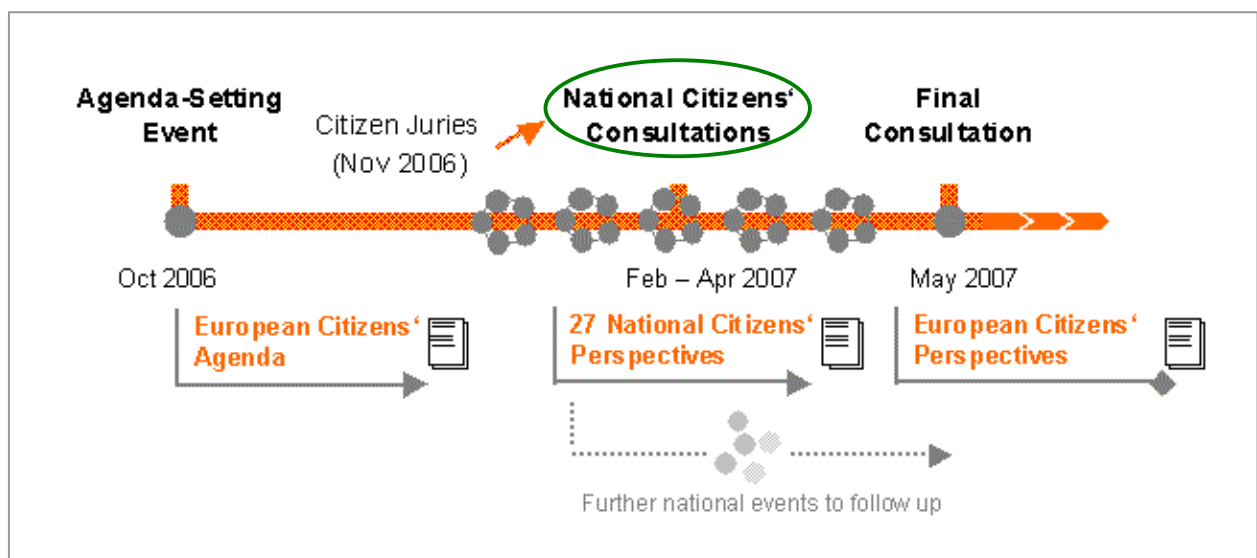
The Minister for European Affairs, Mr Noel Treacy, TD



What happens with these results?

As we mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, at the end of the 'period of reflection' and in time for the June Summit of the European Council, the European Citizens' Consultations will produce a unique input for policy-makers as they chart a course for the Europe of the future.

The Irish Citizens' Consultation is one of 27 national consultations taking place in all EU-Member States in February and March 2007. Each national consultation produces national perspectives on the future of Europe.



All national outcomes serve as the basis for a European-level synthesis during the **Final Consultation** on 9/10 May 2007, highlighting the common ground and the areas of divergence between the national outcomes. The final event also kicks off a comprehensive follow-up process, which actively communicates the outcomes to policy-makers on national and European level and provides feedback to the participating citizens and the broader public.

The European Commission will present the main outcome of the European Citizens' Consultation at the European Summit gathering all heads of state or government of the 27 EU-Member States in June 2007 in Brussels.

Through active outreach activities by all partners, the results of the European Citizens' Consultations will be disseminated at national and European levels to achieve two objectives:

- 1) to inform a substantive debate within the framework of the three topics about the citizens' views on the future of Europe, and
- 2) to demonstrate that citizen participation across Europe is not only feasible but also adds value to policy-making.



How to get involved

The European Citizens' Consultations are more than a one-time exercise in citizen involvement. They are designed as a model for dialogue across the boundaries of geography and language and thereby aim at establishing a template for future European citizens' participation projects that create dialogue in a multilingual and decentralised setting, empower randomly chosen citizens to set the agenda and lead informed debates, use innovative facilitation methods and modern technology to make every voice heard.

There are many ways to get involved in the European Citizens' Consultations:

As a participant

- § Contact the national partner to learn about follow-up events in your country
- § Write to your national partner to let them know about your experience at the event
- § Leave your contact details to the national partner if you wish to be informed about the next steps of the European Citizens' Consultations
- § Leave your contact details to the national partner if you wish to be invited to follow-up events or discussions / interviews with media and policy-makers
- § Stay in contact with the friends you met at the national consultation

As a citizen

- § contact the national partner in your country and ask about ways to get involved.
- § use the results of this initiative to talk to your family and friends about the future of Europe.
- § contact your regional, national, and European representatives and let them know about your experience.

As a policy maker

- § contact the European lead partner or the national partner in your country to discuss how to contribute to the project (e.g. with venues, contacts, information, or funding) and how to get involved personally.
- § reference the European Citizens' Consultations in your statements.
- § talk to other policy makers about the value of new forms of dialogue with citizens.
- § inspire and initiate more projects like this. The partners will assist in every way.

As a journalist

- § contact the European media and PR coordinator, Maria Laura Franciosi at franciosi@brusselsreporter.eu
- § contact the Irish national consultations media coordinator, Caroline Erskine at info@forumoneurope.ie to request images, quotes, interview partners and other material.
- § consider the potential of the European Citizens' Consultations for feature articles, TV documentaries, news stories, interviews, personal stories of participants and many other forms of reporting. The partners will be happy to assist you with material and ideas.

As a researcher or practitioner

- § sign up for the observer programme at the Final Event on 9/10 May 2007
- § contact the European lead partner to obtain more detailed information on the methodology and raw results from the events.
- § contact the European lead partner or the national partner in your country to discuss opportunities for knowledge-building and research as well as to establish contacts with like-minded researchers and practitioners.

Also, please have a look at www.european-citizens-consultations.eu for updated information and contact the Webmaster to give us feedback or to let us know about your information requirements.



The ECC all over Europe

European Consortium

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