

Europe in Dialogue with its Citizens

The present proposal aims at promoting public participation in the "construction" of the future Europe, mainly promoting **public debates and workshops to analyse - starting from real "case studies" - and improve methods and tools employed by the European Institutions to interact with its citizens**, in order to enhance and foster citizens' awareness and participation.

The action also aims at facilitating and **enhancing the "matching" between Europe and citizens**, especially focusing on the multiplying **role played by civil society groups** in the promotion of the European values and European Institutions.

The activities will be implemented in **9 different EU Member States**, involving citizens and civil society organizations belonging both to the "old" and the "new" Europe (countries who joined the EU both on the 1st of May 2004 and on the 1st of January 2007).

The foreseen activities follow a **"3 steps" process**, which include **nine workshops** at the local level, **an international workshop** and the production and the dissemination Europe-wide of the DVD or Cd Rom and the final publication. Through the development of this process, the proposal aims at providing a **long-lasting** (thanks to the multiplying potentiality of partners) **unbiased platform for obtaining information and expressing opinion**.

While running the different actions, special focus is given to the **"two way process"**, granting both information and listening to people's opinions about Europe.

How the project is relevant to the objectives of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme

- **bringing together people from across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future;**

The present proposal brings together people from across Europe, granting them opportunities to share experiences and values and to work together to identify common solutions to improve the communication between Europe and its citizens. Through the analyses and the debate about the interaction with the European Institutions, citizens will be more and more engaged in the construction of the future Europe and their awareness related to European issue will be raised. The activities will take place both at the local level and at the international one, granting thus an impact on different stages.

- **fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture;**

The whole proposal includes the organization of 9 local and 1 international workshops. The choice of the workshops has been made in order to promote action, debate and reflection related to European Citizenship, focusing mainly on the way Europe communicates with citizens. The 9 local workshops and the international one will grant the opportunity to debate on European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture to more than 360 people, coming from 10 different countries, granting thus an added value to the reflection and the debate.

- **bringing Europe closer to its citizens by promoting Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past;**

Most of the local workshops will take place in 2007, 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. This important milestone in the construction of Europe will be transversally "celebrated" during the whole year in order to promote Europe's values and achievements towards the general public.

Furthermore, the final event will take place on the 9th of May 2008, day of Europe: this workshop will thus grant the opportunity to continue and strengthen the debate on European issues, with the direct consequence of bringing Europe closer to citizens.

- **encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society organisations, in particular between citizens from Member States of the EU who joined the EU before and after 1st May 2004.**

The partnership of the present proposal has been built involving organization that are already working on **participation issues** and have, therefore, a **significant background** about the topics addressed. Thanks to their experience and their well-built and long-lasting networks and partnerships at the local level, the interaction between citizens and civil society will be stringly promoted.

Furthermore, partnerships have been stated according to a **geographical criteria**, trying to involve organizations of the "new" and of the "old" EU member countries where European citizenship and active participation are important assets. The present proposal includes a well balanced partnership represented by:

- 4 organizations of the "old" Member States of the EU (France, Spain, Denmark and Italy)
- 3 organizations of the "new" Member States of the EU, who joined the EU aftre the 1st of May 2004 (Cyprus, Hungary, Poland)
- 2 organizations of the "very new" Member States of the EU, who joined the EU on the 1st of January 2007 (Bulgaria, Romania)

Objectives and expected results in relation with the thematic area's

The present proposal aims at giving citizens and civil society groups the opportunity to interact and participate in **constructing an ever closer Europe**, developing a **sense of European identity**, through the promotion of workshops and debates, both local and trans-national ones, focusing on interaction **and communication between citizens and the European Union at the local level.**

Its specific objectives are the following:

- **to foster debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy**, both at the local and at the European level
- **to bring together people from local communities of the enlarged Europe** to share experiences, opinions and best practices related to the interaction and communication with the European Union at the local level
- **to bring Europe closer to its citizens**, by improving communication and interaction methods, while celebrating, at the same time, the memory of the most important milestone in European integration (i.e. the 9 May, day of Europe)
- **to encourage interaction between citizens and civil society organizations** (of different types) **from different participating countries** who joined EU before and after the 1st of May 2004, contributing to intercultural dialogue and fostering European identity
- **to raise citizens' awareness** of the results achieved through European policies and actions
- **to set the basis for long-lasting networking** between the organizations directly and indirectly involved in the action in the framework of active European Citizenship

The proposal's main expected results regard:

- the **increase of awareness** on the European main objectives and values
- the **increase of engagement** of the general public on issues of European interest
- **new and innovative methods and "tools" to improve interaction and communication** between citizens, civil society groups and the European Union
- set-up of **long-lasting networking**

Target group(s) – direct and indirect (number of individuals or organizations to be reached) and **local dimension** – how the project reaches citizens in their every day life

Direct target groups

- **European citizens* and civil society organizations*** (associations, community leaders, minority and gender groups, youth organizations...)

* *Citizens of partners' communities, focusing on those who would not have spontaneously participated in projects of a European nature and paying attention to involve people of different*

demographic, social and professional background (while selecting the target group, priorities of European Year of Equal Opportunities will be considered).

- **360 participants** (individuals and representatives of civil society organizations) taking part in the 9 local workshops are foreseen: 39 local and 1 international participants for each local activity
- **40 participants** (representatives of civil society organizations) in the international workshop are foreseen: 30 local and 10 international participants

Indirect target groups

- **Media** - radio, television, written press... - at the European, national and local levels
- **Local authorities** of the partners' communities
- **ALDA network:** more than 140 Members and 200 partners (mainly Local Authorities)
- **Local communities**

Methodology

The present proposal is based on a participatory method which aim at involving the selected target groups in the different steps of the project. The employed methodology will be characterized by an active interaction between all the actors involved (citizens, civil society organizations...), in order to encourage and support the active participation of citizens and to promote the dialogue between them and the Institutions of the EU.

IT methods and tools will be also promoted to encourage and facilitate interaction and participation.

According to the different steps, the following methodology will be employed:

▪ **Specialized workshops**

Conferences and specialized workshops about the selected relevant topics, with the contribution of high-profile experts and speakers

▪ **Participatory methods**

Innovative participatory methods will be promoted in order to involve local authorities and citizens in the process

▪ **Exchange of best practices**

Exchange of best practices among participants in the local and international events

▪ **Networking**

Promotion of communication channels to support networking among partners;

▪ **Production of material**

Information materials to raise awareness, final publication, website...

Transnationality represents an important feature of this project and it is expressed in different ways:

- the theme of the project - "Methods of communication between Europe and citizens" - will be talked from a national perspective: the different points of view will, at a second stage, be compared during the international final workshop;
- the partnership of the present proposal includes different types of organizations coming from different participating countries: 10 organizations are involved, representing 10 different EU Member States, both belonging to the "old" and the "new" Europe;
- the project includes a transnational activity - the final international workshop - in which representatives of the different partners (and countries) involved in the project will be invited;
- the outcomes of the project will be disseminated Europe-wide, through the different partners and through the network of ALDA which encompasses more than 140 members and 200 partners in Europe.

The partnership building process aimed at **involving different kinds of organizations**, in order to promote a rich and profitable exchange between partners of different nature. The partnership of the present proposal includes:

- national association of local authorities;
- associations of citizens;
- associations of immigrants;
- association dealing with participatory issues;
- no-profit research institutions.

The partnership has been selected and built paying special attention to the potentiality of each partner to act as a "multiplier" in its own community and starting from its own background and experience.. Some of the supporting organizations are represented by associations of local authorities, thus coordinating several municipalities in their region or country; some others represent and cooperate with many civil society organizations on the ground Therefore, the number of organizations directly and indirectly involved in the action will grow, granting a relevant impact and guaranteeing several activities in the field aiming at multiplying the effects, to be further completed even after the end of the present project.

The present proposal brings - during the final international workshop - European citizens of different nationalities and different languages together and offers them the opportunity to participate in common activities, especially within the framework of active European Citizenship. The interactive methodology and the non-formal setting, as well as the direct involvement of participants in the definition of the action, will facilitate the mutual understanding whilst respecting cultural and linguistic diversity.

The proposal is based on intercultural working methods and non-formal education.

All the activities involve participants, citizens, civil society organizations, young people, etc. coming from 10 different countries and representing different organizations.

The working methods are based on the experiential learning concept and includes variety of different methods. It is mainly a participant-centred and practice-oriented process, where active and interactive methods and the experiences of the participants - who are at same time both learners and resource persons - are the most relevant aspects.

The concept of the participant both as learner and as resource person allow and facilitate the exchange, offering to participants a continuous non-formal learning process during the whole project period.

All the activities of the project are accessible to all European citizens and special attention will be given to a balanced participation between men and women, especially in the implementation of the local and the international workshops.

Furthermore, partners will also focus on promoting the participation of senior citizens in all the planned activities, in order to grant an "intergenerational solidarity". The involvement of senior citizens will also facilitate the intergenerational transmission of the memory and of the "live experience" of important milestones of the building of today's Europe. Therefore, special focus will be given to a balanced participation of all age groups.

Tasks and events to be carried out¹

The foreseen activities are included in a "**3 steps**" process which:

1. **starts from the local level** with the local workshops,
2. **provides the European dimension** through an international workshop and
3. **promotes the visibility of the action** disseminating the publication on an extensive basis a summarizing publication including also recommendations arrived at in the previous steps.

The project activities can be summarized as follows:

- 1° STEP: 9 Local workshops, to be organized in the 9 different EU Member States
- 2° STEP: 1 International workshop
- 3° STEP: dissemination through a publication, DVD or CD Rom and Website

¹ specify, if applicable, the tasks relating to the project which the applicant is planning to subcontract to another organization/company/association

Local seminars

The first step of the "process" is characterized by the organization of 9 public workshops in 9 different EU Member States (*Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Denmark, Poland, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania*). All the workshops aim at analysing, debating and reflecting on how citizens and civil society perceived the communication methods employed by the European Institutions to reach citizens at the local level.

Objectives

The main objectives of the local seminars are the following:

- promote a debate on perception of "ordinary citizens" and civil society related to the communication methods employed by the European Institutions to interact with citizens at the local level
- to analyse the most significant successful and unsuccessful cases at the local level concerning interaction and communication between Europe and citizens
- to discuss and promote new and innovate methods and "tools", starting from the analyses of the study cases and through the exchange of best practices, to improve communication between Europe and citizens
- promote the importance of full citizen-participation - and how to get involved - at the European level

Organization and implementation

The local seminars will be implemented at the local level by the different partners which, select the most significant study cases to be analysed and debated. The partners, working in strict cooperation with the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies, will select, according to their background and their audience, specific topics (environment, European policies, social issues, etc.) where to focus on to reflect on the communication methods employed by the Commission in that framework. The direct involvement of civil society will facilitate the participation of the most relevant stakeholders in the communities, namely local authorities (including elective representatives) and other important institutions at the local level.

Target groups and participants

The seminars will be mainly addressed to:

- individuals: "ordinary citizens"
- civil society organizations: associations, minority groups, youth organizations, community leaders...

At least 360 participants are expected to take part in the local seminars (about 40 people for each seminar).

Contents

The 9 local workshops will be organized and implemented according to the characteristics of the different communities involved, in strict cooperation with the most relevant local actors.

However, common contents of the seminar have been identified, in order to guarantee some basic "elements" to all participants, taking into consideration they are part of a common process.

The contents of the seminar may include:

- an overall overview of the history of the European Union and of its methods to communicate with citizens
- at least a "case study", to be analysed in relation with the successful and unsuccessful methods of communication between Europe and citizens
- an open debate, involving citizens and civil society, to discuss and promote, from below, new and innovative "solutions" (methods, tools, etc.) to improve the interaction between Europe and citizens

Format and methodology

The workshops will provide an unbiased platform, at the local level, both for obtaining information and expressing opinion which may also be addressed to the European decision-makers and that will be disseminated through the publication and the website.

The methodology will be characterized by an interactive approach, where participants play both the role of "learners" and of "resource persons".

9 Local workshops
Detailed draft Agenda

9.00	Registration of the participants
9.30	Welcoming words
9.45	Introduction: Active citizenship in Europe: new challenges to improve the interaction between Europe and citizens
10.15	General overview: methods and methodologies employed by European Institutions to communicate with its citizens
10.45	Case study: presentation of a "case study" related to communication between Europe and citizens
11.00	Coffee break
11.30	Working groups: analyses of the case study to identify strong and weak points in the interaction and communication between Europe and its citizens (SWOT analyses)
12.30	Lunch
14.00	Plenary: presentation of the analyses of the case study
14.30	Working groups: improving communication and interaction between Europe and citizens at the local level - Promotion and identification of new and innovative communication tools (<i>with facilitators</i>)
16.30	Presentations in plenary
17.00	Conclusions