



'Europe for Citizens' Programme



## **EUROPE AND ITS CITIZENS**

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DIFFERENT WORKSHOPS**

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**Name of the Organisation:** **Youth-Express-Network**

**Title of the event:** Thematic workshops "Europe in dialogue with its citizens"

**Location:** Strasbourg, France

**Dates:** 17 and 31 January 2008

**Number of participants:** 35

During two evenings, three thematic groups discussed about how to improve communication between Europe and its citizens. Participants targeted all ages of citizens in order to have a comprehensive strategy of EU communication improvement. Open-space methodology was used to define the subjects addressed. Proposals and suggestions were various and numerous. First, further region's involvement was suggested notably with more celebration around the Europe Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May on different public spots in the city including activities for youth. Second, ideas of educational tools were developed, such as board games on European issues, European civic lectures at school, transfer of knowledge and history about building up Europe to the youngsters. Finally, youth exchanges, European programmes and cultural travels in Europe were also proposed as a way to improve European communication towards its citizens.

**Name of the organisation:** **Aid Program Advisory Centre (APAC)**

**Title of the event:** European Examples of Tripartite cooperation - chance for dialogue between Local authorities and citizens

**Location:** Nidzica, POLAND

**Dates:** 25 January and 15 February

**Number of participants:** 48 and 36

Formal discussions and a study visit to a "Pottery Village" was organised in order to have a comprehensive approach of EU communication at the local level, illustrated by a concrete action. The workshop focused on exchange of practices, expertises and competences in the field of communication between local authorities, business and NGOs. Participants representing local communities' actors (local authorities, companies and NGOs) also raised strengths and weaknesses of the communication between Europe and its citizens at the local level. They stressed the importance and the need to involve all relevant stakeholders (local government) in the decision making process. Better communication among stakeholders is necessary. Finally, supporting activities of the EU offers opportunities both at the central level and at the decentralized level.

**Name of the organisation:** **Insieme Association**

**Title of the event:** Round table "Europe in dialogue with its citizens"

**Location:** Rovigo, Italy

**Dates:** 9 March 2008

**Number of participants:** 40

This workshop aimed at debating about the integration of migrants from South-East Europe especially from Romania, Moldavia and Ukraine. The main problem raised by the participants (coming from both central and local public administrations, NGOs, youth organizations, mass-media representatives) is the absence of an open-space for sharing different cultures and traditions with the Italian. The Municipality is concerned about this problem and is available to share together opinions and solutions. Everyone agreed that exchange of knowledge and dialogue between normal local citizens and migrants help to understand the “other” and foster integration of migrants.

**Name of the organisation:** [Balkan Assist Association](#)

**Title of the event:** Cooperation Between Bulgarian NGOs and EU Institutions

**Location:** Euro Info Centre, Sofia, Bulgaria

**Date:** 10 April 2008

**Number of participants:** 40

Three subjects were addressed and debated during this workshop: possibilities for direct citizen participation; mechanisms for cooperation and better communication between NGOs and EU institutions; Lisbon Treaty. Through intensive discussions, some significant conclusions and suggestions came out. Concerning Europe’s communication towards its citizens, there is a lack of information about the EU policy-making decisions and general information in Bulgaria. It is necessary to consolidate NGO sector to create a common representation in Brussels. Finally, traineeships in EU institutions should be fostered.

**Name of the organisation:** [Romanian Municipalities Association](#)

**Title of the event:** Europe in dialogue with its citizens

**Location:** French Institute, Bucharest, Romania

**Date:** 11 April 2008

**Number of participants:** 55

This workshop includes two separate parts. First, a round table aimed at providing information on European citizenship concepts and public information services as well as listening to people’s opinions about Europe. Second, during small workshops the participants discussed different topics such as active participation of young people in the European construction building and the local public administration. They also had the opportunity to have an active dialogue with a Europarliamentarian. Main suggestions of the workshop are: increasing transparency between institutions and citizens; improving the organizational capacity and developing civil society representatives lobby capacities; further involving young people in the communication process established among EU institutions.

**Name of the organisation:** [Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative of the Open Society Institute](#)

**Title of the event:** „CLOSER to the FIRE”: Roma organizations and EU funding – Problems, opportunities and solutions

**Location:** Budapest, Hungary

**Date:** 21 April 2008

**Number of participants:** 48

The Open Society Institute decided to focus on the specific aspects of communication of the European Union with its Roma citizens. The event brought together representatives of Roma NGO representatives to share experience with each other as well as with representatives of EU funding agencies and other support organizations and in order to explore ways of effective communication and cooperation. According to the several raised problems faced by Roma communities, the proposals are the following: alternative communication channels (printed documents, language, local events) which are available and more accessible for Roma groups; proactive role of the local authorities to involve Roma NGOs and experts into the planning processes and public participation by creating adequate channels for it; setting up special capacity building programs to enable them to access to EU funds.

**Name of the organisation:** Màs Democracia

**Title of the event:** Direct Democracy in the European Union. European citizens' initiative: Citizens' Political Participation of Citizens in the European Legislation.

**Location:** Madrid, Spain

**Date:** 17 April 2008

**Number of participants:** 48

European Commission delegates, representatives from different NGOs, political parties, students, professors, state civil servants, experts in social sciences attended this workshop. Direct democracy and European citizens' initiative were the main subjects presented and debated. Experts and participants also discussed about the functioning of the European institutions and its so-called "democratic deficit". The conclusions of this workshop are the following: a common European civil ground of political participation must be promoted especially as European civil society seems more apt and able to cooperate in common goals than national states themselves. A legal framework to exercise European Citizens' Initiative is of utmost importance and was designed by the participants. They agreed that it could be a very useful instrument of political participation for European citizens.

**Name of the organisation:** INDEX – Research & Dialogue

**Title of the event:** Europe in the Daily Life of Cypriot Citizens

**Location:** University of Nicosia, Cyprus

**Date:** 5 May 2008

**Number of participants:** 40

This workshop focused on different important issues: European Commission and European Parliament communication with Cypriot citizens as well as EU "democratic deficit". Several researchers and experts on the EU as well as representatives of the EU office in Cyprus provides a lot of new information about EU functioning, strategies and the Plan D that is not very well known. Participants also noted that there is a lack of interest on the EU and it is seen to be distant, both physically and figuratively rather than part of the fabric of Cypriot society. There was also estimated to be a lack of clear mechanisms through which citizens can become active. This workshop was a great opportunity to gather experts, EU representatives and citizens in order to exchange knowledge, information and to create more EU active involvement from citizens' side.