

Evaluation of the Plan D / Debate Europe citizen consultation projects

Final Report

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Evaluation for the European Commission
DG COMM

This evaluation was commissioned by the European Commission, DG COMM, in the context of the framework contract signed between the Directorate General for Budget and Rambøll Management in association with Matrix and Eureval (Lot 3).

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The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' views, which are not necessarily shared by the European Commission.

This is the final report of the evaluation. It was proof-read and edited by a native English speaker.

The evaluation process at a glance:

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Activities/reports</i>
Inception	10/12/08	Kick off meeting
	11/01/09	Inception report V1
	21/01/09	Inception meeting
	9/2/09 and 4/3/09	Inception report V2
Data collection		Meta-study, case studies, interviews with involved citizens
	05/05/09	Interim report V1
	19/05/09	Interim meeting
	27/05/09	Interim report V2
Analysis		Confirmatory analysis
	09/06/09	Expert panel meeting
Report	17/07/09	Draft final report
	24/07/09	Final meeting
		Comments by EC, complementary information
	15/09/09	Final report
		Presentation in seminar(s)

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Acronyms

EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
CoR	Committee of Regions
ECC	European Citizens' Consultations
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KBF	King Baudouin Foundation
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament (national)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
TECE	Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe

This report¹ is structured in five parts, as follows:

- Plan D and Debate Europe activities – description of what is evaluated;
- The evaluation – short description of the evaluation method and its limitations²;
- The evaluation team’s answers to the questions asked by the Commission in the Terms of Reference;
- Overall assessment
- Recommendations.

¹ In addition to this report, the evaluation team has delivered a technical report which includes 21 monographs of case studies, the complete interviews with citizens, the meta-study on active citizenship, the synthesis of the expert panel and of the interviews with European institutions, and the technical report on the database analysis.

² The method is further explained in the appendix.

1 Plan D and Debate Europe activities

1.1 European communication policies: fighting the EU's democratic deficit

From Maastricht to the 2005 Action Plan

The debate on the democratic deficit of the European Union is not a recent one. The Maastricht Treaty and its adoption, however, started a discussion on the EU project and its democratic features, which led to the EU institutions' commitment to making their work more transparent, and to getting closer to the public. Several measures were taken in this direction.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Commission revived the debate by calling on other EU institutions and Member States to join in its efforts to improve the Union's information and communication.

The European Parliament elections of 2004 revealed the citizens' growing lack of interest in European politics. The Barroso Commission reacted by appointing a new commissioner for communication, Ms. Wallström. After a long period of consultation, Ms. Wallström produced an Action Plan in July 2005³.

The Action plan, though stressing that the communication policy had improved between 2001 and 2004 (identification of objectives, partnership with other European institutions and Member States), identified several weaknesses:

- The fragmentation of communication activities;
- "Messages reflecting political priorities but not necessarily linked to citizens' interests, needs and preoccupations: current campaigns focus on the political elite and media and fail to portray the benefits and consequences for day-to-day life in a direct and understandable manner"
- "Inadequate implementation: the strategies adopted in the past by the Commission were too focused on financing campaigns rather than on dialogue and proactive communication."⁴

The new approach was summarised in a few words: **Listening** ("communication is a dialogue"), **Communicating** ("EU policies [...] have to be advocated in a manner that people can understand") and **Going local**.

From the double No to a new Communication policy

In the meantime, the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by both the French and the Dutch came as a shock to the European leaders. In June 2005, the Heads of State and Government called for a "period of reflection" before deciding what to do.

³ This first section is mainly based on the Euractiv.com dossier on the EU communication policy, available at this address:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/eu-communication-policy/article-117502>

⁴ Action plan to improve communication in Europe by the Commission, 2005:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/communication_com_en.pdf

The White Paper on a European Communication policy was published in February 2006. The main message was that it was time for the EU to close the gap between citizens and institutions, and that this could be done only if all the partners come together to do so, especially the "key players: the other EU institutions and bodies; the national, regional and local authorities in the Member States; European political parties; civil society"⁵ (see Box 1 below). The objective was therefore to contribute to the development of a European public sphere, i.e. a space where the debate on Europe could unfold, by following three principles:

- inclusiveness ("all citizens should have access [...] to information of public concern");
- diversity ("EU communication policy must respect the full range of views in the public debate");
- participation ("Citizens should have a right to express their views, be heard and have the opportunity for dialogue with the decision-makers")

Box 1: The new communication policy of the EU as conceived in the White Paper

"The European Commission is therefore proposing a fundamentally new approach - a decisive move away from one-way communication to reinforced dialogue, from an institution-centred to a citizen-centred communication, from a Brussels-based to a more decentralised approach.

Communication should become an EU policy in its own right, at the service of the citizens. It should be based on genuine dialogue between the people and the policymakers and lively political discussion among citizens themselves. People from all walks of life should have the right to fair and full information about the European Union, and be confident that the views and concerns they express are heard by the EU institutions. The European Parliament, Member States and the representation of European citizens have a special role to play, as peoples' support for the European project is a matter of common interest."

Finally, a last founding document was the communication from the Commission on Communicating Europe in Partnership. The aim in this document was "to strengthen coherence and synergies between the activities undertaken by the different EU institutions and by Member States, in order to offer citizens better access and a better understanding of the impact of EU policies at European, national and local level"⁶.

In direct connection with the other two above-mentioned documents, the objectives of this document were:

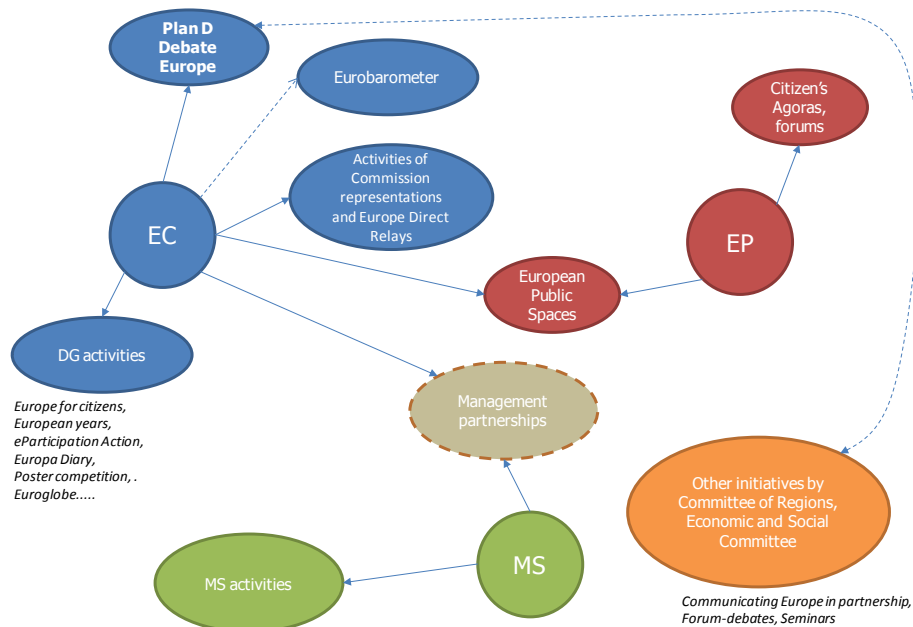
- to offer coherent and integrated communication on the European institutions to further increase the visibility of EU action;
- to empower citizens, by going local and supporting active European citizenship;
- to develop a European public sphere;
- to reinforce the partnership approach.

⁵ White paper on a European Communication policy,
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0035:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁶ Communicating Europe in Partnership
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0568en01.pdf

In particular, the Commission has supported the development of joint communication initiatives (management partnerships between Member States and the European Commission) and the development or strengthening of several other activities (see Figure 1 below for an overview).

Figure 1: Major information and communication activities of the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States



Plan D for Democracy, Debate and Dialogue, which was launched in October, 2005, is in the direct connection with these new policy principles.

1.2 Plan D and Debate Europe

Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate was launched as a pilot programme in October 2005. The press release at the time stressed that the Commission had a role in reactivating the dialogue on Europe after the French and Dutch No votes, by fostering national debates on the future of Europe.

The objective of Plan D was to restore public confidence in the European Union by encouraging debates that extended to civil society, and also to specific target groups such as the youth or minority groups. It is also designed as “a listening exercise, so that the EU can act on the concerns expressed by its citizens”.

This objective was to be reached through debates at national or international level, focusing on three themes pertaining to the future of Europe:

- Europe’s economic and social development;
- Feelings towards Europe and the Union’s tasks;
- Europe’s borders and its role in the world.

In line with the newly drafted EU Communication policy, members of local, national and European parliaments and other political leaders were encour-

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/wallstrom/pdf/communication_planD_en.pdf

aged to participate in these debates, to ensure direct communication with the citizens.

A feedback process was expected to ensure that the debates would have a direct impact on the policy agenda of the European Union.

Plan D ran from April 2006 to May 2008. By the end of its implementation, the process of ratifying the Lisbon Treaty was starting and the European elections of spring 2009 were moving to the top of the political agenda. In April 2008, the Commission adopted a Communication proposing Debate Europe as a follow up to Plan D, with the aim of enabling citizens to hold informed debates on EU affairs, and to encourage the development of a European public sphere.

The Debate Europe programme was launched in April 2008 and is to run until November 2009. It focuses on connecting citizen debates on EU-related issues to the political establishment at all levels of governance. The fact that European elections were taking place in 2009 was expected to facilitate this connection.

As for Plan D, a two-track strategy has been chosen with a pan-European project implemented consistently in the 27 Member States, along with a series of national and regional projects proposed by local NGOs.

Plan D was allocated EUR 6.6 million (EUR 4.5 million for the first call for proposals and EUR 2.1 million for the second call). The resources allocated to Debate Europe amount to EUR 3 million⁸.

Box 2: Origins of citizen deliberation in the areas of technology and research

In 2001, the Prodi Commission launched a debate on governance. The context was shaped by the enlargement issue, a sense of democratic deficit, and a relatively weak Commission (recent fall of the Santer Commission).

For this reason, and also in connection with the rise of democratic assessment of technological choices, as well as in the very specific context of several science- and technology-related crises in the late 1990s, DG RTD launched a ground-setting study on policies, governance and citizens in the area of research. This study was commissioned in 2002 to be undertaken by IFOK, and ended in a successful conference in June 2003.

A call for proposals subsequently initiated a series of projects such as "Meeting of Minds" (the first citizen assessment of a technological choice in an international and multi-lingual context), or CIPAST (a guideline for best practice and a set of training material on citizen participation). A new step was taken in 2005 with the seminar "Goverscience" and a subsequent report by Andrew Stirling (From Science to Society to Science in Society).

During the same period (2004-2005), a series of research projects were initiated with financial support from the 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP6) under the "Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society" heading.

These activities inaugurated the practice of citizen deliberation at European level and paved the way to similar activities in several DGs, including DG COMM.

⁸ During the same time period, the EC Representations were allocated EUR 4.2 millions for their communication activities, which may have some similarities with Debate Europe projects.

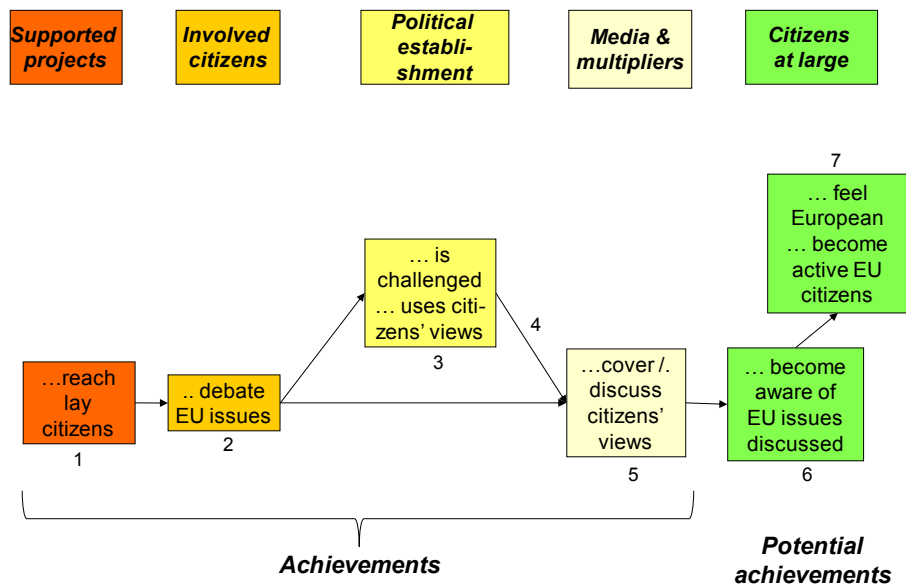
1.3 Logic of the intended effects

This section explains how Plan D and Debate Europe are expected to achieve their intended effects. These assumptions were tested in the framework of this evaluation. They derive from:

- An analysis of basic documents
- Interviews in the EU
- The evaluation team's understanding

Within each chain of cause and effect, the assumptions are displayed in a logical order, which is not necessarily chronological.

Figure 2: Simplified intervention logic



There are three main chains of intended results and impacts, which are detailed in the next three subsections:

- Logic of visible citizen debate
- Logic of challenging the political establishment
- Logic of replication

Logic of visible citizen debate

The assumptions are the following:

- Participants are reached / recruited in such a way that they are perceived as typical lay citizens, and that anybody can feel his/her viewpoint is represented in the discussion. The profile of participants is perceived as non-biased towards a specific opinion, especially towards pro-European opinion (box 1 in Figure 2);
- The questions addressed are of interest for and understood by citizens at large; they pertain to EU issues and the EU's impact on daily life;

participants receive information on these issues, in a comprehensive enough and understandable way; all participants' viewpoints are expressed, listened to, and discussed; an unbiased consensus is reached on some points and remaining disagreements are stated explicitly (box 2 in Figure 2);

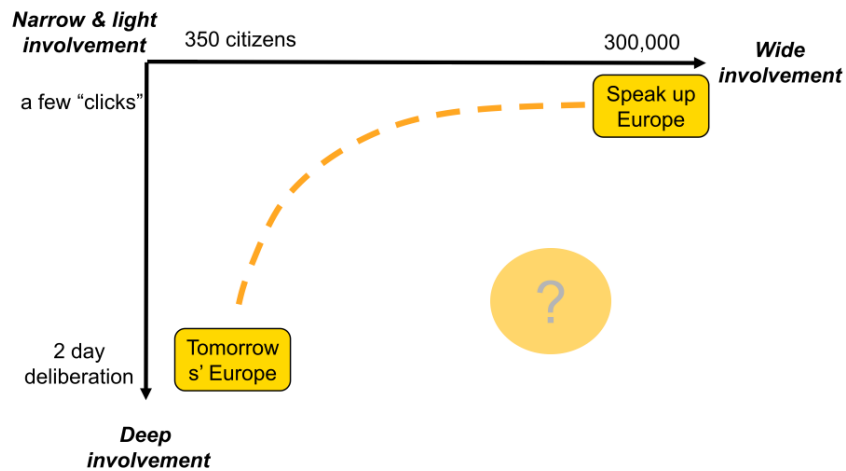
- Media with popular audience report extensively and fairly upon the substance of the debates, including disagreements, and upon the debate process; same for influential multipliers⁹ or opinion-makers (box 5 in Figure 2);
- Citizens at large trust in the fairness of the process, become aware of the substance of the debate, improve their understanding of and interest in the EU issues under discussion, including the lines of divide; they develop a feeling of European citizenship and some of them become active European citizens (Boxes 6 and 7 in Figure 2).

About the concept of citizen involvement

Citizen involvement is a core assumption of Plan D and Debate Europe. Contrary to traditional one-way communication, it was expected that the targeted citizens would discuss the issues at stake (Box 2 in Figure 2) and convey a collective message back to the political establishment (Box 3 in Figure 2), which would make the communication two-way.

⁹ The concept of "multiplier" means that the debate has a wider effect which reaches beyond the direct change in the participants' mindsets. This may occur through the contribution of some actors to the dissemination of the substance of the discussion, for instance: (1) those managing or just observing the debate, (2) the relatives of involved citizens, or (3) the involved lay citizens themselves who become active citizens and opinion makers, for instance by joining an NGO or getting more involved in civic life as a result of their participation in such a consultation.

Figure 3: Width and depth of citizen involvement



How deep should citizens be engaged in the discussion? The new models tested in this evaluation go beyond a mere consultation through question and answer sessions or opinion polls. Citizens were rather expected to exchange views and argue between themselves and / or with politicians and stakeholders. In this report the terms debate and deliberation are used interchangeably for referring to these discussions.

Two key dimensions of debate / deliberation are the depth and width of citizens' involvement, as sketched in Figure 3. In this figure, the project on the left (Tomorrows' Europe) involves a small number of citizens (just 350 participants across Europe) but the involvement is deep (active participation in a two day debate). In the other case (Speak up Europe), citizen involvement is wide (300,000 participants) and light (most often a matter of a few clicks¹⁰).

The dotted line in the figure means that none of the activities under Plan D and Debate Europe achieve a deep and wide involvement simultaneously.

This means that the potential for changing the minds of citizens on a large scale is null (no critical mass), unless the debates are publicised by the media or multiplied by opinion-makers (see box 5 in Figure 2).

Logic of challenging the political establishment

The assumptions¹¹ are the following:

¹⁰ Involvement in internet forums is not necessarily light. Some participants may make a number of inputs over several weeks.

¹¹ Assumptions about politicians pertain to Debate Europe activities much more than Plan D ones. This evaluation will however screen all projects for this assumption in the spirit of learning from any interesting experience, but not in a view to assess activities against inappropriate judgement criteria.

- Representatives of the political establishment take part in the discussion, or at least become aware of the substance and conclusions of the debates; they trust the fairness of the process; they take public positions on the debated issues; they change their minds (even marginally) as a consequence of their participation; they change their behaviour accordingly (Box 3 in Figure 2);
- Key figures in the political establishment participate in the debate and/or react to the citizen's conclusions; this increases the attractiveness of the debates for the media and opinion-makers (arrow 4 in Figure 2), and the credibility of / interest in the information disseminated (Box 5), thus boosting the potential for reaching the wider public (Boxes 6 and 7).

In a system of representative democracy in general, and in the EU institutional system in particular, politicians have the last say on any political issue. They are exposed to a myriad of influences, of which activities like Plan D and Debate Europe are just a tiny part. This is why Figure 2 does not include a box like "better policy making".

Involved citizens may expect that their opinions will be taken into account in the decisions made once the debate is over. There is however a major risk of frustration and disillusionment with such expectations which do not correspond to the logic of the evaluated activities.

About the concept of conclusions

Are citizen debates and deliberations adding value through the conclusions reached or the discussion itself?

The current (and implicit) assumptions can be summarised as follows:

- Participants' profiles are diverse and unbiased towards a specific opinion, especially towards pro-European opinion;
- All participants' viewpoints are expressed, listened to, and discussed;
- An unbiased consensus is reached on some conclusions and recommendations, which become the main outputs of the process;
- Politicians are challenged by the media, which show interest in citizens' conclusions.

An alternative set of assumptions would be that:

- The debate ends in identifying fault lines and divides which are specific to the European situation (and which may differ from national politics), and these new lines of debate become the main outputs of the process;
- Politicians are challenged by the media, which show interest in the citizens' conflicting views.

The two sets of assumptions deserve to be considered in this evaluation since the aim of Plan D and Debate Europe is not to make people think consensually or positively about the EU, but to help them integrate the EU dimension into political debates.

Logic of replication

All the above assumptions were made in the context of activities designed to test new approaches on a small scale rather than to induce EU-wide impacts.

These assumptions therefore need to be complemented by a set of hypotheses about how the lessons will be learnt and applied on a large scale. In this respect, it is assumed that the supported activities:

- Are capitalised on, e.g. described on a website, subjected to an evaluation, analysed in research papers, presented in a seminar, converted into training material;
- Are easily replicable, i.e. not excessively dependent on contextual factors, on highly specialised and largely unavailable skills, on specific institutional facilities, or unaffordable financial resources;
- Are acknowledged and mastered in the relevant networks at European and national level, e.g. NGOs dealing with active citizenship, public bodies, academics, consultants;
- Are replicated on a larger scale.

1.4 Overview of the activities engaged

General features

Plan D was allocated EUR 6.6 million (EUR 4.5 million for the first call for proposals and EUR 2.1 million for the second call). The resources allocated to Debate Europe amount to EUR 3 million¹².

The 6 pan-European or trans-border projects¹³ were co-funded by the European Commission for a total amount of almost EUR 6.5 million, i.e. almost two thirds of the available funding.

According to the information sent by the Representations¹⁴, a total of 107 national- or local-level projects were funded under Plan D and Debate Europe (excluding the 6 international projects):

- 60 were funded under Plan D;
- 47 were funded under Debate Europe.

The 107 national projects cover 19 European countries (see Figure 4 below):

- 10 projects or more have been funded in 4 countries: The Netherlands (13), Germany (11), France and Latvia (10).
- The missing countries are Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Luxembourg, Greece, Poland, Romania and Sweden.

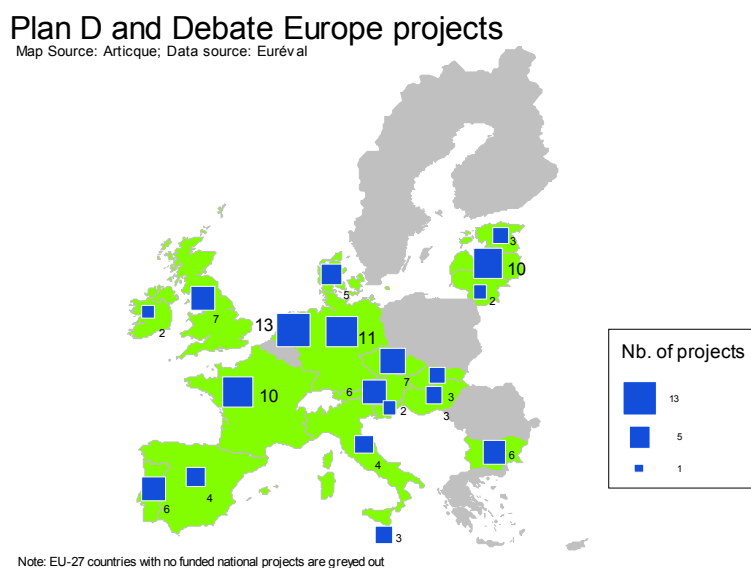
In terms of funding by the European Union, 4 countries received more than half the total grant: The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

¹² During the same period, the EC Representations were allocated EUR 4.2 million for their communication activities, which may have some similarities with Debate Europe projects.

¹³ European Citizen Consultations 2007, European Citizen Consultations 2009, Tomorrow's Europe, Radio Web Europe, Our message to Europe. and Our Europe-Our Debate-Our Contribution. The four first projects covered all European countries, while the three remaining projects covered four or five member States.

¹⁴ Given the disparity of the data sets provided by the Representations, these figures are given for reference only.

Figure 4: Plan D and Debate Europe projects in Europe (2006-2009, excluding pan-European projects)



Stakeholders

Most coordinators of projects are NGOs (60%) or Foundations (10%). Others include local authorities (in France and Germany only), academic organisations or other para-governmental organisations.

Other features include the following:

- Almost 1 out of 3 coordinators is a Europe-oriented organisation, i.e. an organisation whose status or rationale is related to Europe (e.g. Europe Info Centres, "Association for European partnership", "Notre Europe", "Centre d'Information sur les Institutions Européennes", etc.). This was even more true under Plan D than under Debate Europe;
- 4 out of 10 organisations support active citizenship or civic engagement; 1 out of 6 are European-oriented organisations supporting active citizenship;
- 4 out of 10 organisations are public-oriented. This includes all organisations that primarily serve one group or community. The most common are: women, the youth, the elderly, consumers, workers, and "people facing potential discrimination".

Topics treated

The projects mainly treated the following topic:

- The European Union institutions and policies (40%). This topic includes discussions on the future of Europe;
- Active citizenship (20%);
- Equal opportunities and intercultural dialogue (10%).

It should be noted that 2007 was the European Year for Equal opportunities and intercultural dialogue.

The projects namely targeted the youth in 45% of the projects, and women in 15%. Most other projects (35%) targeted the general public.

Tools used

The tools¹⁵ most commonly used in the local projects were:

- Information and dialogue tools (90%). This included seminars, information campaigns, Q&A sessions, etc.
- Online activities (30%). This included not only a website, but also activities such as forums, online polls or games, question boxes, etc.
- Participative tools (25%). This included events or activities in which citizen participated and produced an output (e.g. a declaration, a synthesis of debates, etc.)

Other activities included surveys, contests, publication of a book, artistic contests, games, exhibitions, radio or TV programmes, articles, etc.

A preliminary remark for this evaluation should therefore be that despite the emphasis of Plan D and Debate Europe on participation, only a minority of the local projects had a participative value. All international projects (i.e. two thirds of the total budget), however, were designed with citizen participation in mind.

¹⁵ Note: This typology makes a distinction between purely informative instruments, including dialogue with MEP, etc. and instruments requiring a stronger involvement of citizens, and producing an output (e.g. citizen advice).

2 This evaluation

2.1 Original evaluation questions

The evaluation questions asked in the Terms of reference are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1– Original evaluation questions

Overall evaluation question:	
- to what extent have Plan D/Debate Europe projects modelled best practice in increasing:	citizens' awareness of EU issues?
	the EU's impact on daily life?
	citizens' participation in debates on these issues?
<i>Pan-European projects:</i>	
- to what extent do/did these projects have a potential to contribute to the debate on:	the EU's future?
	the EU's impact on citizens' daily lives?
<i>National/regional projects</i>	
- to what extent do/did projects model best practice in:	contributing to the debate on the EU?
	promoting citizens' participation in this debate?
	strengthening existing networks?
- how well do/did these projects identify:	EU issues of greatest local concern?
	how best to address these issues?
To what extent do/did the projects draw on, and work with, existing activities, notably of the Commission and the European Parliament?	

These questions are answered in Section 4, p. 47.

2.2 Questions

This section briefly describes the approach to answering the evaluation questions asked in the terms of reference.

A series of sub-questions is proposed hereafter with a view to:

- Stimulating reflection on the intervention logic (see Figure 2)

- Structuring data collection and analysis
- Answering the Commission's questions
- Providing a summary of best practices and recommendations

The following sub-questions will be answered:

- To what extent are projects ...

... adding value to existing EU activities? (A - **Added value**)

... testing new models of promotion of active European citizenship?

(B - **New models**)

... involving citizens in debates on EU issues? (C - **Citizen involvement**)

... raising the awareness of involved citizens, on EU issues? (D - **Citizen awareness**)

- To what extent are the debated issues ...

... covered by the media and multiplied by opinion-makers? (E - **Media coverage**)

... publicly discussed with opinion-makers and the political establishment? (F - **Politician involvement**)

... challenging the political establishment? (G - **Politician awareness**)

- To what extent are the projects ...

... recognised as good transferable practices? (H - **Capitalising on experience**)

... acknowledged and mastered in the relevant networks? (I - **Transferability**)

Each of these questions was detailed in design tables, which include success criteria, indicators and success thresholds. In the final phase of the evaluation, these indicators were further refined in order to reflect the programme's reality more clearly.

The amended design tables are available in the Appendix, p.72.

2.3 Contribution analysis approach

This evaluation did not require considerable cause-and-effect analysis. Most of the questions pertained to direct short-term effects which could be reasonably assessed by questioning participants and cross-checking with documents and observers' statements.

Only the following few impacts¹⁶ needed to be analysed, and they were not far-reaching:

- Involved citizens have sustainably improved their knowledge of and interest in the EU issues discussed (D- Citizen awareness)
- Representatives of the political establishment took public positions on the debated issues during and after the project (G- Politician awareness)

¹⁶ Impacts occur beyond direct visible results, and require a cause-and-effect analysis.

- The concerned networks have become aware of the innovations achieved and have acquired the capacity to replicate them at large scale (I – Transferability)

Our approach to analysing these impacts was a “contribution analysis” consisting of:

- Referring to the relevant chain of cause-and-effect assumptions (see Figure 2 p.11)
- Extracting from the data collection all facts and opinions which tend to confirm the assumptions
- Also extracting facts and opinions which tend to disconfirm the assumptions
- Writing a step-by-step explanation of whether or not the supported projects have made a contribution, and ranking this contribution among other explanations
- Submitting the reasoning to systematic criticism within the evaluation team until it is strong enough.

2.4 Tools and information sources

Table 2 below displays the main characteristics of the tools used in the evaluation. For further comments, see the section on method in the Appendix, p. 61.

Table 2– Tools for collecting and processing data

Tool	Purpose	Information sources	Deliverables
Project analysis	Provide an overall picture of the activities and the publics targeted	Documents and database available through EC headquarters, plus other tools	Database, typology of functions and projects
Meta-study	Understand the potential of new models in terms of active European citizenship	Scientific articles, EC communications	Short report on active citizenship, typology of European people's attitudes towards active citizenship
EU-level interviews	Identifying new models, assessing added value, in addition to validation and replication of good practices	13 interviews with officials of the Commission and Parliament	Survey report
Case studies	Analysing reputedly good practices, their results, and their potential	Interviews with stakeholders and documents related to 8 cases and 13 sub-cases	21 Case monographs
Interviews with involved citizens	Understanding all aspects of citizens' involvement and awareness	In-depth qualitative interviews with 25 involved citizens across five countries	25 minutes from interviews input into the case monographs
Expert panel	Confirming the interest of tested models, providing benchmarks, validating good practices	Knowledge of 4 European experts in the area of active citizenship	Minutes from the panel's meeting

Note: the case studies were carried out in 5 countries (CZ, DE, LV, NL, UK) chosen for their general attitude towards the European Union, and their diversity in size and culture.

3 Analysis

Each answer is structured as follows:

- Question
- Approach used
- Evidence (by criterion)

For each section on evidence, "main findings" are added; they summarise the main elements derived from data collection, and constitute the basis of the evaluation conclusions.

3.1 Added value

Question

To what extent are projects adding value to existing EU activities?

Approach

Plan D and Debate Europe are two programmes among many other activities carried out by European institutions to inform and communicate on European issues through engaging and deliberative processes.

Hence the issue of coherence between these activities, which includes:

- Complementarity, i.e. serving the same goals through various means
- Synergy, i.e. achieving better / larger results by the fact that activities add value to one another.

This question is to be answered positively if several examples of complementarity and synergy can be highlighted.

This question is answered through interviews with European institutions, project analysis and, to a lesser extent, case studies.

Complementarity

As seen in Figure 1, p.9, European institutions have many activities in the field of information and communication, including those that foster active European citizenship. Plan D was not the first one, even when considering only deliberative projects (see Box 2, p.10).

Activities with common grounds

Several activities were launched following and based upon the Commission's 2005 action plan and Plan D. The European Economic and Social Committee launched two instruments (Communicating Europe in Partnership, 2006 and Forum-debate, 2007) to reinforce the actions implemented under Plan D. The programme also triggered activities aimed at involving citizens, such as the European Parliament's Citizen forums (2006) and Agora (2007).

eParticipation (2006-2008) is another programme which was launched immediately after Plan D and shares many of its premises, though it was conceived under the i2010 action plan¹⁷.

Original features

The other European activities have generally complemented Plan D and Debate Europe activities rather than overlapping with them, as they:

- Targeted different beneficiaries (civil society organisations for the EESC and Agoras). It should be noted that Plan D/Debate Europe were not only open to NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. local authorities operated a few projects in France and Germany);
- Used different tools (ICT in eParticipation) or instruments (NGO-operated projects, meetings at the EP, directly-operated events, etc.);
- Had a thematic rather than a general approach (European years, scientific focus).

The topics mentioned in Plan D/Debate Europe are in line with the Commission's overall objectives (the future of Europe, employment and social cohesion, sustainable development), and with some of its flagship policies (e.g. intercultural dialogue and equal opportunities¹⁸). For instance, Plan D/Debate Europe complemented and continued the 2007 European Year for Equal Opportunities and Intercultural Dialogue with 10% of the projects discussing these issues.

An original feature is that Debate Europe was also designed to prepare for the European elections; this is not the case for any other programme, not even those of the European parliament.

DG EAC's Europe for Citizens however needs a specific comparison. There are very strong similarities between this programme (which was first launched in 2004 and is still ongoing) and Plan D/Debate Europe. Several organisations, such as Notre Europe, may actually have received support from both programmes. The two programmes actually share similar instruments (projects by civil society organisations)¹⁹ with similar objectives (see Box 3 below) and in similar areas. Topic-wise, many national projects could have been funded by Europe for Citizens.

Complementarity arises in that case from specific features of DG COMM's activities:

- The reliance on national EC representation to award small-sized grants;
- The absence of multi-national criteria for small projects and, on the other hand, a mandatory 25- then 27-country coverage for large-scale projects.

¹⁷ "The objectives of the eParticipation Preparatory Action are to demonstrate how using modern ICT tools and applications can make it easier for people to participate in decision-making and can contribute to better legislation." See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/implementation/prep_action/index_en.htm

¹⁸ i2010 (the framework strategy for the development of the digital economy) is one of the few overarching policies which is not included.

¹⁹ Europe for Citizens also includes other activities such as structural support for NGOs, support to town twinning or to projects initiated by the citizens themselves.

Similar observations apply for Youth in Action (which aims to support active citizenship²⁰), for youth-oriented activities.

Box 3: Europe for Citizens – extracts from the website²¹

“The programme’s priority areas are: promoting participation and democracy at the EU level; the future of the Union and its basic values; intercultural dialogue; employment, social cohesion and sustainable development; and boosting awareness of the societal impact of EU policies.”

“[The programme] supports concrete joint projects between civil society organisations – whether they work at regional, national or European level – from different participating countries. These projects should address issues of European interest and focus on putting forward concrete solutions, through cross-border co-operation or coordination. This measure supports joint actions, debates, reflection exercises and networking activities

The Europe-wide projects would have had difficulties obtaining EC funding without Plan D and Debate Europe.

That was not the case however for national projects:

- Interviews have revealed that the Plan D’s second Call (dedicated to local projects) was partly designed to fund projects that Representations had already identified and were willing to support;
- Some local projects may have obtained a grant from national organisations, as they did not necessarily treat a “European only” topic (e.g. projects on discrimination).
- Finally, as noted above, many local projects could have received funding from DG EAC’s Europe for Citizens with some organisational changes to the projects, or from another thematic programme such as Youth in Action for youth-oriented projects (see Who Else in Box 4 below.)

Box 4: Who Else, a project to support active citizenship among the youth

Who Else is a project developed by the Czech NGO People in Need. A feature of this project was to support the engagement of young people with local problems and to raise their awareness on various issues affecting young people by delivering small grants to teams of students implementing their own activities. These activities have dealt with sexism, bullying, child work, ecology, etc. At the time of the evaluation the project listed 27 teams of students who applied for the grants, covering 11 topics.

In order to provide useful advice on how to organise events, write petitions, prepare promotion etc. when implementing activities, guidelines were issued for the students.

²⁰ “Youth in Action is the EU Programme for young people aged 15-28 (in some cases 13-30). It aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union’s future”. Source: Youth in Action website: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc74_en.htm

²¹ Source: DG EAC website, see http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.htm

It should also be noted that a project very similar to Tomorrow's Europe, "Europolis", received funding from DG RTD to experiment on large-scale, multi-national polling, which was precisely the purpose of Tomorrow's Europe.

Finally, at project level, the case studies have highlighted a few cases of complementarity:

- Several projects were implemented by Europe Direct Centres, including Our Message to Europe in the Czech Republic. These organisations are in charge of disseminating information about Europe in the Member States. In our case, a centre in the Czech Republic may organise up to 30 presentations a year, mostly in schools.
- The first European Citizen Consultations were supplemented in Germany with Regional Citizens' Forums, funded under the "Aktion Europa" initiative (German Presidency of the EU); these forums allowed for the process to be extended to the local level.

Synergy

Achieving synergy implies that Plan D/Debate Europe and the activities identified as similar add value to each other, and that better results can therefore be expected.

First, it should be noted that the European Commission is organised in a decentralised way. This means, among other things, that there cannot be only one communication policy for all the DGs, not to mention the other European institutions.

A high-level inter-service group on communication was created to coordinate communication initiatives, but several stakeholders interviewed claimed that DG COMM was not playing its role in the group, due to a lack of strategy and leadership. Stakeholders pointed out the many informal exchanges of information between the DGs' communication services ahead of the formal inter-service consultations. DG COMM is also involved in several working groups implemented by other DGs, although this is not compulsory.

These exchanges of information can contribute to the improvement of communication practices, and to the use of deliberation processes. However, there is neither an actual strategy to foster synergy between communication activities within and outside the EC, nor evidence of improved results thanks to the exchange of information.

Synergy may nevertheless still occur via project funding: supported organisations develop further capacities that they later exploit under another scheme or, at micro-level, a person trained in the context of a funded project may use her/his skills in another project. Both were observed in our case studies (see Box 5 below).

Finally, the reliance on EC representations does not seem to have triggered any visible synergy with their own activities, or between European policies. Our assumption had been that there could be some in the context of the management partnerships (see Figure 1, p. 6), but the Representations evidently limited themselves to controlling these projects.

Box 5: Cases of synergy in Plan D/Debate Europe projects

From a former programme to Plan D/Debate Europe

The King Baudouin Foundation (KBF) launched "Meeting of Minds" in 2004, a European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Science funded by DG-RTD. This project already included several typical aspects of the Plan D/Debate Europe projects, including the willingness to foster dialogue between citizens and policy-makers.

The experience gained was widely used to design and implement Plan D's European Citizen consultations.

From Plan D/Debate Europe to other programmes

Tomorrow's Europe was the first experiment of EU-wide deliberative polling. The Europolis project was submitted for FP7 funding in 2007, to be ready by 2009, with the deliberative polling event being organised one week before the elections. The project coordinator explained that to increase their chances of success, they thoroughly examined the results of Tomorrow's Europe. They also hired several staff members of Tomorrow's Europe, who had acquired unique experience in that respect.

Main findings:

- f1. There are several European programmes that share common ground with Plan D and Debate Europe, some of them appearing as a consequence of the 2005 Action Plan and the launch of Plan D
- f2. Plan D and Debate Europe have been supporting several European policies and overarching policies through the topics treated
- f3. Plan D and Debate Europe benefit from several original features that enhance their complementarity with other European activities, including: support to the 2009 European elections; funding for national projects (i.e. not based on a multi-national partnership); funding through national representations; support to EU-wide projects
- f4. Because of their original features, international projects may have had difficulties obtaining a grant without Plan D or Debate Europe
- f5. Many national projects could have fit in other Community or Member State initiatives
- f6. There is no evidence that synergy was achieved at programme level, despite informal exchanges between the DGs on their respective experiences
- f7. There is no evidence that synergy was achieved through the Call on EC representations for national projects
- f8. There are a few cases of complementarity and synergy at project level

3.2 New models

Question

To what extent are projects testing new models for promoting active European citizenship?

Approach

Plan D and Debate Europe do not have the aim of supporting “innovative” projects in the sense of totally new approaches. Deliberative processes have been implemented all over the world and in many flavours for decades now. The EC itself has developed many activities to foster European active citizenship or citizen deliberation in the last ten years. Plan D and Debate Europe can of course contribute to innovation in these respects, but they were designed more with the specific objectives of finding new solutions to:

- Allow for two-track communication;
- Provide a framework to discuss specific EU- or Europe-related issues;
- Approach target groups less prone to or capable of discussing EU-related issues;
- Integrate in a multi-lingual or multi-national setting.

This can be done through specific project engineering, approaches to engagement, or the use of tools such as the internet.

The above question is mainly answered through meta-study, project analysis, case studies and the output of the expert panel.

Two-track communication

Two-track communication (i.e. communicating Europe, but also listening to the citizens) is a key feature of Plan D/Debate Europe. The funded projects mainly integrated this feature by including decision-makers in the debates.

Almost all the projects studied relied on experts and politicians to foster discussion on European issues, but the decision-makers’ participation varied widely, depending on the projects. The studied cases include:

- Discussion between decision-makers in the presence of citizens;
- Q&A session with citizens;
- Discussion with citizens;
- Discussion with citizens based on the conclusions or recommendations of the citizens.

The largest and most in-depth attempt to promote two-track communication came from the KBF’s European Citizens’ Consultations 2009, which included discussions with decision-makers and follow-up sessions at national and then European level. These sessions were designed to trigger in-depth discussions about the perspectives of the produced recommendations.

Framework for discussion

One of the objectives of Plan D/Debate Europe was to encourage discussion on EU or Europe-related issues (EU issues being those related to the institutions, and the latter being those supported by the EU and of interest to all Europeans, e.g. equal opportunities, the environment, social cohesion, etc.).

This field of potential issues to be discussed was very large and did not always make the relationship between the project and the European Union clear enough. This applied in particular to local projects, which treated a variety of topics such as climate change, discriminations, flexicurity, etc. In the latter case the Bevan Institute, in charge of the debate, did not even mention the European Union, in order to avoid rejection by the participants. Yet in many

cases citizens had not regularly discussed EU issues before, whether informally or in organised frameworks such as the projects. As a consequence, they would not “recognise” a topic as being European *per se*.

Furthermore, by allowing for such a wide diversity of projects, Plan D and Debate Europe tended not to be differentiated from other Community initiatives focused on the issues treated.

Target groups

Plan D activities were supposed to target groups that were not reached during the Referendum campaigns: the youth²², women, minority groups.

According to our project analysis, the projects targeted the youth in 45% of the projects, and women in 15%. In only two cases out of 107 were marginalised or discriminated people targeted. Many other projects (35%) targeted the general public.

This targeting is probably one of the other factors explaining the strong proximity, in Plan D/Debate Europe, of some local projects with other Community initiatives such as Europe for Citizens or Youth in Action. In the latter case this is particularly noticeable with a project such as Who Else (see Box 4 p.24).

Multi-lingual or multi-national setting

Few projects are engaged in multi-national activities. In our case studies these included the three pan-European projects (Tomorrow’s Europe, ECC 07 and 09) and Our Message to Europe (Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland).

The three pan-European projects were however truly new in the following respects:

- Tomorrow’s Europe is the first EU-wide deliberative polling initiative. The project involved discussions in several languages in working groups and plenary sessions. The expert panel acknowledged that simultaneous translation was a good way to deal with language barriers, despite its cost when all the official languages of the EU were represented.
- The ECC proposed a pyramidal organisation which allowed citizens from each country to discuss issues together, and then to send representatives to Brussels for a multi-lingual EU summit. Speaking English was however a prerequisite to participate, and English was used as the *lingua franca* of the event.

²² It should be noted that although young people have been considered as priority targets for the EC communication activities, following the rejection of the TECE in 2005, previous Eurobarometer studies have shown that they have a more positive image of the European Union than do their elders. This situation does not disqualify the targeting of young people; it illustrates the fact that opposition to the TECE was not merely a consequence of a lack of information or interest in the European Union, but rather a more complex phenomenon. See for instance http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb70/eb70_first_en.pdf p.49.

Main findings:

- f9. The projects mainly attempted to enable two-track communication by involving decision-makers in the debates, and rarely by going further in the design
- f10. As the field of Europe-related issues is very large, the participants did not always immediately relate them to the topic of the European Union
- f11. The pan-European projects proposed two alternative ways to organise multi-national debates
- f12. Specific targeting on youth is probably one of the factors explaining the proximity of some local projects with Youth in Action projects.
- f13. Most projects rely on a classical set of tools

3.3 Citizen involvement

Question

To what extent are projects involving citizens in debates on EU-related issues?

Approach

Most projects aim to involve lay citizens in debates on EU- or Europe-related issues. There are a number of conditions for good-quality debates, recognised by experts. These can be assessed by considering whether:

- Recruiting is unbiased;
- Topics discussed are controversial enough;
- Discussion is informed;
- Debate is deep enough;
- Issued conclusions are unbiased.

Budget-wise, more than 75% of the funds were dedicated to deliberative projects. In terms of numbers, however, only a minority of the funded projects developed a truly deliberative approach: only 25% of the non-international projects included events or activities in which citizens participated actively and produced an output (e.g. a declaration, conclusions, recommendations, or a synthesis of debates, etc.). Other projects could rather be qualified as information campaigns, which cannot be assessed with the same quality criteria.

This section is based on the case studies, interviews with citizens, and the expert panel's output.

Unbiased recruiting

The expert panel stated that "In the case of informative debates, no selection or recruitment is necessary, but when a deliberative process is launched, the selection of participants should be very meticulous. [Recruitment will be based on] the representativeness of all points of view on the issues discussed.

[...] Diversity of opinions does not always mean representation of Euro sceptics and pro-European; it depends of the topic discussed.”

The case studies have shown that for the major projects with a deliberative ambition, recruitment was taken very seriously.

In the case of the ECC, the King Baudouin Foundation imposed common selection criteria (age, gender and socio-economic background) from the first edition, but selection was delegated to the national coordinators. They would usually select a specialised organisation (e.g. polling institutes) to recruit participants.

It is noteworthy that apart from common criteria, the national partners would also use rules that they deemed necessary to improve the representativeness of the event. In the United Kingdom, for instance, racial criteria were used to promote racial diversity, a practice which would have been inconceivable in France or in many other EU countries. In Latvia the institute sought a balance between citizens and non-citizens.

This adaptation to national ways includes professional and legal practices as well: in the UK it is totally acceptable to rely on an existing database²³ to recruit citizens, whereas in Germany and in the Czech Republic the recruitment was purely random (respectively, phone calls, and people approached on the streets).

For the 2009 edition, and in order to improve the consistency of the recruitment, the Foundation commissioned a single company for this task. It was generally reported that the process worked well.

The highest standards were also observed in Tomorrow’s Europe, with the difference though that the recruitment had to deal with representations from each country. As the sample had to represent not only the European population but also all the European countries, it was more difficult to have a representative sample (see Box 6 below).

Box 6: Difficulties to gather a representative pan-European sample: the case of Tomorrow’s Europe

In the sample of 3,550, at least 80 persons were surveyed in each country and 380 in the largest country, i.e. a ratio of 4.75 (vs. a ratio of 182 in populations). As a consequence, the largest European countries are underrepresented, and the smallest are over-represented. For instance, Germans accounted for 18% of the EU-2006 population and German MEP for 13.5% of the EP in 2006, while they accounted for 10.7% of Tomorrow’s Europe initial sample and 12.9% of the participants.

Among the participants, each country had between 2 (Luxembourg) and 47 (Germany) attendees, in close proportions to the EP’s. Observers insisted on the fact that defining country origin as the main criterion was making it more difficult to have a representative sample (“three people from Malta [are] never going to be representative of Malta’s views”, said one of them) when it came to the other features of the population (age, gender, socio-economic status, education mainly).

(excerpt from the case study)

²³ In the case, the institute had a database with which British citizens can freely register.

Our Message to Europe is an exception: it was promoted through posters and displays in the cities where the debates were taking place. Associated organisations also sent invitations to their contacts. As a consequence, participations were either “the usual target group of people interested in EU politics, most of them being between 45 and 70 years old” (Our Message to Europe, Germany), or individuals who had a professional link with the European Union (e.g. receiving grants through ERDF or CAP). Participants were therefore not representative at all.

Another exception is the Flexicurity debate, which was based on the voluntary participation of the employees of selected companies in Wales. Our assumption is that in this case, the base was homogeneous enough to recruit participants this way.

Finally, two last questions should be considered:

- First, representation of point of views; even though EU- or Europe-related issues are discussed in the debates, the expert panel pointed out that balancing the sample according to Euro-orientation (Euro-enthusiasts and Euro-sceptics) was not necessarily the most relevant way to proceed. The sample should select pros and cons on the topic treated, not on overall issues such as Europe. This is of course possible only when the topic is focused enough, which was not the case in either ECC or in Tomorrow’s Europe;
- Second, many observers pointed out that because the persons recruited for the debate were willing to participate, a bias was introduced. It should be noted however that this is not limited to Plan D/Debate Europe projects, for all deliberative processes are based on voluntary participation.

Controversial questions

The expert panel has pointed that it is important for the quality of the debate for questions to be controversial enough to trigger interest and engagement. This does not mean that it must be a hot topic in the news (developing a deliberative event is a long process and opinions change), but that there are sound enough pros and cons to ensure a lively debate.

A consequence of this is that the topic should be sharp enough to ensure discussion, and that few topics are therefore suitable. However, in most projects broad issues were chosen, which were not controversial *per se* (e.g. “the future of Europe” or “family and social welfare”), or many issues were chosen for discussion at the same time. In the case of Tomorrow’s Europe, some of the issues discussed were controversial (e.g. immigration, enlargement), but they were a few among many others.

On the other hand, the choice by Kampagne K to discuss Climate Change in the North Sea (a region which would potentially suffer from rising sea levels, ensured quite a high level of interest from local citizens).

Another example is Our Message to Europe in the Czech Republic, where the discussion of the introduction of the Euro raised more interest than technical (Common Agricultural Policy) or general topics.

Informed discussion

Case studies have shown that the project coordinators had different attitudes towards prior information of the participants: nothing in Our Message to

Europe, short briefings in the two ECCs and a sound, balanced dossier in Tomorrow's Europe.

In the latter case, the briefing was discussed by a panel of four MEP, 2 Euro-sceptics and 2 Euro-enthusiasts, to ensure that it was well-balanced.

The quality of the briefing does not ensure however that the debate will be informed:

- First, the average level of knowledge on the EU and Europe-related issues is very low;
- Second, many participants do not read the briefing: this was observed by stakeholders and confirmed by the citizen interviews. The Tomorrow's Europe experiment has shown that between the moment when they were selected and the debate itself, a significant proportion of the participants enquired about the EU and the news.

It should be noted that even in the case of a debate on local issues, training is still necessary to understand all the points of view and the ins and outs of the topic.

Ensuring an informed discussion means having a long training process, as the expert panel has confirmed. Few processes however really considered allowing enough time for participants to become informed enough.

The two major pan-European processes have included training:

- In the two ECC, experts first explained the EU organisation and competences to the participants and then input directly into each work-group;
- In Tomorrow's Europe, plenary sessions gave more information to the participants.

This was not enough however to ensure a totally informed debate: in many ECC case studies observers pointed out the numerous factual mistakes made by the participants (e.g. on the competences of the EU). The role of the experts was also criticised, depending on the case, for not correcting the mistake or on the contrary for influencing participants. In the UK the 4 experts (for 10 roundtables) could intervene to restore the truth but not to give further insight, whereas in the Netherlands they were able to do so. These criticisms show that experts had difficulties in finding a clear position in the process.

Even if the participants' knowledge does increase in the end, this is more an output of the debate than a precondition (see next section).

Depth of deliberation

The question of whether the deliberation was deep enough to ensure the quality of the debate in deliberative projects is directly influenced by the level of information: informed citizens are more likely to have a substantial discussion.

Another risk when citizens are not informed enough is that the initial debate may turn into a Q&A session, with the decision-makers involved, or into a debate between decision-makers.

In the main deliberative projects, the process was designed in such a way that all voices could be heard and opinions discussed, thanks to two key decisions:

- Relying on professional moderation;

- Having the main bulk of the discussion done in small groups.

In Tomorrow's Europe, for instance, participants were split into 20-person deliberation groups, limited to 3 or 4 different languages: at least one was spoken by the moderator, and another by the moderator's assistant.

However, the case studies have shown that discussions were often superficial, for many reasons, including issues that were not controversial enough, the lack of information, and the lack of time. In ECC for instance, the agenda was very tight, and roundtable discussions very short (in the ECC 09 UK, sessions were observed to last between 60 and 90 minutes, with some being reduced to fit the schedule). This did not allow citizens to go much further than their prior beliefs on the topic discussed. The same applies to non-deliberative projects such as the Czech Can I Understand It? where the depth of the debates was reported to vary depending on the students' prior knowledge of the topics discussed.

Unbiased conclusions

Few projects actually reached conclusions:

- As Tomorrow's Europe consisted of deliberative polling, the final output of the project was a survey of participants, on the same items as at the beginning of the process;
- In Our Message to Europe, the output was a synthesis of the participants' views, by the coordinator.

Only in ECC did participants really reach conclusions and propose common recommendations. The process was consensus-oriented, and the use of voting to choose statements eliminated the most extreme or original propositions. In no cases did observers claim that conclusions were biased, and the evaluation of ECC 07 in the Netherlands supports this statement: to the question of whether they agreed with the results of the consultation, 26% answered "completely", 71% "for most of it" and 3% "partially".

The consensus-oriented approach made it impossible to report on lines of dissents. However, no cases were reported of disagreements that were impossible to overcome. The most controversial situation was observed in ECC 09 in the Czech Republic, over the use of nuclear energy; the situation was finally cleared by a vote.

Main findings:

- f14. Recruitment was done in a professional and unbiased way for the events with a deliberative ambition
- f15. The issues discussed were often too general or too numerous simultaneously to allow for lively debates and citizen engagement
- f16. Sound prior training (e.g. by experts) and enough time to think it over are key factors for an informed debate, which were not applied enough
- f17. The deliberative processes managed to ensure that all voices were heard and all opinions discussed, thanks mainly to professional moderation
- f18. The discussions were often superficial, due to the lack of knowledge and time
- f19. In deliberative projects, conclusions were generally reached in a consensus-oriented manner
- f20. The validity of the conclusions did not suffer from the consensus orientation followed in the deliberative projects, as the issues tackled were mostly not controversial enough to trigger strong disagreement

3.4 Citizen awareness

Question

To what extent are projects raising the awareness of involved citizens on EU issues?

Approach

The direct outputs of the projects on citizens were assessed by considering the effects of the projects on the knowledge about and interest in the EU and Europe-related issues, and more largely civic issues.

This section is based on the case studies and on interviews with citizen.

Knowledge of EU issues

Most citizens involved in deliberative or informative processes seem to have improved their knowledge of European institutions and Europe-related issues. There are several evidences to that effect (see Box 7 below).

It should be noted however that citizens' average level of knowledge of European issues is very low, as Eurobarometer polls have shown in the past²⁴. Even in the cases cited below, observers have stated that the level of knowledge is still low after the debate although higher than before.

²⁴ See for instance Eurobarometer 67, Section 5, "Information on European issues": on most Europe-related issues, just one third of citizens think they are well informed, and only 20% were able to correctly answer 3 quiz-type questions on the European institutions.
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb67/eb67_en.pdf p.120 and following.

It should also be noted that several projects emphasised neither EU issues nor the European dimension of the topics discussed. This is for instance the case of the Flexicurity debate in the UK, and of Can I Understand it? in the Czech Republic.

Interviews with citizens have confirmed that their views on many topics discussed were lastingly challenged, and that others' knowledge and opinions expressed during the discussions were a key factor in that respect. Although these interviews do not have any statistical value, it seems that the longer the participants have been involved (e.g. participating in both ECC national and European summit), the stronger and the more lasting the effects on the participants' perception of European institutions and policies will be.

Box 7: Evidence of improved knowledge (excerpts from case studies)

The last poll showed improved knowledge: On 9 knowledge questions, participants from new member States shifted from an average 37% of correct answers to 53%; and participants from old member States, from 40% to 56%. Overall, almost 80% said that they had improved their factual knowledge of the EU (Tomorrow's Europe).

The evaluation of ECC 2007 showed that citizens gained a better understanding of EU policies and institutions (ECC 07 CZ).

In their evaluation questionnaires filled in after the debate, the participants confirmed that their knowledge and understanding on the EU issues had improved (ECC 07 LV).

Interest for EU issues

An increased interest in EU issues and in the European dimension of policy issues is another common effect of the projects on the citizens involved. The evaluation of the ECC 07 in the Netherlands states for instance that 97% of the participants were satisfied and more interested in EU issues than before. Only in a few cases was their interest said to be unchanged, as in ECC 07 and 09 in the UK (a country where there is a strong Eurosceptic consensus).

Participants in non-deliberative processes such as Kampagne K also claimed to be more interested in the EU.

There is also real interest in deliberation, with a large share of the participants saying that they would participate again. This is common behaviour for participants in deliberative processes.

There is little evidence of civic engagement by citizens following participation, except for the "Helen Duffet case"²⁵. Interviews with citizens seem to show a fading engagement over time, and it is possible that their interest in EU issues will also decline without other stimulus.

Projects such as Who Else? or Observed by Youth, which were designed to support active citizenship, may however obtain good results in the future.

²⁵ Helen Duffet was a former participant in the ECC 07 national consultation in the UK and ECC European summit; she then engaged in a political career with the LibDem.

Main findings:

- f21. Participants have a real interest in deliberative projects
- f22. Knowledge and interest in European institutions and Europe-related issues among participants increased after participation, although the initial level was very low
- f23. The citizens' views on the topics discussed were in several cases lastingly challenged, owing mainly to others' knowledge and opinions
- f24. Longer processes improve the sustainability of knowledge effects
- f25. Civic engagement may rise immediately after participation, but this effect probably does not last.

3.5 Media coverage and multipliers

Question

To what extent are the debated issues covered by the media and multiplied by opinion makers?

Approach

To answer this question, not only was the extent of the coverage assessed, but also its fairness (i.e. report is unbiased) and adaptation (report is understandable by all). The media coverage of the projects studied was systematically researched, especially in local and national newspapers.

This section is mainly based on the case studies.

Extensive coverage

Media coverage was generally quite low for several reasons.

First, the expert panel confirmed that this kind of project rarely interests the mass media, although there are some success stories. The fact is that the difference with panel surveying (for deliberative polling) or an information event (for deliberative processes) is difficult to grasp for organisations which receive thousands of requests at the same time.

It was especially difficult to obtain media coverage when there were important events at the same time: for instance, the results of ECC 09 in the Netherlands were competing with a summit on Afghanistan in The Hague; the Czech Presidency of the EU happened to be a disadvantageous context for ECC 09 (journalists had enough to report, with all the other EU-related events in the country).

Many observers stated that famous names could have attracted the media, but MEP (the politicians invited in most cases) are often second-range politicians in their home country, and having higher-level policy makers can be difficult if the media coverage is predictably low.

Second, most organisations engaged in projects do not have permanent staff for press relations, or are unfamiliar with the media. The Tomorrow's Europe coordinators recognised that their investment in media affairs was low, due to a lack of resources. The very good coverage of People in Need's 'Can I Understand It?' is due not only to the project's quality but probably also to the fact

that the Czech public TV is one of its cofounders. In several cases, media coverage was not consistently sought; only limited media activities were engaged.

Third, the events were generally unsuitably positioned, in view of the way in which the media cover European issues. Usually, European correspondents cover European affairs in Brussels or Strasbourg, while national offices cover national affairs.

In this case, European correspondents would only cover events in Brussels (such as Tomorrow's), but not the events at national level, while national media did not cover events presented as European. Some events, such as the 2007 ECC European summit, only benefited from the coverage of the Belgian and European press (EUobserver, EurActiv), which is directed to people already aware of and interested in European affairs).

The media coverage obtained in the end is quite low in most cases. Only the largest events such as Tomorrow's Europe or some ECC national consultations managed to secure extensive media coverage, including TV (see Box 8 below).

Box 8: Tomorrow's Europe media coverage

On TV, a 6'30 BBC Newsnight report; Tomorrow's Europe was also in the news in several countries (Euronews, Basque country TV -ETB2, Danish TV -DR, RTBF, LCI), hence covering mass audiences in a few countries.

Major newspapers and magazines such as *le Monde*, *Financial Times*, *the Guardian*, *El País*, *La libre Belgique*, *Die Tageszeitung*, *Der Spiegel* or *Politiken* have published reports. The results were handed over to 5 of them before the press conference.

Some national projects fared well with national (in small countries) and especially regional and local newspapers (see for instance ECC 07 in Germany, ECC 09 in the Netherlands and Latvia, Can I understand it?, Who else?, Kampanje K). The audiences reached with these newspapers depend on the country and the position of each newspaper; some regional newspapers can be read by very large audiences (as in Germany) while others reach only a few thousand readers.

In all cases, the coverage was very short and rarely lasted. The events consequently had very low visibility for the general public.

Fair coverage

There is no evidence of biased coverage of the events. However, the reason may be essentially that a very large proportion of the reports produced were actually replications of the press releases, with very little added value by the journalist.

Another type of article frequently published (especially for large-scale events) told the stories of national participants going to Brussels (or alternatively local participants going to the capital) to talk of European matters.

Very few opinion articles could be found (i.e. articles using the event to support the newspaper editorial line, columns, blog entries by journalists or known observers). One of the reasons may be that most projects failed to involve opinion makers. Comparison with the First European Estates General

organised by Notre Europe, which included many opinion makers and obtained quite a good coverage in the media, is interesting in this regard²⁶.

Appropriate coverage

There is no evidence of inappropriate coverage of the events: all events were reported upon in a comprehensible way. However, in many cases, articles did not cover the complexity of the process, for instance the fact that processes were deliberative and not merely surveys or panels. This introduced a potential misunderstanding on why lay citizens would give their opinion on a given issue and request politicians to implement it.

The journalists who chose to do the educational work to explain the process highlighted the number of persons involved ("Ms. Wallström promised the 27 representatives of the 1,800 citizens involved..."²⁷), the European dimension, or the fact that it was an exercise in participative democracy.

Main findings:

- f26. Few events obtained an extensive coverage, for a variety of reasons which include the media's lack of interest and the organisers' lack of media skills
- f27. A reasonable yet short media coverage was obtained by many projects in national and regional newspapers
- f28. A large share of the coverage is composed of replications of press releases with little editorial work
- f29. Few opinion articles were written about the events
- f30. Few journalists engaged in educational work to explain about deliberative processes

3.6 Politician involvement

Question

To what extent are the debated issues discussed with politicians?

Approach

Our approach to this question was altered substantially to take into consideration the observation and the data collection. This section therefore first considers to what extent the processes enabled two-track communication (in their design and implementation), and then whether this communication actually happened.

This section is mainly based on the case studies.

²⁶ The EEG were also funded under Plan D. See

<http://www.etatsgeneraux-europe.eu/>

²⁷ See Olivier le Bussy's articles in *La Libre* in 2007, for instance

<http://www.lalibre.be/actu/international/article/347612/nous-citoyens-europeens.html>

Attendance at the events

The fact that the Plan D/Debate Europe projects include politicians is an original feature. Most of the cases studied effectively included national politicians and/or MEP, and particularly the projects with a deliberative ambition. Our assumption is that in Debate Europe, the forthcoming European elections played an important role in encouraging the attendance of the MEP or MEP candidates.

This is for instance the case of the pan-European events (Tomorrow's Europe and ECC 07 & 09 launching events, ECCs European summits) which were attended by many high-ranking politicians. At the 2009 European summit, representatives of the European Parliament, presidents of the main European parties, the European Commission, the Council, the European social and Economic Committee and the Committee of Regions were present. They reacted to the recommendations and discussed them with the participants.

National events relied more on MEP and, in small countries, on Members of national parliaments (MP) and even members of the government: for instance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Latvia in 2007, and the President of Latvia in 2009.

Two-track communication by design

Two-track communication means that interaction with politicians is designed to inform and communicate on Europe, but also to listen to what citizens have to say.

Almost all debating projects (even when non-deliberative) were designed to enable direct communication between the citizens and politicians involved: this is the case in ECC 07 & 09, in Tomorrow's Europe, Our Message to Europe and even smaller activities such as Kampagne K.

However, the latter two had a "podium approach", i.e. politicians discussed an issue in front of the citizens before the debate, and then interacted with them. Citizens and politicians were consequently not on equal footing – an arrangement which was not suited to two-way communication.

Non-deliberative projects were generally not designed to support two-track communication, except for Observed by Youth which is built entirely around it (see Box 9 below).

Box 9: Observed by Youth, a project designed around two-track communication

Observed by Youth was designed to encourage the participation of young people from a Latvian region, Kurzeme, in the decision-making process at local, national and European levels. Through participation and observation of the work of decision makers, the young people tried to understand the decision-making processes in their municipality and in the European Union.

26 municipalities participated in the project from the start and received young people who observed the decision-making processes and promoted their initiatives. Throughout a several-month-long process, young people had many discussions with politicians and decision-makers, at municipal councils, visits, conferences, and dialogue events at national and local level.

Actual two-track discussions with citizens

The interviews and our own observations in the framework of the case studies have shown that there was a thin line between two-way discussions and question-and-answer sessions.

Lack of time, lack of preparation for citizens, and design are the main reasons for discussions turning into Q&A sessions. This is for instance the case of many ECC national debates, of OME "podiums" or Kampagne K, where participants were moreover not trained beforehand and had no common conclusions to defend, so that they would slip into individual questions.

The relationship between citizens and politicians is clearly at stake here. It seems that politicians were often involved only at the moment of the debate itself, and therefore had only a vague idea of what it was all about. Politicians often said that they were surprised by the quality of citizens' participation, but would not value them more than an opinion survey for instance. As an expert put it, politicians also need to be educated in participatory governance (see Box 10 below).

Box 10: Who should be educated?

"It very often seems that in order to reduce the democratic deficit at the European level, citizens have to be 'educated', better informed, in order to better understand the complexity of European politics. This is true. However, it is also true that European politicians and civil servants should be educated in order to better understand the needs and values of European citizens, and to incorporate the principles of participatory governance in their actual practices. This dimension is insufficiently taken into account."

(excerpt from an expert contribution)

On the citizen side, participants had different attitudes towards politicians and other decision makers. In most cases they wanted them to listen to their conclusions and recommendations, but in several instances they were irritated by the politicians' attitude and their lack of consideration for their work (see ECC 09 in the Netherlands, and also the ECC 09 European summit).

There are also positive examples. "Policy dialogue event" in the follow-up of the ECC 07 European summit appeared as a moment of truly two-track discussion, with enough time to actually consider the citizens' recommendations and their validity. Tomorrow's Europe last plenary session also appeared as a moment when politicians were challenged, sometimes sharply, by participants to give clear answers and to justify them.

Main findings:

- f31. All deliberative projects were attended by politicians: mainly MEP and national politicians at national level, and high-ranking European politicians for pan-European events
- f32. Debating projects were almost all designed to enable direct communication between citizens and decision makers
- f33. Many projects drifted from expected debates to Q&A sessions, enabling communication in a more traditional way than expected
- f34. Politicians were often not informed and involved enough to enter into a genuine two-track exercise

3.7 Politicians' awareness

Question

To what extent are the debated issues challenging the political establishment?

Approach

Few politicians, and no high-ranking ones, agreed to answer our questions. Many would not remember the event or consider it important enough to discuss it again in the framework of this evaluation. We were consequently unable to ask decision makers to assess whether they were challenged by the results.

To answer this question, it was therefore first assessed whether the outputs of the projects were deemed to have a political importance. The politicians' public positions on the debated issues were then scrutinised.

This section is mainly based on the case studies.

Political importance of the projects' outputs

Most projects with a deliberative dimension were designed so that their results would be addressed to politicians, and be useful for them.

This was expected to happen through:

- Direct communication between citizens and politicians (see the previous section);
- Results being handed to regional or national parliaments or governments (Flexicurity, ECC national events)²⁸;
- Results being handed to the European level, including the European Commission and European parliament (Our message to Europe, ECC European summits, Tomorrow's Europe).

The pyramidal structure of the European Citizens' consultation was actually designed to obtain direct communication between citizens and the national and European levels:

- the European summits allow for conclusions and recommendations to be directly transmitted to the highest level;
- The results of the consultations at national level were handed to national decision makers and discussed in follow-up events (see Box 11 below)

Tomorrow's Europe has by comparison a much less political approach. Although its results were potentially interesting for the Commission (at least as much as Eurobarometer reports), they were made public through a press release and then analysed for what they had to say on the participants' opinions, and not for what they involved for policy makers.

²⁸ In the Our Message to Europe case, coordinators of national projects said that they were not aware of whether the results had actually been delivered to national decision bodies.

Box 11: Results presented to national decision makers in ECC

“the German Citizens’ Declaration on the future of Europe was handed over to representatives of the Federal Foreign Office, the EC Representation in Germany, the EP Information Office and the Robert Bosch Foundation. They all promised to use the results” (ECC 07 in Germany)

“the politicians promised to take the recommendations with them to Brussels and feed the results into the European parliament debate” (ECC 09 in Germany)

“Afterwards the results of these consultations were further discussed at the national follow-up events, which included a seminar for staff of EU Information Agency, EP Information Bureau, EC Representation and others with briefing on the project conclusions and discussions on how these results could be used to “communicate Europe”; and discussion on the policy results and its implications with Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, MEP), Political Analyst of the EC Representation in Latvia” (ECC 07 in Latvia)

(excerpts from the case studies)

This political role is however hindered by two issues common to most projects and mentioned by the experts (see Box 12 below):

- The fact that the politicians present at the debates were not necessarily involved in the decision-making for the issue at stake (and at the same time, that many issues were discussed all together);
- The fact that no rules made it clear how to integrate what had been done into the decision-making process.

Therefore, the inclusion of politicians does not guarantee the political use of the participants’ conclusions; nor even that their voices are listened to by the people who could use them in the policy-making process.

Box 12: Obstacles to the use in the decision-making process

“the important characteristic of a participation process is its link with the policy making process and its potential as a vertical accountability instrument. Thus, the presence of policy-makers (politicians or high-ranking officials) may be interesting since they can provide both relevant information and symbolic legitimacy to the process. However, this will only be the case if these politicians are involved in the specific policy making of the subject being discussed and they can answer, discuss and be questioned through the process.”

“no rule makes it clear how to integrate what has been done in the decision-making process. In the worst case, these activities could be “just words” without any impact on European public policies – this would discredit the participatory frame. At least, some accountability should characterise the process through adequate information concerning the way citizens proposals have been (or have not been) taken into account.”

(excerpts from the expert contributions)

Politicians’ awareness

There is very little evidence of politicians publicly acknowledging their participation in such events, and even less of politicians taking public positions on

the results of projects funded under Plan D/Debate Europe, or on the topics treated.

In any case, there is no evidence of the results being taken into account, except in specific cases at national or local level, as Observed by Youth (see the previous section) or Can I Understand it? (the produced guidelines being used by the Ministry of the Interior to train policemen on discrimination issues). Coordinators generally said that they had no feedback on how the results were used, and the politicians interviewed did not mention any use of the results either.

Several observers said that the recommendations for some projects (ECC 07, Our Message to Europe) were not specific or feasible enough to be really interesting for decision makers. In the case of Tomorrow's Europe, the results were not directed towards politicians, although people involved in the project considered that they could have been very useful for decision making (but had no evidence that that had been the case).

Main findings:

- f35. The major obstacle for the results to be usable in the decision-making process is that they have no clear role
- f36. There is no evidence of politicians being challenged or the results being used

3.8 Good practices

Question

To what extent are the projects recognised as good transferable practices?

Approach

This question was based on the fact that Plan D and Debate Europe projects had a potential for learning better ways to discuss European matters in a deliberative way. The two sub-sections below discuss dissemination in the appropriate networks, and how the practices were capitalised on. Good practices *per se* are discussed separately in Section 5.2, p. 52.

This section is mainly based on the case studies and on the expert panel's output.

Learning from experience

Capitalising on an experience can be done in several ways:

- External evaluation: To our knowledge, only the ECC processes were subjected to external evaluations, which were not made public afterwards; these evaluations were used to improve the project design and implementation;
- Research papers: Tomorrow's Europe is due to be discussed in the next book of Pr. James Fishkin (scheduled for late 2009);
- Presentation at seminars, etc.: in Latvia, the ECC 07 organiser (Providus) organised a seminar for state institutions and municipali-

ties, introducing the methodology used for implementation of European Citizen Consultations, in order to support future replication

- Production of guidelines: several projects did so or expect to do so, including Can I Understand It? and Who Else?. Observed by Youth also expects to propose a framework for the next iteration of the programme.

Dissemination

Only the largest deliberative projects were partly discussed by academics and professionals of deliberative processes or European affairs.

The specialised website opendemocracy.net²⁹ contains several discussions on Tomorrow's Europe mainly, and the European citizen consultations. These discussions involved several stakeholders, especially academics or journalists, and examined mainly methodological points, including the dissemination of results. There were for instance several articles calling for improved transparency of Tomorrow's Europe, for example through external evaluation or the publication of all the material for researchers.

The expert panel confirmed that the lack of transparency of the projects was casting a doubt on their validity and reducing the dissemination possibilities: "Projects (and specially the most expensive ones) should be more accountable. Their websites are quite disappointing as they do not precisely mention all the steps they have made through the process. For instance ECC does not clearly present the recommendations issued at national level and how they translated them into the European recommendations. Data on recruitment and on participants are often too poor. Transparency should be improved."

Main findings:

- f37. Some examples of capitalising on experience and dissemination processes were observed, although they are quite heterogeneous
- f38. For several projects, the main objective of the entire process was the production of guidelines for future dissemination
- f39. Only the three largest projects were discussed by academics in the relevant networks.

3.9 Transferability

Question

To what extent are the new practices acknowledged and mastered in the relevant networks?

Approach

This question was assessed by considering the skills and capabilities acquired by the networks in reproducing this kind of event, and the actual cases of

²⁹ See www.opendemocracy.net/

replication. "Networks" refer to the organisations engaged in deliberative projects in Europe, and those engaged in discussing Europe-related issues with citizens.

This section is based on the project analysis, case studies and on the expert panel output.

Capabilities

Most projects proved not to be context-specific in their design and implementation. Plan D/Debate Europe offer a wide variety of projects, from the smallest to the largest, on a large number of topics.

The opportunity for replicating the major projects can be discussed with regard to their effects. However, the two major obstacles to their replication are:

- The cost of a multi-lingual project: Tomorrow's Europe relied on the European parliament, but the cost of a week-end with simultaneous translation for so many participants could easily have reached EUR 0.5M;
- The capacity to deal with a multi-national project, which means the capacity to have partners in all European countries. Several observers have stated that the King Baudouin Foundation is the only organisation in Europe in the position to do so – something which strongly limits any replication by other organisations.

For these reasons the experts supported the development of projects midway between national and pan-European: "One possible solution would be pointing to a mid-way between national and pan-European projects: for instance involving only a few countries on a common issue. Costs of transportation and translation would quickly decrease, while interesting comparison and exchanges would be available."

The projects also had a learning effect which may trigger replication, or improvement of current practices. The learning effect may be seen on the staff of the organisers, but also of other organisations as in the KBF network, and especially large organisations such as the Robert Bosch Foundation or the Compagnia di San Paolo which were present in the major projects.

Cases of replication

The case studies have revealed several cases of replication, or following events using all or some of the features of the projects funded under Plan D/Debate, or at least building on the things learnt.

The European Citizen Consultations were particularly interesting in that respect, as they triggered or contributed to further events in at least two of the 5 countries studied (see Box 13 below).

The case of Tomorrow's Europe and Europolis is a little different. These two projects were designed more or less at the same time, though the debates were implemented in October 2007 for Tomorrow's Europe and in May 2009 for Europolis. However, the latter strongly benefited from the experience of the former (see Box 13 below).

Box 13: Cases of further events related to the funded events

"at the initiative of a politician who attended the ECC, the Dutch Parliament's commission on EU issues has organized a city tour on topics similar to the ones of the ECC event together with the IPP" (excerpt from the case study on ECC NL 2007)

"A similar approach for organising debates on EU-related issues organised for specific target groups was subsequently applied in the design of several projects (6 in total) financed by Debate Europe and implemented in Latvia, e.g., My life in Europe implemented by the NGO Association for Support of Rural Libraries, Top 10 questions on EU in the Latgale region – by NGO Baltā Māja (White House), etc." (excerpt from the case study on ECC LV 2007)

"Having participated in the European Citizen Consultations in Latvia, the President of Latvia appreciated the format of debates and has initiated the organisation of a similar event at the national level – Public Forum – by applying the same methodology. The Forum will address issues of national importance and it will be co-organised by the Commission of Strategic Analysis of the President and an umbrella organization for NGOs in Latvia: Civic Alliance – Latvia. The Forum has been organised in the regions of Latvia end May 2009." (excerpt from the case study on ECC LV 2007)

"Tomorrow's Europe was very valuable for Europolis to generally confirm the method used for a pan-European debate. In order to increase the scientific value, it will include a control group (hence answering some criticisms of Tomorrow's Europe in the scientific community) and a fourth wave of interviewing, one week after the EP elections. The higher budget (EUR 4.2 million, 3 times the Tomorrow's Europe budget) enabled them to develop these new features."

"Europolis also recruited several persons who had been engaged in Tomorrow's Europe, for their experience." (excerpt from the case study on Tomorrow's Europe)

Main findings:

- f40. The projects studied generally proved not to be context-specific, and were therefore replicable.
- f41. The main obstacles to the replication of pan-European projects is the cost of a multi-lingual setting and the fact that very few organisations have the networks and skills to engage in a pan-European project
- f42. There are several cases of organisations using the method or general experience of the funded debates for their own deliberative projects
- f43. Cases of national citizen debates directly inspired by funded projects have been identified in 3 of the 5 countries studied (Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands)

4 Overall assessment

4.1 Synthetic conclusions

- A. Plan D and Debate Europe successfully support and complement several European policies thanks to the set of topics and targets that were enforced for the projects (findings f1, f2, f12)
- B. Despite an overall objective of "communicating Europe in partnership", the EC failed to actively seek synergies for Plan D and Debate Europe, either with other DG, or with the European Parliament, or with Member States' initiatives (f6, f7, f8)
- C. The features of the local projects fail to reflect the expectations of Plan D and Debate Europe to enhance citizen participation in the debate on the EU, especially because many selected projects were not designed to respond to the programme's requirements (f3, f4, f5, f13, f33)
- D. The field of EU issues was defined too vaguely to ensure that participants always understood the relationship between the projects and the European Union (f10, f12)
- E. The deliberative projects in Plan D/Debate Europe generally respected the standards for such events, ensuring a good overall quality (f14, f17, f20)
- F. Two major flaws reduced the validity and interest of the international projects: not enough time to inform participants, and a lack of focus on a limited set of controversial EU issues (f15, f16, f18, f19, f20)
- G. Participants in deliberative projects increased their knowledge and interest in the European Union and Europe-related issues, and have often shown enthusiasm for the deliberative process itself (f22, f23, f24, f25)
- H. By not succeeding in obtaining mass media coverage and the attention of opinion multipliers, the projects failed to have any measurable influence on the European public sphere, and more specifically on the general opinion (f26, f27, f28, f29, f30)
- I. Although politicians generally attended the events, their preparation and participation were too superficial to trigger a genuine two-track communication with citizens (f9, f31, f32, f34)
- J. Due to the peripheral nature of the topics discussed – compared to what is currently at stake in the European institutions – and the lack of focus of the outputs, the results were overall inadequate for decision makers (f15, f20, f36)
- K. The fact that no clear status was given to the results of the projects prevented even the largest events from contributing to the European decision-making process (f35, f36)
- L. Despite heterogeneous practices in terms of experience dissemination, projects have proved able to propose replicable (and replicated) deliberative processes, at national level mainly (f11, f37, f38, f39, f40, f41, f42, f43)

4.2 Synthetic answers to the original evaluation questions

To what extent have Plan D/Debate Europe projects modelled best practice in increasing citizens' awareness of EU issues, the EU's impact on daily life and citizens' participation in debates on these issues?

Note: Best practices have been identified in international and local projects, and presented in Section 5.2, p.52.

Regarding the assumptions of the programme, it should be noted that the effects of the activities have been limited to participants and have had no measurable effects on citizens (conclusion H).

Within the framework of the international projects, participants increased their knowledge and interest in the European Union and Europe-related issues. Their deliberative value was appreciated by participants (conclusion G), especially since quality standards were adhered to in their implementation (conclusion E).

To what extent do/did international projects have a potential to contribute to the debate on the EU's future and on the EU's impact on citizens' daily lives?

The intervention logic for the programme defined two potential ways for projects to contribute to the debate on the EU's future and on the EU's impact on citizens' daily lives: by triggering a debate in the European public sphere, and by contributing to the institutional process on the issues considered (i.e. within European decision making).

The evaluation has shown that even the largest projects had almost no echo in the mass media (conclusion H), and that not only were the topics treated not central to current European institutional debates, but that nothing had been planned to actually integrate the results of the largest debates (conclusion J). Even at the individual level, politicians were generally engaged too superficially in the process to actually remember and use much of what they had seen (conclusion I).

To what extent do/did local projects model best practice in contributing to the debate on the EU, promoting citizens' participation in this debate and strengthening existing networks?

Note: Best practices have been identified in international and local projects, and presented in Section 5.2, p.52.

At local level, only a small share of the projects really supported citizens' participation in the debate, as they were more information- than discussion-oriented events (conclusion C).

However, it should be noted that in a few cases the Calls for local projects also supported innovative projects in the way citizens were engaged and participate in the debates.

Finally, local associations which were funded were often already Europe-oriented, and often had already been funded by other programmes, mainly Europe for Citizens and Youth in Action. Based on the evidence collected, it cannot be said that Plan D and Debate Europe strengthened this network of NGOs, except by helping them to improve their competences.

How well do/did local projects identify EU issues of greatest local concern and how can these issues be addressed most effectively?

First, it should be said that the definition of "EU issues" was really broad in Plan D and Debate Europe, including topics strictly related to the European institutions and the many topics which are discussed or addressed at European level (e.g. equal opportunities or climate change). Local projects particularly favoured the second type. A consequence was that the relationship between the projects and the European Union was not always tangible (conclusion D).

Moreover, only a handful of the projects were designed to deliver a solution to the issue tackled, whether the output was delivered by/on the work of citizens (as in deliberative processes) or by the implementing organisation (e.g. through guidelines). Only in these cases can it be considered that local projects have identified ways to address the issues tackled (conclusion L).

To what extent do/did the projects draw on, and work with, existing activities, notably of the Commission and the European Parliament?

By design, Plan D and Debate Europe have complemented several European overarching policies or flagship programmes, especially but not only those which are related to the 2005 Action Plan (conclusion A).

Complementarity does not however prevent potential encroachment, something which can be seen with local projects, especially with the Europe for Citizens and Youth in Action programmes. This is due to the insufficient differentiation of Plan D and Debate Europe features when compared to existing programmes (conclusion C)

There are also no signs of synergy with other Community initiatives (although programme officers do communicate with one another), with the European Parliament initiatives (though MEP attended many projects) and with Member States (conclusion B).

5 Recommendations

5.1 Strategic and operational recommendations

Clarify the objectives

When Plan D was launched there was a lack of clarity as to the aim of the citizens' consultations. Communication objectives ("two-track communication" but also, more basically, improving the image of the EU after the rejection of the TECE) were mixed with political objectives ("contributing to the debate on...", "active European citizenship") and with Debate Europe (supporting the EP elections).

The evaluation has shown that the projects were generally very beneficial to the participants in terms of knowledge and interest in the European Union, but not to the European Union itself. But it is not possible for the Commission to be satisfied with effects only on participants, as the cost of such events (particularly the pan-European ones) per participant is gigantic when compared to other communication initiatives.

We propose that future similar activities be refocused on two aspects:

Active European citizenship: Future activities should convey a sense that all citizens can contribute to European policy making, be it through deliberative projects, engagement in NGOs, political involvement, etc.

A Citizen pillar for European decision making: European policy-making has integrated civil society consultation at an early stage, along with the Parliament and the Member States. It may be time to call for deliberative events to better foresee and understand citizen's expectations and reactions on some issues which are high on the EU political agenda. Deliberations could enhance and contribute to the European policy making process at key moments:

- At the design stage (e.g. contribution to Green or White Papers);
- At the consultation stage;
- At the validation stage (e.g. contribution to an impact assessment).

These issues should be controversial enough to trigger such an event.

Improve coherence with Community, Parliament and Member States activities

Plan D and Debate Europe had original features which were not sufficiently highlighted, especially its political objectives.

Every project which can be funded by another Community initiative should not be funded anymore. This includes more or less all the current local projects.

In order to improve coherence with other initiatives, we propose to establish a new "open" instrument, i.e. available to all DGs engaged in a policy-making process, and also to Representations/MS willing to foster public debate on an issue which is high on the EU political agenda.

For instance, a deliberative project could be scheduled: in the framework of the impact assessment of a Directive or Regulation process; in the consultation prior to an EU-funded trans-border infrastructure; to discuss a European

decision which has created a controversial debate in one or several member States, or to defuse a potential crisis (e.g. the debate on rosé wine, recently).

Due to their cost, pan-European projects should be considered only exceptionally, on the largest new regulations, or the most likely to trigger interest among European citizens. Other Pan-European sources of information exist, including the Eurobarometer and Europe Direct Centres.

The "going local" motto of Plan D should not be abandoned however, but rather implemented through the expected management partnerships with Member States. Giving such a frame to local activities is a necessary condition if EC Representations are to continue to support projects.

From NGO-driven to EU-driven projects

Future activities should be distinguished from all other Community initiatives by the fact that they are real listening exercises.

Listeners can be of many types (policy designers in the Commission, MEP, Commissioners, national politicians., etc.), but they must be identified as individuals personally engaged in the policy-making process on the topic under consideration. They must be engaged from the start in preparing future listening events, and actually contribute to writing the Terms of Reference of the service that will be requested.

This means that the use of Calls for Tenders rather than Calls for Proposals may be more adequate. This will ensure that the service corresponds exactly to the expectations of the policy-makers, and that the listening event fits more easily into the policy-making agenda.

A framework contract headed by DG COMM but open to the other DGs should be considered to facilitate the uptake of such a procedure.

This should not mean that ideas from the NGOs should be abandoned, but they should be developed under other DG schemes, especially Europe for Citizens.

Build more capacity

Many DGs have been supporting deliberative projects and other listening exercises, but due to the decentralised structure of the Commission the results of these projects, the good and bad practices, are not gathered together for common learning and (potentially) future use. For instance, a debate held in 2007 on the sharing of digital content would still be useful for an impact assessment in 2009 (hypothetical example).

Conversely, if the Commission shifts from a Call for Proposals to a Call for Tenders model, then knowing which type of approach is mature enough and which is not is extremely important to avoid a bad-quality service.

Finally, it is important that future contractors be up to date with the service they offer. Supporting the dissemination of good practices among the existing networks and future service providers may be a required step to secure quality of service. A thematic network such as PEP-NET (a network supported by DG INFSO focused on eParticipation) could be an interesting and relatively inexpensive alternative for doing so.

5.2 Good practices

Function	Definition	Good practices
Reaching citizens	attracting citizens, either volunteers or randomly selected; reaching specific target groups; dealing with incentives and selection biases	Recruiting citizens with selection criteria; balancing the recruitment over the representation of the relevant points of view on the issue discussed
Choosing issues	specifying the issues of EU interest to be discussed, with or without an input from the involved citizens; drafting questions where relevant	Choosing controversial issues in order to trigger interest and genuine debate; focusing on a specific issue as to allow in-depth discussion and accurate conclusions and recommendations; choosing issues that are high on the EU political agenda
Informing participants	informing citizens on the issues under discussion; enabling them to learn from stakeholders, decision-makers, and experts	Informing participants beforehand and/or training them at the beginning of the process; spending enough time to ensure adequate information; limiting information to the issue at stake; presenting all points of views in a balanced manner
Moderating debates	moderating debates or internet forums; preventing group dynamic biases; ensuring that all viewpoints are expressed; drawing the best from differences in values and cultures; managing conflicts	Ensuring moderation as a way to help discussion flow and give floor to all opinions and ideas; choosing professional moderation
Formalising conclusions	making citizens reach common conclusions on the issues under discussion, through a public statement where relevant; dealing with dissenting views and lines of divide	Making rules clear from the beginning of the process (what is expected, how to reach it); choosing from the start between consensus- or controversy-oriented processes
Involving politicians /stakeholders	attracting the interest of politicians, decision-makers and stakeholders on the substance and conclusions of the debates; ensuring a follow up to their participation	Involving policy makers or policy designers very early in the process and until it ends; choosing policy makers (incl. EU officers) involved in the issue discussed
Assuring media coverage	producing communication material such as websites, films, DVD; involving journalists from the outset; ensuring that the media report fairly on the substance of citizen's conclusions and discussions	Attracting mass media with controversial topics and by emphasising the relationship with policy-making; focusing on multipliers rather than mass media; contracting with organisations specialised in public relations

Designing projects	setting and prioritising objectives, targeting the public, choosing the discussion platform / channel, deciding on the depth and width of citizen involvement, establishing responsibilities	Designing ad hoc projects for ad hoc objectives; ensuring the scientific validity and making it assessable by peers through transparency
Setting partnerships	establishing appropriate institutional linkages and co-financing	Choosing partners with a potential for dissemination and/or who can contribute to the validity of the process
Dealing with languages	dealing with translation and interpretation issues	Using simultaneous translation to foster genuine multi-lingual debate; considering the cost of such a solution in the design of the project
Dealing with levels	where relevant, structuring citizens' involvement at two levels, e.g. regional / national, national / European	Developing synergies with other activities
Capitalising	evaluating the approach, drawing conclusions and disseminating lessons	Ensuring that external evaluations of the projects are done and made public; supporting dissemination towards other organisers

Introduction

The evaluation and particularly the expert panel have shown that there is no single way to design and implement deliberative processes: each debate should always be designed depending on the intervention context, the available resources, the topic discussed, etc.

The following good practices can however be considered as general guidelines for the implementation of deliberative projects aimed at contributing to the objectives of the EU communication strategy, namely "two-track communication" (i.e. the European institutions should not only communicate towards citizens, they should also listen to their concerns and their expectations; see box below).

The good practices proposed here draw on several sources, including interviews with European institutions, case studies, the expert panel and expert contributions.

The following objectives guided the collection of good practices

"[Plan D] is a listening exercise, so that the EU can act on the concerns expressed by its citizens. The objective of the Commission is to stimulate this debate and seek recognition for the added value that the European Union can provide. The democratic renewal process means that EU citizens must have the right to have their voices heard."

"[Debate Europe] will take this process one step further and focus on "D for democracy", further enabling citizens to articulate their wishes directly to decision-makers and making better use of the media in the process."

Reaching citizens

Description

Seeking balanced recruitment is an integral part of any deliberative process; the projects should therefore recruit participants very carefully.

Several methods are available and each has its advantages and its drawbacks. The most important thing is to develop transparent, relevant selection criteria.

Criteria may include demographics and socio-economics, but the major criterion for such debates is the participants' position on the issue discussed. For instance, if a project discusses the introduction of the Euro currency, the recruitment should be balanced according to the citizens' position on the Euro.

Expected results

A representative panel or sample should ensure that the results obtained clearly reflect the opinions of the citizens or of the specific target that was involved, especially on controversial issues on which the opposite parties may easily discount an unfavourable conclusion.

Representing the different parties in a debate will also foster deeper, more engaged discussions.

Potential replication

This should be applied to all deliberative projects.

Choosing issues

Description

A deliberation has more chances to be more in-depth, more engaging and ultimately more useful if it tackles a well-defined, controversial issue on the current agenda of the European institutions.

It is an established flaw of the pan-European projects studied that they tried to discuss too many issues that were too general and too disconnected. In the case of ECC 07 this resulted in trivial conclusions and recommendations.

When defining the issue it is important to bear in mind that it should have an engaging, controversial value. For instance, discussing the provision granted to some member States to opt out of the Working Time directive was controversial for MEP but not for citizens, whereas discussing the introduction of more "flexibility" to the 48-hour working week would probably have triggered citizen interest, and thus providing citizen advice to include in the impact assessment of the directive.

Issues on the agenda can go from preliminary reflection on a topic, to contribution to White or Green Papers, to contribution to an impact assessment, etc.

Expected results

Choosing well-defined, focused issues should help to leave enough time for an in-depth debate; choosing a controversial issue will encourage the citizens' engagement; choosing an issue on the agenda will stimulate interest from decision makers and the media, and ultimately make the project more likely to be useful.

Potential replication

The projects should try to apply a mix of these three criteria, depending on the context. For instance it must be possible to discuss emerging themes ahead of the political agendas, or to discuss "classical" issues (e.g. curbing CO² emissions) at regular intervals.

Informing participants

Description

The fact of informing participants in a deliberative process is what distinguishes its results from those of an opinion panel or an opinion survey. Informing and training citizens is therefore a critical step in a deliberative process.

The information should be balanced (i.e., all points of views are represented) and limited to the topic (too much information could be overwhelming for participants). The process could be made impartial by involving politicians with contrasting opinions at this stage, as in Tomorrow's Europe.

There are many ways to inform participants, which can be mixed in a project: brochures, discussions with experts and/or stakeholders, workshops, etc. An important thing however is to give enough time to participants to absorb the information and to support their opinions with it. For instance, a project could be implemented in several steps (first training sessions, then the debate), or information could start beforehand in order to improve the level of knowledge at the beginning of the event.

Expected results

Informed participants will be able to argue on the topic discussed in a more structured way. The debate will have more chances to gain depth and ultimately the quality of the conclusions and recommendations should improve.

Potential replication

In pan-European projects the idea is to gather participants more than once or for longer than a weekend, for cost and logistic reasons. More modest events in terms of countries involved or area covered should make it possible to cope with this problem more easily.

Moderating debates

Description

Moderation should be understood as a way to facilitate discussion, and to allow all citizens to participate and to present their opinions. When the sample of citizens is particularly heterogeneous and/or the topic highly controversial, the ability to manage conflicts (including cultural, national, religious, etc.) is crucial to the implementation of the project (see ECC in Germany). Participants need to feel that moderation was fair, to engage fully in the process. Most of the projects studied actually invested in an efficient moderation function.

Expected results

Competent moderation increases the validity of the process by allowing all opinions to be expressed. It directly supports the quality of the debate, as well as the engagement of participants.

Potential replication

Moderation does not have to be performed by professionals, but experience is important. In the end, the choice depends upon the available resources of the project.

In multi-lingual settings the choice of Tomorrow's Europe, to have a moderator and an assistant expressing themselves in different languages, is a convincing option.

Formalising conclusions

Description

Formalising an output of the debate is a difficult step in a deliberative process, and there are many techniques or devices that can be used to do so: it can be directly produced by citizens or done/facilitated by organisers, based on the discussions; it can be in the form of conclusions, recommendations, individual opinions, survey results, etc.

In all cases it is crucial to make the following clear from the very beginning of the process:

- The purpose: to whom the conclusions are directed, in what process, what will their status be
- The approach: are conclusions aimed at reflecting the issues on which consensus can be achieved, or the lines of dissent, etc.

Typically, Tomorrow's Europe deliberative polling tended to show lines of dissent, and the European Citizen Consultations were essentially consensus-oriented. Of course, when the topic addressed is controversial enough, even a consensus-oriented approach can end up by showing lines of dissent.

Expected results

Making the rules clear on how the formulation of conclusions (or any other output) will be achieved is likely to support a better understanding of the process by the citizens, by stakeholders and by decision makers.

Moreover, when conclusions are focused and sharp enough, they are more likely to be put to use in an analytical or decision making process.

Potential replication

This should be done in all projects. Organisers' experience in deliberative processes should improve the quality of the conclusions.

Involving politicians and stakeholders

Note: policy-maker, in this section and the others, is the general term used to qualify all persons involved in a policy-making process in terms of preparation, design, advice, or decision. This of course includes politicians, but also administrative officers, people in advisory bodies, etc.).

Description

In the projects studied, policy-makers were most likely to be involved only in the case of a debate with citizens. However, if the projects are to be genuine listening exercises, then several conditions apply:

- First, the appropriate people or institutions for listening should be found; they should be involved in the design of the projects so that they are useful to them;
- Second, the citizens are not the only ones who should be targeted; policy-makers, especially from countries in which deliberative processes are not common yet, should be told what these processes are, what they can expect (or not) from them, etc.

Policy-makers can be involved at the design stage, in the training phase, in the debate or in the follow up.

Expected results

Involving policy-makers early will have several effects: the objectives of the process are more likely to make sense to citizens and to policy-makers; there are more chances that the policy-makers behave in accordance with the spirit of deliberative processes during the debate (vs. a "Q&A attitude"); and the projects will be more likely to be useful.

Potential replication

It may prove difficult to obtain politicians' participation throughout the process, but administrative officers in charge are a very good choice as well. It is more likely that politicians become involved if the topic is of interest to them, and even more so if they are involved in commissioning the project.

Ensuring media coverage

Description

Although it was considered in Plan D/Debate Europe that mass media coverage was crucial to the success of the debates³⁰, it appears that:

- Attracting media coverage for deliberative events is often a very difficult task;
- The role of mass media should not be overestimated: the effects on public opinion of a few TV spots could be very limited;

When mass media coverage is still sought, several good practices should be considered to trigger interest:

- Emphasising the relationship between the debate and a policy-making process (e.g. "the results of this debate will be used as a citizen input to the writing of the White Paper on the EC strategy on, e.g. GM food");
- Emphasising the controversial (and if possible, 'hot') issue tackled.

³⁰ "Finally, the debates can only be a success if the mass media are engaged in the process, in particular television"; see the communication on Plan D.

Another potential move would be to rely on the services of a company specialised in media coverage: many projects studied had weak capacities in that regard.

Another choice can be to focus on multipliers rather than mass media: opinion leaders (columnists, influential journalists, etc.) or key stakeholders can be easier to associate; these actors will then be in position to disseminate information on the project.

Expected results

The results of such practices are unsure, as it is difficult to be certain that the project will obtain a media coverage, or that such coverage will have an impact.

Potential replication

Not all projects aim to obtain mass media coverage. This depends on the echo they want to obtain in public opinion.

Designing projects

Description

A lesson of the good-practice approach in this evaluation is that there are few good practices that can be applied to all deliberative processes.

It should therefore be considered as a rule that projects should be designed according to the context, to the objectives, and to the resources available. A corollary is that the design should be made public to ensure the validity of the process.

Expected results

Having an ad hoc design will foster the chances of the project reaching its objectives. The project will also be more likely to be cost effective.

Potential replication

This should be applied to all projects.

Setting partnerships

Description

Partnerships are generally necessary to the development of multi-national projects in order to:

- Gather the necessary funds. Multi-national projects are expensive, though Plan D/Debate Europe have been funding them up to 70%;
- Make the implementation easier, by having partners in each country concerned;
- Support validity, by choosing partners dedicated to the topic treated, or to the deliberative processes;
- Support learning or dissemination, either by adding experienced partners in the process or by choosing organisations likely to be able to communicate on the topic or the debate.

The last two features in particular should be considered by project organisers. Local or national authorities/agencies can be an interesting option, for the legitimacy they convey and their decision-making orientation.

Expected results

Relevant partnerships will help to support the validity and legitimacy of the process.

Potential replication

The choice of partners will be guided first by financial considerations or existing relations. Further focus will strongly depend on the capacity of projects to be attractive to relevant stakeholders.

Dealing with languages

Description

Language is a major difficulty for multi-national debates. The use of English as a common language is not an acceptable option, considering that gathering a sample of citizens fluent in English would probably strongly reduce its representativeness.

Simultaneous translation is the best way to support direct communication between individuals (see Tomorrow's Europe). However, it is a costly approach that pleads for projects limited to a few countries rather than being pan-European. This would not necessarily be harmful for the representativeness of the sample.

Expected results

Using simultaneous translation allows each citizen to talk his or her own language, therefore making communication a lot easier. This will contribute to the depth of the debate and to an even contribution by all the citizens involved.

Potential replication

The cost of simultaneous translation is the main barrier to its adoption; reducing the perimeter of the projects is likely to make it easier to use.

Dealing with geographical levels

Description

Having multiple levels (e.g. local/national or national/European, as in ECC) is an option for projects, although it is only one alternative among others.

An interesting approach consists in developing synergies with other processes implemented simultaneously, before or after the funded project. For instance, the results of a comparable project in another country or at a local level can be used during the training phase, or a partner can decide to develop information sessions at local level on the topics treated.

Expected results

By relying upon other projects or activities, the project will be more likely to focus on the process, and either learn from other projects or contribute to them.

Potential replication

Synergies are typically difficult to obtain. Achieving them will probably be more about seizing opportunities than scheduling.

Capitalising

Ensuring that external evaluations of the projects are done and made public; supporting dissemination towards other organisers.

Description

Capitalising is essential in a specific environment (organisations able to develop deliberative processes at multi-national level) which is still in its infancy.

First, it is crucial that external evaluations of the projects are performed and made public. These evaluations will not target citizens, but the scientific community, stakeholders and peers. Evaluations support the validity of the activities undertaken, but are also a way to learn about what was done, what worked well and what did not.

Initiatives which aim at disseminating further what was learnt in a project should also be encouraged: seminars, communications to networks, articles, etc.

Expected results

More transparency and outreach behaviour would allow the few organisations already engaged in such projects to improve their practices, and the new ones to reduce the gap faster.

Transparency is also a condition to ensure that the validity of the processes is recognised by the community.

Potential replication

External evaluations made public should be mandatory. Outreach activities are harder to organise directly by project organisers (although they are a small world today and communicate together), and should rather be implemented or specifically supported by the EC.

6 Appendix

6.1 Expert contributions³¹

Luigi Bobbio

The cases that have been taken into account in the Evaluation Report (ER)³² belong to two different types. Some of them (and almost all the national cases) mostly have a communicational goal. They aim at informing citizens and inducing reflective attitudes with a pedagogical flavour. A few others (specially the pan-European ones) aim rather at developing discussion among citizens holding different views. While both are sound practices, the latter seem to fit better to the spirit of the Plan-D and Debate Europe programmes.

Choosing the issue

In order to develop a true debate among citizens a number of conditions should be met.

A first critical point is the choice of the issue. The ER stresses the fact that issues should be hot, in order to capture the interest of people and of the media. I would rather stress two other aspects:

- i) in many cases issues were too general and too broad to allow for a good and informed deliberation. Tomorrow's Europe asked the citizens to debate on a very wide array of European themes in a couple of days. ECC in 2007 was even more general as the citizens were asked to debate on the future of Europe in the next twenty years. The 2009 edition of ECC tried to be more precise about the issue, but the final recommendations include many heterogeneous topics. I think that *focusing more precisely the issue* under discussion is a necessary condition to reach a good deliberation. People must be called on to reflect on a narrowly focused theme, on which all pertinent information is supplied. When issues are too broad, final recommendations risk being trivial and hence worthless (as has often happened in both ECC experiments);
- ii) debate is likely to occur when facing a *contentious issue* and when all points of view on the same issue are correctly presented. Involved citizens must learn what is really at stake, in order to develop their own opinion. It seems to me that contentiousness is more important than heat, when defining the issue.

Supplying balanced information

A direct consequence is that the information that citizens are given should be balanced and should clearly report the pros and the cons that are raised in the real-world public debate. This condition can be fulfilled better if the preparatory material is discussed and controlled by all relevant stakeholders. This

³¹ Experts are presented in Box 14, p.67.

³² Note: a preliminary version of the report, including the first version of the good practices was sent to the experts before the meeting. Luigi Bobbio is referring to this document.

step was explicitly included in Tomorrow's Europe, but was poorly implemented by other projects.

Recruiting citizens

When deliberation is at stake, the problem is not only the (social, demographical or geographical) representativeness of involved citizens, but also (or mostly) the fact that all current and relevant views on the issue are present in the debate. The former does not guarantee the latter.

When the participation is open and free (as in most national cases), the sample may be biased. Similarly oriented people are likely to show up and hence the deliberation does not make much sense. Things are better when the sample is randomly selected, as in the pan-European experiments. But even in these cases, there is the problem of representing minorities. On every issue there are interests or points of view that, though supported by small groups or communities, deserve to be listened to.

The ER correctly suggests involving both euro-sceptic and euro-enthusiastic citizens when dealing with European issues. This suggestion can be generalized. Depending on the issue at stake, one should ensure that the widest diversity of points of view on that very issue are involved.

Framing the deliberative setting

I fully agree with ER's emphasis on the importance of professional facilitators or moderators, but other organisational features should be taken into account as well. Most national cases were based on a "podium-audience" format – which created an imbalance between experts or politicians (the podium) and the public (the audience) –, left little time to citizens' interventions, prevented them from discussing the issue among themselves, and limited the discussion to a question-answer exchange. The pan-European experiments did much better, by dividing the participants into small groups in which they were able to exchange opinions among themselves. Moreover, this arrangement tended to reverse the relationship between participants and experts (or politicians). The former were no more a passive "audience" but rather an active group searching for clarification from the latter.

Reaching conclusions

The output of a deliberative process is always highly problematic. I do not share the ER's view that voting can be considered, in itself, as a good practice. It can be good or bad depending on the nature of the discussion and on how the alternatives are formulated.

Different ways to produce outputs can be conceived of, each of them with some shortcoming:

1. *surveying participants' opinions before and after deliberation*, as in Tomorrow's Europe, with the risk of being unable to find a clear causal link between deliberation and changes of opinion;
2. *reaching a shared recommendation*, as in the citizens' juries, with the risk of having too much pressure on consensus and of obtaining a synthesis which does not really correspond to the preceding debate;
3. *ranking different proposals* through voting, as in ECC, with the risk of favouring the most trivial and common-sense ones, at the expense of innovation and creativity;
4. *voting on alternatives*, with the risk of compelling citizens to express themselves on ill-defined questions.

There is no sure way to get to a sound output. The problem deserves further research and experimentation.

Reducing costs

There is a huge imbalance in the costs of the projects: below 100,000 euros for the national ones and over 1 million euros for the pan-European ones. The latter are highly complex and very costly machines and one can wonder whether the cost-benefit ratio is acceptable, as there are no more than a few hundred involved citizens.

Moreover, projects which are that resource-consuming can hardly be replicated. One possible solution would be pointing to a mid-way between national and pan-European projects: for instance involving only a few countries on a common issue. Costs of transportation and translation would quickly decrease, while interesting comparison and interaction would be available.

Improving accountability

Projects (and specially the most expensive ones) should be more accountable. Their websites are quite disappointing as they do not set out all the steps they have taken throughout the process. For instance ECC does not clearly present the recommendations issued at national level and how they translated them into the European recommendations. Data on recruitment and on participants are often too poor. Transparency should be improved.

Joan Font

The objective of this document is to complement the verbal inputs provided at the meeting held in Brussels in early June. Since the meeting was based on the discussion of the provisional evaluation produced by Eureval, this document will have two basic parts. In the first one we will make some additional comments on the evaluation document itself. In the second one, we will develop further thoughts about the future of participation activities by the EU Commission.

The Eureval evaluation has two difficulties that make any discussion of its contents more complicated than in other cases. The first one stems from the content of the Democracy, Dialogue and Debate programme itself and the combination of very different types of activities that it contains: large European activities that include substantial participatory efforts are extremely difficult to compare and analyse with similar patterns as those used for local activities whose goal is much more informative and which involve very different organisational criteria. The second difficulty stems from the fact that any evaluation will basically depend on the goals of the programme being developed. These were probably not clear enough and this factor made the development of any evaluation criteria more difficult. For example, in my view, the role that the document and the overall evaluation process gave to media coverage of the events and, even more so, to involvement of politicians in the activities, was too intense. Probably both criteria have a clear justification, but these need to be spelled out to be understood. As I will argue in the second part, the important characteristic of a participatory process is its link with the policy-making process and its potential as a vertical accountability instrument. Thus, the presence of policy-makers (politicians or high-ranking officials) may be interesting since they can provide both relevant information and symbolic legitimacy to the process. However, this will be the case only if these politicians are involved in the specific policy making of the subject being discussed and they can answer, discuss and be questioned through the process.

A final difficulty with the evaluation document was its emphasis on the idea of good practices that could be replicated in future scenarios. Good practices are an interesting learning instrument, but the expert group insisted on two important ideas about it. First, we can learn as much from success as from failure. Thus, the analysis of good practices should be combined in future with the analysis of the limitations of each process and what went wrong, because we can derive important lessons from it. Second, even if good practices illustrate interesting ideas and suggest venues for action, any participatory process should aim to reach a combination of quality democratic criteria with a flexibility to adapt to specific local characteristics (subject, actors involved, budget, time constraints, etc.). With all the spices in mind we need to create a specific set of arrangements that very often cannot be reproduced in a different setting. The use of participatory budgeting at the local level has clearly illustrated these difficulties, showing that what are clearly good practices in Latin America cannot be imported without changes to the European settings.

Regarding the future of participatory activities to be developed by the European Commission, two important remarks should be made. The first one comes back to the issue of the political objectives to be achieved. No perfect participatory instrument exists and the decisions on how to organise them involve establishing priorities and setting priority goals. Depending on what we want to get (more informed policies, a better image for the Commission, empowered citizens, etc...), decisions on how to proceed will have to be taken. Probably all these goals would be desirable but not all of them can be achieved simultaneously, so priorities will have to be established.

Personally, I think that the most important limit of the activities developed up to now is their very limited link with the policy-making process. The involvement of organised groups in this process has been substantially developed and is now clearly incorporated in the policy styles of the Commission. Participatory processes involving normal citizens, such as those developed as part of the Plan D/Debate should start abandoning their experimental character and become part of the regular policy-making process at the EU level. As such, they should not depend on a specific Programme, but rather be incorporated by all the Commission Departments.

Yves Sintomer

Europe-wide vs. local. The projects that are run under Plan D and Debate Europe Activities are at least of two types. The first type is "local": in this case, the EU sustains participatory devices that do not directly concern its action – as it does in other programmes, such as URBACT. Such projects are important and valuable, and Europe should strengthen its role at that level through the promotion of participatory and deliberative processes. However, the newest and the most challenging type of project is Europe-wide: mostly ECC and Notre Europe projects. The following statement will mainly focus on this second type.

A first stage. Implementing participatory processes at the European level, directed to ordinary citizens (and not to organised civil society) is something new and very promising. These activities have to be considered as a first stage. As such, the standard shall not be as high as it should be for the next stage. Participatory devices resting on random selection have been tested. It has been shown that ordinary citizens can reasonably discuss on European topics. This adds a potential new channel for the expression of public opinion – an enlightened and well-informed public opinion. This is the main positive aspect. However, the methodology and the process have to be improved in order to be really efficient.

Information, selective listening or part of the decision-making process? The aim of participation is yet to be clarified. The rationale of Plan D and Debate Europe makes it clear that it is supposed to go beyond mere information of citizens. However, the activities have remained on the level of "selective listening": a participatory debate takes place, what ordinary citizens says is listened to by (some) politicians and high-ranking civil servants, but no rule makes it clear how to integrate what has been done in the decision-making process. In the worst case, these activities could be "just words" without any impact on European public policies; this would discredit the participatory frame. At least, some accountability should characterise the process through adequate information concerning the way citizens' proposals have been (or have not been) taken into account.

Who shall be educated? It very often seems that in order to reduce the democratic deficit at the European level, citizens have to be "educated", better informed, in order to better understand the complexity of European politics. This is true. However, it is also true that European politicians and civil servants should be educated in order to better understand the needs and values of European citizens, and to incorporate the principles of participatory governance in their actual practices. This dimension is insufficiently taken into account.

What topics in order to foster a good deliberation? To have a really enlightened discussion, and in order to make efficient proposals that can be included in the decision-making, the topics that are discussed should be limited. It is not very serious to enlarge them too much: this will lead to less reasonable conclusions that are too generic. Enough time has to be given to participants: it is much better to organise fewer events, but to organise them well, than to multiply events that will be more public shows than a real enlightened political participation of lay citizens.

Lay citizens and the organised civil society. It is very important to include lay citizens in European governance, for example through assemblies selected by drawing lots. However, the relationship between this channel and the discussions between the EU leadership and the organised civil society should be better articulated – or simply articulated, for it does not seem that something has been planned at this level during this first stage.

Good practices. It seems clear that good practices have to be underlined, so that a cumulative process can take place. However, a large and participatory debate should be organised concerning the criteria of good practices: they are not self-evident, and the expert panel has largely focussed on this question. Two dimensions in particular have to be taken into account. The objectives of the participatory processes should be very clear (double-track participation at the local level/European level; how to include participation in the decision-making process; educative process that concerns both citizens and European leaders, etc.). The participatory devices have to be well chosen. Various schemes have been tested and are recognised as efficient and reasonable, both by practitioners and by academics. But none can be mechanically applied, and one has to take into account the objectives and the context when one wants to have the best possible output.

Costs. At the European level, the cost of participatory devices is very high. One should consider increasing the share of EU funding in order to enable more actors to make reasonable proposals in the next call.

6.2 Method

Overview

Task	Latest steps	Next steps	Comments
Project analysis	Analysis of documents available at the Commission		Some facts are not available
Meta study	Selection and first analysis of 9 pieces of collected documents		
EU level interviews	13 interviews	The interview report to be amended	
Case studies	21 case studies		Attendance at the ECC 09 European Summit Citizen interviews used to complete the monographs
Citizen interviews	26 citizens interviewed		Only participants from European Citizens' Consultations and Tomorrow's Europe
Expert panel	Expert meeting (June 9 th) and expert opinion		All experts have agreed to take part in a Conference presenting the evaluation in the coming months

Project analysis

The task as planned in the inception report

- To provide an overall picture of the supported activities in all their relevant dimensions, with special attention paid to the extent to which new models have been tested, i.e.
 - New forms of debate involving citizens in an institutionalised two-way communication process about EU affairs
 - New targets, especially social groups that are the least inclined / able to discuss EU issues
 - New ways of reaching / attracting citizens, e.g. through the Internet
- Refine the fields of the database in order to cover the following information better:
 - Main partners
 - Languages
 - Levels of debate
 - Approach to reaching, attracting and selecting participants
 - Targeted public, including specific groups
 - Issues debated, and approach to selecting them

- Approach to informing participants
- Width and depth of the debates
- Approach to moderating debates
- Nature of conclusion (consensus / dissent)
- Politicians and stakeholders involved
- Media coverage
- Capitalising on experience activities
- Complement the database by analysing any document available through DG COMM and related to Plan D and Debate Europe.
- Complement the database with information provided by the EC Representations in the five selected countries.

Methodological options, problems encountered, solutions found

Contrary to what was expected initially, the available information was limited and depended on the EC representation's willingness to report on the national projects.

As a consequence, the project analysis was limited to the available data.

An analysis report is available in the technical report, including synthetic tables, typologies and qualitative comments.

Meta-study

The task as planned in the inception report

- Identify a series of quantitative surveys and qualitative research works addressing the issue of two-way communication in a European context
- Access survey results (and basic survey data when available) and research papers
- Identify and/or develop several typologies/categories in order to describe European people's attitudes towards citizen involvement
- A list of reviewed studies and research papers will be appended to the final version of the report.
- Findings integrated in the successive versions of the final report.

Methodological options, problems encountered, solutions found

The few available quantitative studies appeared to be of minor interest for this evaluation. The meta-study therefore focused on research works primarily.

The documents reviewed were mainly accessed through the Internet.

The meta-study covers the following four topics:

- Potential for a European public sphere,
- Including citizens in European decision-making,
- Active citizenship, including different definitions and considerations on what can be expected of citizens,
- Deliberative processes and what can be expected from them.

The final version of the meta-study report is provided in the technical report and will also be provided on a CD-ROM together with the final report. The results of the study have been integrated in several sections of the final evaluation report.

EU level interviews

The task as planned in the inception report

- Identify interviewees with knowledge of activities similar to Plan D and Debate Europe in the European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions and European Economic and Social Committee.
- Carry out in-depth face-to-face interviews (from 30 to 60'), or telephone interviews as a second best if flexibility is needed. Focus on questions such as:
 - Factual information about two-way communication processes, including dates, places, targets, networks, budget
 - Points to be considered as innovative, and reasons for that
 - Likelihood that two distinct EC schemes serve the same goals through various means
 - Likelihood that two distinct EC schemes achieve better / larger results by adding value to one another.
- Seek examples, factual information and documentary sources as a priority (preferably to opinions)
- Ask interviewees to suggest other relevant informants (snowball approach)
- Successive versions of the survey report
- Findings to be integrated in the final report

Methodological options, problems encountered, solutions found

Considering the fact that many interviewees were not available, and the difficulties in reaching them, the evaluation team had to be very flexible in setting appointments. Telephone interviews often proved the best alternative. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60'.

13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with officers directly in charge of identified activities at the Commission (DG INFSO, JLS, EAC, SANCO, RTD), and other European Institutions (European Parliament, Committee of Regions, European Economic and Social Committee).

The interviews focused on:

- The analysis of other similar EU activities that have actual or potential connections with Plan D and Debate Europe, as planned in the inception report
- A better understanding of the various models of citizen involvement, and their innovative features.

The draft final version of the interview report is provided in the technical report. Its amended version will be provided with the final report. The results of the survey have been integrated in several sections of the final evaluation report.

Case studies

The task as planned in the inception report

Three Pan-European "cases", twelve "sub-cases" and seven "cases" in five countries were selected and approved by the steering committee.

Data was collected for each "case" and "sub-case". The aim was to:

- Gather all programme management documents available in DG COMM
- Interact through email and/or telephone with relevant officers at EC headquarters
- Where relevant, interact with the European Commission Representation in the country, complement the project database for the country (see project analysis), collect additional information about the case
- Where relevant, extend the interaction to the Office of the European Parliament in the country
- Hold an in-depth face-to-face interview with the project manager or a substitute
- Gather and analyse all project management documents available
- Where relevant and feasible, attend the event (two events attended)
- Retrieve the names and contact data of all involved citizens, and agree with the programme manager on how the selected participants will be contacted
- Retrieve the names and contact data of five or more concerned persons such as journalists, politicians, civil society organisations, opinion makers, members of relevant networks, and hold telephone interviews with them
- Analyse the minutes of the in-depth interview(s) of the citizens involved (see interviews with involved citizens)
- For each "case" including its "sub-cases", analyse the whole set of information and display the results in a case monograph.

Methodological options, problems encountered, solutions found

In general, the case studies were implemented according to the initial work programme.

Only a few journalists and decision-makers were interviewed, as few answered positively to consultants' appeals to contribute to the evaluation. As a consequence, when it was possible, e-mail exchanges or very short phone interviews focussing on 2-3 issues were undertaken instead of classical interviews.

Results of the interviews with involved citizens were integrated in the monographs.

Their final versions are provided in the technical report together with the final report. The analysis of the case studies will substantiate all evaluation conclusions.

Interviews with involved citizens

The task as planned in the inception report

- Develop a standard interview guide and an analysis grid covering:
 - Depth of interviewee's involvement
 - Personal interest in the debated issues
 - Opinion about the conduct and results of the debate
 - Self-assessment of changes in awareness and attitudes
 - Knowledge of and satisfaction with media coverage
 - Opinion about multipliers and their role
 - Knowledge of and satisfaction with take up by the political establishment
- Prepare a recruitment screener in order to ensure:
 - At least one interview per case study
 - More interviews with citizens having participated in recent events than in Plan D supported activities
 - Maximum diversity among all interviewees in terms of: recruitment process, type of debate, depth of involvement, satisfaction with the event, attitude towards Europe, and socio-economic profile
- Select 25 interviewees:
 - Five per selected country in average
 - One to three per case and sub-case
- Hold a cross-country briefing session during which the interview guide is fully reviewed, and a debriefing session after the first interview in each country
- Carry out in-depth face-to-face interviews (average 60' tape-recorded) in a neutral and comfortable setting for the interviewee, and in his/her native language
- Have the interviews transcribed in English by experienced professionals
- Fill in the analysis grid for each interview with at least 30% of quotes
- Short methodological note including self-assessment of biases and limitations will be produced for the final report
- Anonymised analysis grids
- No nominative list of interviewees
- Interview transcripts and analysis grids used as an input in the case studies
- Findings integrated in the successive versions of the final report

Methodological options, problems encountered, solutions found

After several problems to gather lists of participants to be interviewed, the interview coverage is satisfactory regarding several selection criteria (five countries, two programmes, men and women, etc.).

Due to availability issues however, only participants to ECC 07, ECC 09 and Tomorrow's Europe were interviewed by our partner, TNS-SOFRES.

The minutes of the interviews are available in the technical report.

Expert panel

The task as planned in the inception report

- Consultation of the panellists by email so as to add documents to be reviewed in the meta-study
- On the basis of the interim report and after additional analysis, develop a series of "good practice fiches" together with a working document displaying the evidence supporting these assessments and the criteria applied
- Provide all panellists with these documents together with the terms of reference of the panel meeting
- Hold a one day panel meeting in Brussels (9th of June) moderated by our team leader (with an observer from the Commission)
- Provide panellists with the draft minutes of the meeting, and take their comments into account
- Adjust the "good practice fiches".

Box 14: Members of the expert panel

Three experts committed to take part in the panel

- Luigi BOBBIO is professor of Public Policy Analysis at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Turin. He has published research on citizen involvement and democratic deliberation since 2002, based on research in Italy.

- Joan FONT is Research Director at the Survey Research Centre (CIS) of the Political Science and Sociology School of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). He coordinated a research group about citizen participation from 2000-2004 and published numerous research works on this subject in international journals.

- Yves SINTOMER is Deputy Director of the Marc Bloch Research Centre in Berlin. He has published research on participatory democracy at European level and in three European countries since 2002.

Methodological options, problems encountered, solutions found

The good practices appeared as a sound basis for discussion, but were mainly dismissed by the experts. As a consequence, even though the good practices fiches are available in the technical report, the expert output and the expert reports proved to be more interesting for the evaluation.

The results of the expert panel are available in the technical report and have been integrated in the final report

Amended design tables

Added value

Question	To what extent are projects adding value to existing EU activities?
Success criteria	The supported projects complement, benefit from, facilitate other existing similar EU activities
Indicators	<p>Complementarity with other EC activities, e.g. two projects target the same public at national and regional levels respectively, two projects test the same approach in two distinct contexts, Plan D & Debate Europe support activities which would not have been funded by other DGs or European institutions; Plan D & Debate Europe complement or are complemented by programmes or activities launched by other DGs or European institutions; the activities engaged support policies engaged by other DGs or European institutions.</p> <p>Synergy with other EC activities, e.g. the lessons learnt through a Plan D or Debate Europe project are taught to those in charge of similar activities, are exchanged and support the activities launched by other DGs or European institutions, or vice-versa. A project strengthens the capacity of an NGO, which will subsequently apply to another EC support and disseminate know-how. Persons trained in a project use their skills in another project.</p>
Success threshold	At least some examples of complementarity and synergy
Analysis	Cross-checking sources
Information sources and tools	EU-level interviews (main source), case studies, project analysis

New models

Question	To what extent are projects testing new models for promoting active European citizenship?
Success criteria	The supported projects test some new functions (or new features in a given function) which have not been applied in the same context in the past.
Indicators	<p>Approach considered by stakeholders as new in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - institutionalised discussion, citizens discussion of specific EU issues - Targeting social groups that are the least inclined prone / able to discuss EU issues - Project engineering, ways to engage citizens - Specifically making use of the Internet, especially in that it allows for bottom-up "voluntary"/spontaneous participation - Multi-lingual or multi-national setting
Success threshold	An assessed project or practice involves at least one innovation in terms of a new approach to a given function or new context
Analysis	Experts' assessment and cross-checking sources
Information sources and tools	Meta-study, Project analysis, EU-level interviews, case studies, expert panel (main source)

Citizen involvement

Question	To what extent do projects involve citizens in debates on EU issues?
Success criteria	Recruited lay citizens reflect the whole range of viewpoints on the debated issue(s) in an unbiased way; they hold an informed in-depth discussion on issues related to the future of Europe, EU's impact on daily life, and/or EU and local concerns; an unbiased consensus is reached on some points and remaining disagreements are stated explicitly
Indicators	Wide / narrow recruiting
	Unbiased recruiting, e.g., participants and observers state that minority viewpoints are fairly represented within the group of involved citizens, and that there is a balance between Euro-sceptics and Pro-Europeans pros and cons regarding the theme of the debate ; they are able to provide examples
	Informed discussion, e.g. participants and observers state that a substantial amount of information is provided in a form which is accessible to lay citizens; they are able to provide examples; the information is balanced ; this is confirmed by the reviewed documents
	Deep / light debate / deliberation, e.g., participants and observers state that the discussion is interactive, substantial, and fair enough for enabling all issues at stake to be discussed from all viewpoints; they are able to provide examples
	Questions addressed Hot EU issues , e.g., participants and observers state that the questions actually discussed pertain to their daily life, and to local concern are sufficiently controversial to draw interest from citizens ; they state that these issues are discussed from a trans-national EU standpoint; this is confirmed by the analysis of documents
	Unbiased conclusions, e.g. participants and observers state that all participants agree with the conclusions, and that disagreements are fairly delineated and reported upon; they are able to provide examples
Success threshold	In-depth involvement and high quality debate (all indicators are true), even if the number of involved citizens is limited; with non-debate projects, deep involvement due to specific project engineering
Analysis	Cross-checking sources
Information sources and tools	Project analysis, Meta study, case studies, interviews with involved citizens (main source)

Citizen awareness

Question	To what extent do the projects raise the awareness of involved citizens on EU issues?
Success criteria	Involved citizens sustainably improve their knowledge of and interest in the EU issues discussed
Indicators	Knowledge, e.g. participants improve their knowledge of the topic treated and its European context at the end of the process; later, they are able to recall at least some of the issues discussed and to explain them in a way which is consistent with the project documents ; participants and observers assess that some knowledge is lastingly acquired about the European dimension of the issue; they are able to provide examples

	Interest, e.g. participants' self assessment is that their interest in the European dimension of the debated issues is higher than it was previously; they are able to provide examples of how this interest has materialised; this effect is lasting after several months
Success threshold	Typical participants have increased their knowledge of and interest in the European dimension of at least one of the debated issues
Analysis	Citizens' self assessment to be cross-checked with other sources in the framework of the case studies
Information sources and tools	Meta study, case studies, interviews with involved citizens (main source)

Media coverage and multipliers

Question	To what extent are the debated issues covered by the media and multiplied by opinion makers?
Success criteria	Conclusions, lines of disagreements, and the debate process are reported fairly by journalists in media that have a wide audience, and by multipliers playing a role of opinion-makers; these issues are reported in a way that is adapted to and attractive for the wider public
Indicators	Extensive coverage, e.g. the processes and the results of the debates projects are reported by journalists in media that have a wide audience, and by multipliers playing a role of opinion makers
	Fair coverage, e.g. participants and observers state that the substance of the conclusions is reported in an unbiased way, as are the disagreements remaining after the debate, and the debate process; this is confirmed by the documents reviewed
	Appropriate coverage, e.g. the documents reviewed show that the debate is reported in a way and with a terminology which is 'user friendly' for the wider public
Success threshold	At least three journalists or opinion makers report on the debate in a way that matches all indicators Several projects benefit from a wide-enough coverage to make them accessible to a larger audience
Analysis	Cross-checking sources in the framework of the case studies
Information sources and tools	Project analysis Interviews at EU-level Case studies (main source) Meta-study

Politicians' involvement

Question	To what extent are the debated issues publicly discussed with political establishment politicians?
Success criteria	Politicians and institutional stakeholders take part in the discussion; they trust in the fairness of the process.
Indicators	Politicians and institutional stakeholders attend the events
	The debate or project is designed and implemented for two-track communication
	Organisers and observers Politicians and institutional stakeholders state that politicians engaged in a trustful two-way discussion with participant citizens; they are able to provide examples; this is confirmed by the reviewed documents
Success threshold	At least three representatives of the political establishment take part in the debate in a way that matches the indicators Most debate events allow for two-track communication
Analysis	Cross-checking sources in the framework of the case studies
Information sources and tools	Project analysis, Interviews at EU-level, case studies (main source)

Politicians' awareness

Question	To what extent do the debated issues challenge the political establishment?
Success criteria	Representatives of the political establishment take public positions on the debated issues during and after the project.
Indicators	Results are sent or presented to politicians, or are seen to have a political importance
	Awareness, e.g. representatives of the political establishment organisers and observers state that they politicians take public positions on the debated issues during and after the project; they are able to provide examples; this is confirmed by the reviewed documents
Success threshold	At least one representative of the political establishment takes a public stand on the debated issues in a way that matches the indicators
Analysis	Politicians' self Organisers and observers' assessment to be cross-checked with other sources in the framework of the case studies
Information sources and tools	Project analysis, interviews at EU-level, case studies (main source)

Capitalising on experience

Question	To what extent are the projects recognised as good transferable practices?
Success criteria	The results of new models initiated by the programme are presented and extensively discussed within appropriate networks; these results are subjected to some validation process
Indicators	Dissemination, e.g. projects are discussed in the appropriate networks Capitalising on experience, e.g., innovative practices are described on a website in a communication document, subjected to an evaluation, analysed in research papers, presented in a seminar, and/or converted into training material; the information provided is accessible and sufficient for the lessons to be learnt by future project promoters
Success threshold	All project are subjected to a validation process matching the indicators Several projects have managed to create extensive discussion in the appropriate networks
Analysis	Cross-checking sources
Information sources and tools	Project analysis EU-level interviews, case studies (main source), expert panel

Transferability

Question	To what extent are the new practices acknowledged and mastered in the relevant networks?
Success criteria	The concerned networks are aware of these innovations and acquire the capacity to replicate them on a large scale.
Indicators	Transferability, e.g. observers and experts organisers state that innovative practices are not excessively dependent on contextual factors, on highly specialised skills, or on specific institutional facilities; network members state that they are aware of the innovative practices and that they have the technical and organisational capacity to replicate them
Success threshold	At least one innovation in each project (even a small one) is made transferable in a way that matches the indicators
Analysis	Project promoters' self assessment to be cross-checked with other sources in the framework of the case studies
Information sources and tools	EU-level interviews case studies (main source), expert panel