



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **European Citizens' Consultation to bring Plan D to life *Autumn launch for ambitious project to consult the public on Europe's future***

**The biggest-ever pan-European debate involving EU citizens from all 25 Member States will be launched this autumn to find out what they want from Europe. This ambitious project is aimed at inspiring policy-makers at European and national level as they prepare to take decisions on the next phase of the EU's development.**

As the Union's leaders search for a way out of the current impasse over the Constitutional Treaty following its rejection in France and the Netherlands last year, the European Citizens' Consultation provides an answer to the question that is dominating debate among communication experts around Europe: how can the EU create dialogue among its citizens and involve them in shaping the future?

The European Citizens' Consultation will do just that, providing a unique opportunity for members of the public from all 25 Member States to discuss what kind of Europe they want. A group of citizens chosen randomly to reflect the diversity of the population will take part in the deliberations, and will be assisted by experts to identify common ground and make recommendations to policy-makers. The project is supported by the European Commission within the framework of its Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate.

*"Europe needs to engage citizens in a new kind of dialogue – one that is large-scale, accountable and involves the public in the EU's Member States, instead of Brussels talking to Brussels,"* said Luc Tayart de Borms, Managing Director of the King Baudouin Foundation (KBF), which is leading the consultation exercise using techniques it pioneered during its 2005-06 'Meeting of Minds' project.

*"Now is the time to ask citizens for their ideas, stories and metaphors to inspire Europe. If the European idea is to remain and take shape in people's minds, they must feel that they are genuinely part of the process, voice their opinions and see the results,"* said KBF Director Gerrit Rauws.

The Consultation will create a truly European discussion by bringing citizens together at European events and linking simultaneous national debates on a shared agenda of broad ideas and visions set by the participants themselves. The debates will overcome the barriers of languages and geographical

distance using an innovative combination of professional facilitation and modern technology.

More than 20 independent and non-political European foundations, think tanks, universities and civil society organisations - including the European Policy Centre, European Citizen Action Service, Robert Bosch Foundation, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and Compania di San Paolo - have joined the consortium led by KBF. It is supported by communication consulting firm IFOK and opinion research agency OPTEM.

This project aims to provide **key input for the decisions** on the future of the constitutional process which will be taken before the end of 2008.

However, the European Citizens' Consultation is designed to deliver more than a one-off discussion. **It aims to establish a model for involving European citizens in further large-scale dialogues in future**, using the unprecedented platform built by the partners involved in this first Europe-wide cooperation of its kind.

The project will be launched at  
an **event in Brussels on 7-8 October 2006**  
where citizens will be asked to identify the key themes to be discussed at national debates in all 25 Member States taking place beginning of 2007.

The results of those deliberations will then be presented to EU policy-makers in spring 2007. Details of this event and the citizens chosen to take part in the exercise will be released in the early autumn. For more information, please contact the project's media coordinator:

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