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Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Risiko- und Nachhaltigkeitsforschung

European Citizens' Consultations Project

Final Evaluation Report

**Rüdiger Goldschmidt, Ortwin Renn and
Sonja Köppel**

Nr. 8 / March 2008

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ISSN 1614-3035
ISBN 978-3-938245-08-8

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The research results that are described and analysed in this paper were obtained in the context of an evaluation project funded by the King Baudouin Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the European Commission DG Communication. The authors of this paper are grateful for the support that they had received from these funding organizations. All views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organisations or other researchers involved in this project.

Final edition of content: August 28, 2007

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1 Mandate and Methods

1.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

This evaluation focuses on the “European Citizens’ Consultations”-Project (ECC-Project). The evaluators’ main objectives have been, first, to conduct an empirical analysis of the methodological concept and design and, second, to monitor the implementation of the organizers’ goals during all activities, events and procedures at the European (Agenda-Setting Event and Synthesis Event) and national level (national consultations). In addition, the evaluators pursued the objective to investigate the repercussions of the project on those involved in the process (internal impact) as well as the impact of the project on relevant actors and stakeholders outside of the process (external impact). For meeting these objectives, empirical data was collected for evaluating the process and the organisation, partially based on subjective satisfaction of the main actors and partially grounded in systematic observations by the evaluation team. The evaluation began at the Agenda-Setting Event in October 2006 and was completed in August 2007 after the final report was written.

1.2 Evaluation Criteria

The selection of indicators and their sub-dimensions was based on a set of evaluative criteria that guided our evaluation. These criteria¹ refer to:

¹ cf. Renn, 2004

Fairness This criterion requests that all relevant and affected actor groups have an equal opportunity to participate in the process (external or structural fairness). In addition, the criterion demands that the process offers fair conditions to all participants (internal or procedural fairness). Aspects of fairness include, for instance, the conditions and constraints of the process, the rules and provisions regulating the dialogue and explicitly the development of agreement. These rules should be defined beforehand and consensually.²

Competence This criterion refers to a sufficient level of communicative and issue-related proficiency. Participants should be able to assess the consequences of their preferences with respect to different decision options and measures. Competence also includes the ability to communicate and to exchange norms, values or emotional expressions.³

Transparency This criterion demands that all methods, proceedings and rules, but also the produced results are openly communicated to all persons involved. The optimal result is a balance between availability of information (quantity as well as quality) and mutual understanding of all viewpoints.

Efficiency This criterion specifies the relation between effort (time, money, etc.) and result. The efficient use of all resources including the time of the participants is of major importance for subjective satisfaction with the process as well as for the goal of optimal allocation.

² cf. Webler, 1995: 62f

³ cf. Habermas, 1992

1.3 Methods Used for the Evaluation

The evaluation has been based on three main methods that provided material for each evaluation criterion:

1. Systematic observation of events,
2. Survey of participating citizens and
3. Semi-structured interviews with participating citizens, coordinators and external actors.

The Agenda-Setting Event (ASE), 12 national consultations (NC), as well as the final Synthesis Event (SE) were analysed combining the methods of observation, evaluation survey and interviews. Additionally, a document analysis of reports etc. and an analysis of the media coverage and other repercussions of the project (especially press and websites) were conducted.

1.3.1 Observation

The events at European level were observed by at least two observers belonging to the evaluation team. The selection of national events was guided by the quest for diversity and included a minimum of two national consultations per group of events (cf. Table 1). Another criterion for the selection of the national consultations for observation was the size of the events (3 small, 6 medium, 3 big events). In addition, a certain geographical equilibrium was the target. Events in Northern, Southern, Eastern (i.e. new EU-member states), Central and Western Europe were therefore covered. The events in France, Germany and the United Kingdom were observed by Dialogik staff members. The other nine national consultations were attended by external observers, selected and instructed by Dialogik. The external observers were usually nationals of the country, in which the observation took place.

All observers used a pre-structured observation tool for the documentation. The tool included global indicators as well as specific variables related to the process. Every indicator contained several sub-dimensions, which were listed on the observation sheet. The main indicators were:

- Atmosphere (general conditions of the discussion),
- Interaction (characterised the style of communication and interaction of the citizens),
- Discussion (documented how the citizens participated in the discussion),
- Roles (referred to an aggregate of sub-dimensions focusing on special functions of individual actors or small groups),
- Opinion (was orientated to all content-related aspects of the discussion),
- Language (framed questions such as which types of language were used, as well as problems of articulation),
- Structure (documented “external” influences on the observed process).

The dimensions of the pre-structured tools were explained in depth by detailing the purpose and structure of each dimension. The observers also took individual notes. The instructions given to the observers included an introduction to the pre-structured observation tool and a set of directives for observing and reporting. The proceeding was illustrated by examples. The observers were generally instructed to document the dynamics of all interactions and report their impressions with respect to all relevant activities, including those that were not directly located in their actual observation field.

Date	Event observed	Observers	Number of participating citizens	Returned questionnaires	Response rate evaluation survey
7-8/10/06	Agenda-Setting Event	3 internal	200	196	98,0%
1-3/12/06	Citizens' Jury Budapest	1 external	-	-	-
10-11/02/07	NC-Slovenia	1 external	45	45	100,0%
	NC-Estonia	2 external	60	52	86,7%
24-25/02/07	NC-Belgium	1 external	150	132	88,0%
	NC-Hungary	1 external	34	32	94,1%
	NC-Germany	2 internal	200	176	88,0%
10-11/03/07	NC-France	1 internal	49	44	89,8%
	NC-Greece	1 external	28	28	100,0%
24-25/03/07	NC-UK	1 internal	74	70	94,6%
	NC-Italy	1 external	40	40	100,0%
	NC-Spain	1 external	92	91	98,9%
	NC-Finland	1 external	29	25	86,2%
	NC-Romania	1 external	48	48	100,0%
9-10/05/07	Synthesis Event	2 internal	27	27	100,0%

Table 1: Events observed and response rates of questionnaires in the evaluation surveys

1.3.2 Evaluation Surveys

In addition to the observation, the participants were asked to fill out a fully standardised questionnaire translated into the national language. In all surveys high response-rates above 85% were achieved (cf. Table 1). Since 196 citizens at the Agenda-Setting Event and 783 citizens in the 12 focused national events completed the questionnaires, as well as 27 citizens at the Synthesis Event, almost 1000 participating citizens of 1800 in total were covered by the survey. Aiming at several core questions, the different questionnaire-waves contained items related to each phase of the process. The core questions focused on the perceived objectives of the undertaking, the personal reasons for participation, as well as assessments regarding the process itself, such as fairness and transparency or satisfaction with the results and the estimated impact of the ECC-Project. In addition, a feedback survey among 23 national coordinators⁴ was conducted after the Synthe-

⁴ One organisation coordinated two national consultations (Greece and Cyprus) and therefore participated only once in the feedback-survey among the

sis Event, in order to capture the satisfaction of the national coordinators with their own national event, the Synthesis Event and the satisfaction regarding the overall ECC-Process.

Generally, the assessments were gathered by symmetric five-point rating scales ranging from very positive to very negative as basic response options. The responses in the surveys tend to be positive with respect to the entire process which indicates a substantial degree of satisfaction of the citizens as well as other persons involved with respect to their role and function in the process. Responses that do not represent very positive assessments are clear indications of critical positions or perceived disturbances. These will be discussed later in this document.

1.3.3 Interviews

The evaluation team conducted 35 semi-standardised interviews with internal and external actors, including citizens, national coordinators, facilitators, main-organizers, experts involved and external actors such as employees of the EC. The phone interviews were conducted after the Agenda-Setting Event, the Citizens' Jury in Budapest, several national consultation events and the Synthesis Event (cf. Table 2). The guidelines for the interviews differed slightly depending on the phase of the ECC-Project and the type of actor being interviewed. In general, the guidelines corresponded to the questions raised in the evaluation surveys.

national coordinators. The feedback form of IFOK, which was the coordinating organisation for the main process and the national consultation in Germany, was not considered in the current analysis. The Hungarian and the Portuguese partner did not fill out the form.

	ASE	Citizens' Juries	NC	SE/ Follow Up	Overall
Internal actors - persons involved					
~ Facilitators	4		4		8
~ Organisers	1			1	2
~ National Coordinators	1	2			3
~ Expert			1		1
Internal actors - citizens	5	1	7	5	18
External actors				3	3
Overall	11	3	12	9	35

Table 2: Overview on interviews differentiated in phases of the ECC-Project and actor-groups

1.3.4 Media Analysis

A media analysis was carried out in order to assess the ‘repercussions’ of the ECC-Project. Generally, the ECC-Project received a high media coverage. A formal analysis and a complete search for sources were not planned nor performed. All press articles analysed were taken from links presented on the official website of the project. The analysis included different media types, but mainly focused on the coverage by printed media, as well as internet sources directly related to the project. Out of all sources, a selection of 22 press articles from print and online newspapers, magazines, as well as radio and television broadcasts from both European and national media was analysed. The selection procedure was focused on diversity regarding media types and countries although not all languages could be considered. Additionally, ten internet-websites of governmental and non-governmental organisations at national and European level were investigated, i.e. five political/governmental sources (GO) and five NGO-websites.⁵ The sample of websites included very heterogeneous sources, e.g. reactions of high-level governmental agencies as well as “voices close to citizens”. The procedures to identify these websites were:

⁵ The complete list of the internet sources of interest is provided by the references.

- 1st: Links on the official ECC homepage
- 2nd: Google search: “European Citizens’ Consultation” or/ and “ECC”
- 3rd: Google search on politicians’ websites, who have been “special guests” at ECC-Events

	AT	BE	FR	DE	IE	NL	UK	‘EU’	Overall
Print	1	5	1	3	1	3		1	15
Online press	1		1					3	5
Radio	1								1
TV					1				1
GO websites				2	1			2	5
NGO websites	1						2	2	5
Overall	4	5	2	5	3	3	2	8	32

Table 3: Overview on the sources of the media analysis per country and different media types

The dimensions of the media and website analysis that were covered by our analysis referred to ‘intensity’, ‘direction’ and ‘attitude’ of the external reactions on the project. Intensity denominates the degree of interest in the ECC-Project and refers to the degree of reaction by countries or level (national vs. European level), different ECC-Events and different media-sources. Direction aimed to cover the focus of the reactions: What were the main issues of the sources (project in general vs. individual events or method vs. content)? Attitude focused on the assessment of the ECC-Project and was analysed based on four topics:

1. overall impression,
2. assessment of process and procedures
3. evaluation of outcome and results and
4. (expected) impact of the ECC-Project.

2 Results

2.1 Objectives of the ECC-Project

The project's intentions were very ambitious. Starting with the development of a feasibility study,⁶ which was published in January 2006, there were only nine months for securing funding, designing the process and conducting all activities to prepare the actual deliberation process. The main deliberation process ("main process") lasted only eight months from October 2006 to May 2007 to progress from the Agenda-Setting Event to the final event. In comparison to the ECD-Project,⁷ which included only nine European countries in a deliberative process, this time constraint was extremely tight.

For the ECC-Project, partner-organisations in 27 European countries had to be found and involved in the project, which placed high demands on information and time management and required a lot of coordination efforts as well as organisational capacity for installing a network capable of governing and implementing the entire process. An undertaking of such dimensions was never conducted before in Europe. In addition to all the organisational efforts, the process required significant financial investment.

The project was supported by the European Commission. The King Baudouin Foundation initiated the project and led – in cooperation with the European Citizen Action Service (stakeholder relations), J@ys (Journalists at your service – media relations), the European Policy Centre (policy advice) and a Network of European Foundations (coordination of funding) – the consortium of partners. IFOK and the King Baudouin Foundation developed the general design for the European as well as the national events. In addition, IFOK organ-

⁶ cf. project document: Feasibility Study on a European Citizens' Debate, 2006

⁷ cf. www.meetingmindseurope.org

ised the national consultation process in Germany. All other national consultations were implemented by national partner organisations. In addition, the project was supported by funding organisations at European and national level. An overview on all partner-organisations can be found on the website of the project.⁸

A clear definition and prioritisation of objectives required some interpretation because the organisers presented the objectives in different terms and formats depending on media type and recipients, etc.. The evaluation team extracted one main objective from the proposal of the ECC-Project, which encloses two sub-objectives.⁹

BASIC GOAL: Reconnect citizens to the development of the European Union (long term).

- Therefore, the ECC-Project aims to reach a wide range and high numbers of individuals and organisations.
- The target groups can be outlined as the citizens who are directly involved into the project's events or additional outreach activities and decision-makers at European level (representatives of European institutions) as well as national level (national government officials and local MPs). Indirect target groups include civil society and implementation partners, media, academic partners and sponsors.
- Bring to the surface the connection of citizens' lives and the future of the EU.
- Build up a positive emotional connection of citizens with the EU and each other.
- Raise understanding and confidence in EU institutions and their relevance in tackling the challenges that matter to citizens.

⁸ cf. project document: <http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu>

⁹ cf. King Baudouin Foundation, 2006

1) METHOD TO REACH THE GOAL: Development of an effective participative governance tool for decision-makers enabling them to lead multilingual debates across Europe (immediate)

- The European Citizens' Consultations will provide a space to address citizens both intellectually and emotionally in a format that corresponds to their expectations of transparency, outreach, impact and accountability.
- Immediate: development of a new consultation forum for institutions to interact with citizens.
- Immediate: a forum to allow for comparison and result sharing across countries from the citizens' perspective, feeding into Plan D.

2) EXPECTED OUTPUT: identify citizens' ideas and expectations for Europe's future

- Immediate: Contribution to the creation of a new vision and rationale of Europe, more relevant to its citizens, and correspondingly renewed interest from citizens and media.
- Immediate: contribution to the debate about the future of Europe and input for further discussions.
- Establish a superior source of information on citizens' views and values.
- Provide a strong information basis for EU communication, and relevant input from citizens for key political challenges facing the EU.

2.2 Basic Design of the Project and Evaluation of the Basic Design

2.2.1 Basic Design and Main Process

The European Citizens' Consultations is the largest and most ambitious Pan-European participation project up to date. It involved all the EU countries (27) and included 1800 citizens.¹⁰ The **main process of elicitation** started with the Agenda-Setting Event (cf. Figure 1) gathering citizens from all over Europe, who were given the task to articulate the agenda of topics for the following consultations at the national level. The national events picked up these topics and developed "Visions" from the perspective of each national panel. These recommendations were then fed into a Synthesis Event in which the final report was completed. At the end of this final stage, the report was handed over to Margot Wallström (Vice-President of the European Commission), Jean-Luc Dehaene (MEP and former Vice-Chairman of the Convention on the Future of Europe) and Gérard Onesta (Vice-President of the European Parliament).

¹⁰ cf. project document: <http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/6.0.html>

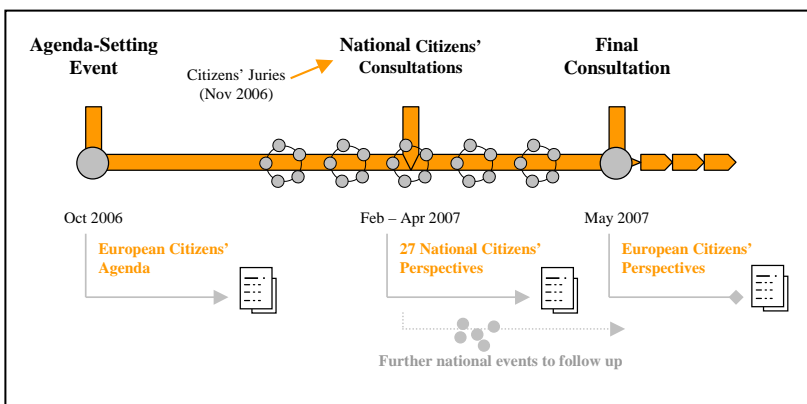


Figure 1: Structure of the project's main process¹¹

In addition to the main process, two **Citizens' Juries** were conducted in Budapest and Berlin at the end of 2006. The Citizens' Juries were supposed to define the nature, quality and format of information that participants of the national consultations would require to lead a productive debate.¹² As the coordinators of the juries confirmed in interviews, these events should additionally serve as a test for the preparation of the following national consultations.

However, the Citizens' Juries did not optimally fit into the main process, which reduced the efficiency of these exercises. What are the reasons for this deficit?

1. The design of the Citizens' Juries differed considerably from those of the national consultations.¹³
2. The working sessions focused mostly on special aspects of the main topics that were developed in the Agenda-Setting Event,

¹¹ source: cf. project document: <http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/3.0.html>

¹² cf. project document: First report from the Citizens' Juries within the European Citizens' Consultation, 2006: 3 and the ECC website: <http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/3.0.html#c21>

¹³ cf. project document: First Report from the Citizens' Juries within the European Citizens' Consultation, 2006: 4

for instance “A Europe of Singles?”, “World Power Europe” or “How large is Europe”¹³ etc.. Additionally, the main topic “Environment and Energy” was discussed in its original broader understanding of the Agenda-Setting Event, not according to the narrow definition that formed the basis of the consultations at the national level.

3. In addition, experts played a much bigger role than in the national consultations: each of the 4 working units per day was opened by a 20-minute long expert statement, followed by citizens’ questions.¹⁴
4. Furthermore, the operational objectives between Citizens’ Juries and the national consultations differed considerably. The citizens did not have to come up with a citizens’ declaration during the Citizens’ Juries.

From a pragmatic point of view, the project report should have presented more information on “lessons learnt” for the national consultations. The Citizens’ Juries could have been more intensely utilized for testing the design of the national consultations. This impression was shared by one of the main organisers in the last wave of the evaluation interviews. However, this opportunity was missed.

2.2.2 Alternatives to the Basic Design Chosen

The basic design appears superior to possible alternative structures. This can be illustrated by looking at three potential alternatives:

1. The first alternative would have been to have each national consultation develop its own topics; instead, the Pan-European event produced three commonly agreed core-topics. If each of

¹⁴ cf. project document: First Report from the Citizens' Juries within the European Citizens' Consultations, 2006: 3

the 27 national panels had selected their own three topics, however, there would have been too many suggestions, making it difficult to proceed to the next step of discussion of the topics. Additionally, setting the agenda in initial events at the national level could have hampered an agreement on a common set of three European topics, because each national delegation of participants would have preferred and defended its own selected topics.

2. The national consultations actually composed plural visions for the Synthesis Event. Conducting these single national events provided widely independent national assessments as well as the opportunity for the citizens to consider national subtleties. This basically enhanced the variety of viewpoints on the topics for the synthesis. A European event strongly focused on national dialogues, such as the Second Convention of the ECD-Project with the Carousel Method would have demanded immense (financial) efforts. Additionally, a higher number of participants were involved at national level by the single national consultations, which corresponds to the intention of the organisers to involve as many participants as possible in the project.
3. The third alternative could have been to omit the Synthesis Event and report only on the national results. The final event at the European level, however, was essential to produce a synthesis paper. National Events would not sufficiently provide opportunities for a common adoption of the final report by citizens of all European countries.

One additional design adjustment could have been to organise dialogue sessions with competent and relevant politicians as well as experts before the final event. This interaction could have been a positive contribution to the deliberation process and would have assisted participants to recognize and take into account the arguments and views of those who professionally deal with these topics.

Except for the citizens of the Synthesis Event and a few citizens who attended the Agenda-Setting Event and the national consultation event, the participation was organised by division of labour rather than involving the same citizens in all events. Therefore, the project embraced many more citizens than the ECD-Project, where all the 126 involved citizens attended all events of the project.¹⁵ With respect to the (non-scientific) topic of the ECC-Project, involving citizens usually only once was an acceptable methodological decision, although it might have been advantageous to have some participants from each country (“core panel”) attend all meetings in order to inform the other citizens about the reasons and arguments for choosing the three topics that were selected during the initial event. Since that continuity in information flow was not given the panellists had often to rely on the reports of the national organisers and therefore on second-hand information.

2.2.3 Continuity along the Main Process

Although the overall design served the main purpose and reached all the objectives, at least to a satisfactory degree, there were several problems and inconsistencies that had negative impacts on the process and – to a minor degree – on the output of the exercise. These problems and inconsistencies are addressed in the following sections of this report.

2.2.3.1 Conceptual inconsistencies

There was an inconsistency regarding how the chosen topics were handled between the different process stages: For instance, one topic legitimised by the citizens’ vote in the Agenda-Setting Event was “Environment and Energy”.¹⁶ However, the organisers then limited

¹⁵ cf. www.meetingmindseurope.org

¹⁶ cf. project document: Final Report. Agenda-Setting Event, 2006: 19

the scope of the topic to: "Energy & Environment: The environmental and economic impact of Europe's energy use".¹⁷ The initial proposal included all environmental aspects and, in addition, a special emphasis on energy. The organisers' choice was to narrow down the subject to environmental aspects of energy. The national consultations were bound to this definition of the organisers. In the Synthesis Report, half of the statements on the topic area "The environmental and economic impact of Europe's energy use" touch upon the energy topic.¹⁸ The organisers justified their decision for intervention into the agenda setting, for instance during the German national consultation, with the fact that a lot of the citizens' contributions during the Agenda-Setting Event had focused on energy. However, the empirical analysis revealed that about half of the collected contributions during the Agenda-Setting Event mentioned topics outside of the energy field.¹⁹ Moreover, the intervention of the organisers resulted in further inconsistencies between the national consultations: Documents such as recommendations based on the experiences of the first national events¹⁷ indicated a common baseline regarding the handling of the topics in these events. However, the national consultations finally dealt differently with this topic of environment. In France, for example, a wider range of environmental issues was discussed, although the lead facilitator had explicitly mentioned the restrained topic at the beginning. Other national consultations adopted the focus on energy like in Germany.²⁰ Barring the inconsistency along the main process, this change of a topic was not acceptable because it generally violates the sovereignty of the citizens to set

¹⁷ cf. project document: Recommendations for the upcoming national consultations on the basis of the experiences of the first ECC-weekend, 2006: 11

¹⁸ cf. project document: European Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 9

¹⁹ cf. project document: Agenda-Setting Event - Final Report, 2007: 21

²⁰ The statements of the vision towards the topic "Energy and Environment" clearly refer to energy-subjects and ignore other aspects of the environmental topic (cf. Internal document: Deutsche Bürgererklärung über die Zukunft Europas, 2007).

the agenda. The organisers gave this competence explicitly to the citizens.²¹

The second topic “Social Welfare and Family”²² was also slightly modified by the organizers since the final topic was called: “The social and economic conditions for Europe’s families”.²³ However, most national consultations as well as the final Synthesis Report adopted the broader subject of social welfare beyond the issue of Europe’s families. In the end, the panels by themselves restored the original version of the second topic.

2.2.3.2 Deliberation Types and the Handling of Diversity of Contributions

There was a turn from deliberative to non-deliberative style as the main-process entered into the final stage of the Synthesis Event. With a certain distance from the main process, this methodological decision of the organisers interrupted the continuity of the process. The effects of the non-deliberative design of the Synthesis Event are described in chapter 2.7.2.

One of the non-deliberative features during the main events such as the Agenda-Setting Event referred to the process of decision making. The design of the process included voting procedures which are always problematic because it is unclear what a majority or minority means in terms of representation. Since the participants of the panels were not a true representation of the European public, any voting mechanism is difficult to defend, yet pragmatically also required if a consensus cannot be accomplished. The organisers had hardly any other choice but relying on voting mechanisms in order to reach some closure of the deliberations.

²¹ cf. project document: Project Summary, 2006: 1

²² cf. project document: Agenda-Setting Event - Final Report, 2007: 19

²³ cf. project document: European Citizens’ Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 9

The major design of using majority voting for prioritisation of the topics resulted in a different handling of diversity along the main process and created tensions between the participants and the facilitators at least in some countries.

While the Synthesis Report was basically open to the perspectives expressed by the citizens, the organisers followed the rationale that the national consultations should conclude with concise results. This goal was successfully accomplished and all 27 national panels produced concrete declarations for the Synthesis Report. This, however, came with a price: As many national consultations, for instance in UK and Germany, focused on prioritising the results, there was only limited time to explore and discuss the different entries into the debate, which resulted in the demand of the citizens to further elaborate on the results and in adding an extra step in the process.²⁴ This unplanned extension of the process occurred in Germany and partially in France. Especially, in instances where a topic had not been discussed before, the consideration of divergent opinions became important. For instance, the German results²⁵ do not illustrate the diversity of perspectives that appeared during the deliberations. Therefore, not all “voices” raised by the citizens were fed into the process, which was initially claimed by the project’s organisers. Diversity of viewpoints should have been more in the focus of the organisers during this stage of the process. At least, indications of the diversity of viewpoints expressed, for instance ratings, should have been documented also in the short version of the national final report. This would provide important insights to external actors, who did not attend the events.²⁶ In spite of this omission, the German panellists were satisfied with the output and adopted the final German declaration. Ob-

²⁴ cf. evaluation document: Europäische Bürgerkonferenzen. Bürgerkonferenz Deutschland. Evaluationsbericht, 2007: 5

²⁵ cf. project document: German Citizens’ Perspective on the Future of Europe, 2007

²⁶ Only a few national reports made some short comments on the diversity of viewpoints.

viously, the citizens finally let go of their objections in order to contribute to the common outcome.

2.2.3.3 Base of decision making

The organisers stated that about 1800 citizens participated in the main process.²⁷ However, the Synthesis Event included only 27 citizens.²⁸ With respect to the fact that the main input was based on the contributions of such a high number of citizens, it is problematic to delegate only one citizen per country to attend the Synthesis Event. This participant was empowered to make amendments such as adding, editing or deleting aspects in the drafted Synthesis Report. Only amendments based on the respective national reports were accepted. Nevertheless, the opinion of these single citizens received a high influence. Probably also due to pragmatic causes, such as financial constraints, the Synthesis Event constituted the “eye of the needle”. This tapering of the main process towards a very narrow base of decision making at the Synthesis Event stood in contrast to the intensive efforts to gain a broad and diverse sample of Europe’s population during the Agenda-Setting Event and the national consultations.

²⁷ cf. project document: <http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/6.0.html>

²⁸ cf. project document: European Citizens’ Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007

2.3 Quality of Process – Implementation of the Basic Design

2.3.1 External Fairness – Participants and Sampling

During the Agenda-Setting Event, the organisers achieved an equal representation of male and female participants and a sufficiently diverse range in age and educational distribution.²⁹ However, there was an unbalanced regional representation within some countries' delegations because many citizens came from the capital or one particular region. For instance, all German participants came from Cologne. Such a focused selection distorts the idea of representativeness and narrows diversity among the participants. Additionally, urban populations are usually more in favour of EU-integration than rural populations.³⁰ The sampling issues additionally resulted in some minor complaints by citizens. Several participants, but also national coordinators expressed their discontent with the mismatch between their own experiences regarding the sampling and the organisers' claim for "random selection" of the participants. One interviewed coordinator criticised that some participants seemed to have known each other before the event, since many of them had been participating in several market research panels.

The national consultations strongly differed with respect to their recruitment processes and success. Demographic diversity, e.g. distribution regarding age classes, gender, profession, generally was sufficiently achieved in most countries. This can be exemplified with Fig-

²⁹ cf. project document: Final Report. Agenda-Setting Event, 2007: 6

³⁰ cf. European Commission, 2006

ure 2 in Annex A for the age-distributions of the national panels.³¹ Successful sampling occurred, for instance, in Estonia, Hungary, Belgium, Germany and Slovakia. Some national organisers invested high efforts to achieve a well balanced national sample of citizens.³² However, the sampling in Greece, Romania and France was less balanced, as the national panel was dominated by young participants. Greece and Romania also had an undue high proportion of students and participants in education.

Due to information lacking in the national reports and the different national subtleties, it is not easy to give an assessment of the diversity of the national panels regarding the regional distributions (country-districts) and other variables such as representation of minorities. The Spanish and Italian panel were quite diverse regarding the regional distribution.³³ With respect to representations of minorities, Finland, Latvia, UK, and Cyprus appeared to be more successful than Slovenia, Hungary and Greece.

The absence of numerous citizens who had confirmed their participation was another major problem for a number of countries, for instance for Estonia, Latvia, Denmark or Greece. In the UK, only 76 citizens participated in the national event instead of the planned 150 citizens, among other reasons probably due to late ticket transfer.

The evaluation team acknowledged several problems regarding the sampling method in some of the participating countries. The selection

³¹ The evaluators extracted available data on gender-rates, age-distributions and distribution regarding profession from the 27 national reports presented at the project's website (date of download: July, 27 2007). Some data was missing or imprecise and some sources dissented regarding the information given, so that this data entry had to be validated a few times. However, some data was not available.

³² For instance in Slovenia, an extra bus transfer secured regional representation.

³³ cf. project document: European Citizens' Consultations. Spanish Citizens' Perspective on the Future of Europe, 2007 and information gathered by the DIALOGIK-observers

of participants, for example, in Finland was based on a phonebook, which excluded most Finnish citizens, who usually use a mobile phone. In the UK, the selection was based on an online portal, which focused on political opinion surveys and which demanded registration for the opportunity to be selected for the national event in the UK. Some German citizens reported during the national consultation that they were about to refuse the invitation to the event, because they had the impression that they would be involved in market research. Several national partners complained that the leading organisers delivered good sampling criteria but demanded sampling to be conducted by professional organisations. Some of these professional organisations finally did not deliver the results aimed at.

The sampling procedures were influenced by structural and framing aspects. For instance, the Hungarian partner joined the project network just a few weeks before the national consultation started. Although being late he succeeded in providing an astonishingly high performance in getting the sample together and conducting all necessary processes.

At the Synthesis Event there was a clear overrepresentation of highly-educated citizens, which was especially caused by exclusive selection of only English-speaking citizens.³⁴ The gender distribution was balanced³⁵ and one disabled person (wheelchair) attended the event.

Representativeness is one important criterion for sampling participants. Yet deliberative participation is not contingent on achieving a true representation of the population. In particular, deliberative

³⁴ In the evaluation survey, when the 27 participating citizens were asked for their highest degree of education the following distribution occurred: 7 university degree (additionally 1 student), 3 PhD, 3 master, 1 engineer, 3 BA = 18 participants. Some entries were not clearly assignable to one degree and therefore excluded from this analysis.

³⁵ The evaluation survey confirmed that 48,1% female participants attended the Synthesis Event.

models of participation rely on a complete representation of arguments, but not of their distribution in the population (proportional distribution). In this sense, the sampling procedures in the national events probably met the diversity criterion as a high degree of diversity was accomplished (at least in most panels). The aim of diversity is more difficult to accomplish in the Pan-European events. Only eight citizens per country were selected for the Agenda-Setting Event and only one for the Synthesis Event. This very thin base for diversity is certainly problematic, although pragmatically justified.

Another issue is the decision regarding how to balance equal opportunities for every country's contribution with respect to the population sizes in each country. In the Agenda-Setting Event, the equal number of citizens per country supported the assumption of internal fairness. The citizens of one country could not dominate the dialogue because they were confronted with equal numbers of participants from all the other countries. For the national meetings, the population size of every country is more relevant regarding inclusion of citizens of all regions into the national sample as well as for creating sufficient diversity with respect to minorities and specific social groups or sub-cultures. For instance, Estonia with its small population succeeded in getting a national sample of 60 citizens, while Italy – with a much larger population – had a smaller number of participants (40 citizens). Although Italy was able to represent some regional diversity, the citizens' involvement at national level, especially the number of citizens at the consultations, should have been more in the focus of the main organisers, particularly when diversity is emphasized as important.

2.3.2 Internal Fairness, Involvement of the Citizens and Facilitator Performance

Overall, the events provided fair conditions and equal opportunities for the citizens. In the different evaluation surveys, most citizens

generally gave predominantly positive and rarely any negative assessments.³⁶ Looking at the proportion of very satisfied and satisfied assessments, a higher rate of citizens in the Agenda-Setting Event as well as in the national consultations (overall-result) expressed more often the second best response option (satisfied rather than very satisfied). This indicates some minor shortcomings regarding fairness.

A very positive aspect of the Synthesis Report was that the organizers put original phrases of the citizens into the final document. However, this wouldn't have been necessary if the final report had been finalized by the citizens themselves. It would have been better to involve the citizens more deeply in writing and completing the results. Some explanations are presented in the following sections:

The chosen design for summarising the citizens' contributions during the **Agenda-Setting Event** was a pragmatic and effective solution to the challenge of processing 200 citizens' contributions in a short time. Occasional problems at single discussion tables could have been resolved by more feedback and interaction between facilitators and participants. This process provided in general equal opportunities for each participant. The citizens were, however, not involved in the summarising process of the dialogue results, had no opportunity to monitor the activities of the editorial team and were not in-depth informed about what happened during the summarising process.

The summary of the citizens' contributions lied in the hands of the editorial team, which had to proceed very quickly to produce an output on time. Such a rapid summary needs to be interpreted with caution, taking into account that the results from 200 citizens and 26 tables (!) varied a lot due to different styles of presentation by citizens

³⁶ The survey-results regarding the Agenda-Setting Event are presented in Figure 3 in Annex B. Because of constraints regarding the number of questions, transparency and fairness had to be evaluated in this survey by one item. For information about the survey-results of the national consultations respectively the Synthesis Event please refer to Figure 4 in Annex C respectively Figure 10 Annex D.

and diverse forms of note taking among the facilitators.³⁷ It is questionable that under such constraints all statements could get the attention that they deserved, especially since every contribution was related to a specific meaning and context.

Additionally, the message developed by the citizens at the tables during the dialogue had to pass several “filters” such as the translation by the interpreters, the note taking by the facilitator and the summary conducted by the editorial team. Such a sequence of filters demands an active and elaborated process of recursive validation and confirmation by the citizens. But the process was more orientated to prioritise the topics than to elaborate on their content.

On the basis of other evaluations,³⁸ one could have expected that the participants would have voiced an open critique or protest, if they had judged the quality of the results as inadequate. However, most of the participants were satisfied with the overall outcomes of the process and hence more tolerant about the associated deficiencies, which they interpreted as minor disturbances in comparison with the perceived high overall quality of the final output. The topics chosen were legitimised by voting. The procedure of voting is, however, as pointed out before, problematic in a deliberative setting.

Looking at the evaluation survey, the **national consultations** in Hungary, Finland and Romania received very positive ratings by the majority of the participants.³⁹ The UK, France and Spain received the least favourable ratings, yet they were still predominantly positive rather than very positive. Further information on the results of the observation will be presented in the following chapter focussing on the facilitator performance.

Regarding the **Synthesis Event**, the organisers invested a lot of efforts in developing a synthesis of the statements presented in the

³⁷ cf. evaluation document: European Citizens' Consultations - Interim Report, 2006: 11 (cf. Annex F, p.100f)

³⁸ cf. Goldschmidt and Renn, 2006

³⁹ cf. Figure 8 in Annex C

reports of the national consultations. The data of the evaluation survey confirms that this task was well done.⁴⁰ The task of the citizens was only to check the draft Synthesis Report. They could recommend changes regarding their own national statements. The operative involvement, e.g. support of the citizens by the supporting team of the organizers, was good. But, the final wording was performed by the organizers after the working session without the citizens.

The day when the report was handed over to the politicians constituted the first and last opportunity for the citizens to read the entire final report (as one unit) and to check the changes made during the working session of the Synthesis Event. However, the citizens had only limited time (about 15 minutes) to review the complete final report. This procedure in fact impeded any opportunity to add aspects or to correct the given text.

On the first day of the Synthesis Event, some citizens did not take advantage of the entire working time for their task to check the Synthesis Report, which was drafted by the organisers. Some citizens finished the review of the Synthesis Report quickly, whereas others stayed until the end. This can be seen as an indicator of the good quality of the report drafted by the organisers but could also indicate a lower involvement of the citizens than initially envisioned by the organisers. The impression of indifference seems to fit best to the circumstances, because citizens emphasised to the evaluators in talks during the beaks and also in interviews that they were not fully satisfied with the result. In the evaluation survey, the results were rated satisfactory by 52%, and very satisfactory by 37%.⁴¹ In addition to this feedback, the observers got the impression that the features of the design increased the risk that the citizens would automatically approve most of the items in the report drafted by the organisers without even considering the pros and cons. During the final commenting

⁴⁰ 88,9% of the 27 participating citizens of the Synthesis Event assessed the presentation of the results developed during “their own” national consultation positively (33,3% very positively). 7,4% gave an ambivalent assessment.

⁴¹ cf. Figure 10 in Annex D

and signing of the declaration, the French representative arrived late and signed the report without looking at the revisions. Despite of the limitations detected, the citizens of the Synthesis Event were generally committed to their tasks.

2.3.2.1 Performance of the Facilitators

In spite of the fact that each facilitator performed differently, there were some general impressions that had an impact on the evaluation. The observations during the Agenda-Setting Event and during the national consultations, especially in Germany, the UK, Slovenia, Hungary, Belgium and Finland indicated that the facilitators were able to structure the dialogue, provide information and summarise the statements by the citizens adequately. The citizens gave overwhelmingly positive assessments regarding the facilitators' performance in the evaluation survey of the national consultations.⁴²

However, the observers also noticed that the facilitators occasionally did not succeed to involve all citizens into the dialogues, which resulted in unequal opportunities for contributing to the dialogue among the participants. Especially in France, Estonia and Romania some citizens only listened without saying anything. More outgoing speakers sometimes dominated the dialogue.

During the national consultations, fairness was especially compromised at the bigger tables or working groups where occasionally only some participating citizens had the opportunity to speak up. Some problems with microphone services hindered the dialogue and reduced opportunities for equal contributions. Examples were the national consultation in the UK, Germany and Belgium, i.e. mostly countries with bigger events. Noise levels were often elevated, for

⁴² 91,4% of the citizens (N=774), who participated in the national consultations, confirmed that the facilitators "did a great job". 62,1% of all respondents expressed a very high satisfaction.

example in Spain, where the rapporteur could not physically hear the contributions of all participants.

The citizens usually treated each other with fairness and respect during the dialogues. They actively contributed to the progress of the processes also by supporting the facilitators directly. Problems regarding the involvement of all citizens were sometimes resolved by citizens themselves.

The citizens usually were open to mutual communication and listened actively to each other. Overall, personal attacks were rare. However, the facilitators experienced a diversity of attitudes regarding the citizens' mentality of discourse. For example, the national discussions of citizens from southern countries such as Italy, Spain or Greece generally appeared livelier than those between citizens from northern countries. However, the intensity of dialogues depended also on the topics: the topic "immigration" generally evoked the most intensive contributions.

The competence and performance of the facilitators differed considerably from event to event, but also during single events such as the Agenda-Setting Event. One core aspect was whether the facilitators involved were **experienced or not**. One French and two Romanian facilitators occasionally dominated the discussions and influenced the results during the national consultations. Two facilitators in Romania were actually TV-moderators and did not restrain from giving their own value judgements, thus trespassed their role as moderator. One Romanian facilitator moderated only in a laissez-faire style.

Another point was the **preparation and information of the facilitators**. For instance, during the Agenda-Setting Event a lack of preparation and information caused small irritations and misunderstandings during the process.⁴³ Therefore it is recommended

- to choose only experienced, competent and active facilitators. Language abilities are a very important aspect at the trans-national level of dialogue.

⁴³ cf. evaluation document: Interim report, 2006: 8, (cf. Annex F, p.97f)

- to inform / “train” all team-members sufficiently and before an event starts regarding:
 - the overall as well as the procedural objectives,
 - the role and the tasks of the facilitators (see aspects mentioned above).
- that organisers provide for adequate working conditions for the facilitators. Depending on the process design, an additional rapporteur for documenting the dialogue results is needed so that the facilitators can focus on their moderating tasks.⁴⁴

Additional facilitator briefs should be conducted during the events for informing all team-members about unexpected changes of the design and for clarifying open aspects.

2.3.2.2 Influence of Gender

As a major element of internal fairness, this evaluation considered gender issues in two ways: The first aspect includes the question, whether female participants were equally represented in the various samples (panels) and perceived equal opportunities to contribute to the dialogues. The second aspect focuses on the topics of the dialogues. The dialogues should include implications for gender aspects and give the participants sufficient room for such deliberations. Based on the evaluation survey as well as the available data presented in the various national and European reports, the distribution of men and women was balanced. The only exceptions were found in Latvia, Estonia and Malta. Only in the sample of Malta a majority of males (61,3%) participated.

The observers noticed more or less equal speaking opportunities for men and women. In the beginning, men sometimes started conversations, but in the course of the deliberations, men and women became equally engaged in mutual exchange of ideas and arguments.

⁴⁴ cf. evaluation document: Interim report, 2006: 10 (cf. Annex F, p.99f)

Gender issues generally did not achieve a prominent status during the deliberations because all topics were elaborated “organically”, i.e. in a common perspective of men and women. For example when looking at the topic “The social and economic conditions for Europe’s families” in the Synthesis Report,⁴⁵ most aspects were commonly presented without differentiation or specification regarding gender. However, gender aspects were considered by the participants. For instance, one statement in the final declaration demanded equality regarding “gender, age or handicap”, which should “not be an obstacle for finding a job”.⁴⁶

2.3.3 Transparency

The analysis of the evaluation surveys confirms that the basic topic, the future of Europe, found deep repercussions among the citizens. The most important reason for attending was the topic itself (cf. Table 4).

Interest	ASE	NC	SE
Issue (future of Europe)	62,2	47,0	1st. (65,4%)
Process (participatory debate)	17,9	16,4	3rd. (64,0%)
Participation in a Project together with other European citizens (Meeting)	15,8	30,7	2nd. (48,0%)
Other interests	4,0	5,9	4th. (40,0%)
N	196	749	N min=25

Table 4: Citizens’ interest for participating in the ECC-Project⁴⁷

⁴⁵ cf. project document: European Citizens’ Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 3-5

⁴⁶ cf. project document: European Citizens’ Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 5

⁴⁷ The interest for participation was measured during the Agenda-Setting Event and the national consultations by requesting the nomination only of the most important interest. The participants of the Synthesis Event were

Most citizens assessed the transparency of the project positively.⁴⁸ The Synthesis Event was overwhelmingly rated as transparent. Regarding the overall-result for the national consultations, nearly half of the citizens indicated their full satisfaction, and nearly 40% were satisfied. The results of the observations correspond to this finding. At most events, the operative tasks were clearly laid out to the citizens and the content was adequately visualized. During the Agenda-Setting Event, the live visualisation of the content on the screen was sometimes interrupted or delayed. Some content points were not displayed at all.⁴⁹

1. For instance, changes on subtopics were only orally communicated, which reduced the citizens' opportunities to follow the process.
2. The basic language was English, which constituted an advantage for English-speaking citizens, especially where delayed translation occurred. A permanent presentation of content by projection would have enabled at least English-speaking citizens to follow the process completely. Some citizens supported their fellows with the translation. One possibility for transnational events could be to translate the content developed additionally into French and German and to project all three main languages. Since French, German and English are major languages, the majority of participants would be able to follow at least one projection.

requested to rank all 4 interests, Table 4 presents the highest rates for every aspect of interest.

⁴⁸ The survey-results regarding the Agenda-Setting Event are presented in Figure 3 in Annex B. Because of constraints regarding the number of questions, transparency and fairness had to be evaluated in this survey by one item. For more information regarding the transparency-assessments of the national consultations respectively the Synthesis Event please refer to Figure 4 in Annex C respectively Figure 10 in Annex D.

⁴⁹ cf. evaluation document: Interim report, 2006: 13 (cf. Annex F, p.103f)

During the national consultation in Germany, a tool in form of a board game on each table explained the main dialogue process and indicated the progress of the event, which increased the transparency. In contrast, some citizens, as well as table facilitators, for example in France and the UK were sometimes uncertain about what to discuss and about the tasks of the current process, especially due to unclear changes in the program and/or unclear instructions by the lead facilitator. In Estonia and Romania, the observers noticed shortcomings regarding the coordination of the process.

The operational transparency and the implementation of the task demand competent facilitators (cf. chapter 2.3.2.1). Basically, the current tasks should be clearly formulated by the lead-moderation and visualised on the screen to all participants. Additionally, every participant should get an overview as well as a detailed program of the event. The organisers should offer different ways of transmitting consistent and easily understandable information on both – process and content.

Furthermore, in some countries such as Spain, the screen was not visible for some participants. In Finland and Hungary, it was sometimes not easy to monitor what the facilitator or rapporteur had written as a conclusion of the dialogue. Therefore, organisers should take care that the visualisation of the content developed and the visualisation of the main instructions ensure that citizens can follow the writing process completely. At least, facilitators or rapporteurs can read loudly what they wrote. This is a requirement also for internal fairness.

2.3.4 Efficiency

Due to sufficient scheduled breaks, the events did not challenge the physical constitution of the participants. However, during some of the national consultations such as in Belgium, Estonia and Hungary, citizens became tired during sessions in the afternoon or evening as

some countries had started their discussion already early in the morning and some citizens had to leave their home early in order to travel to the event's location. In the UK, the timetable of the event did not offer enough breaks, so that the participants sometimes left the working groups for getting refreshments. Besides sufficient breaks, some "energisers", such as the Kooshball-Game in Germany, should be scheduled between the events' work sessions. During the Agenda-Setting Event, the citizens were involved in different types of group activities, which fostered their commitment.

Before the Agenda-Setting Event started, the participating citizens were requested during a "Pre-Event Survey" to express their views on the most important topics for the EU. The inclusion of these results was an elegant as well as time-saving design-feature, because the process began with a common result which constituted a first base of agreement.

The design, explicitly the Agenda-Setting Event and the German national consultation, was basically flexible as well as robust against procedural flaws, so that no critical situations occurred. For instance, during the national consultation in Germany, the citizens got additional time for further elaboration on the outputs. Nearly all observations confirmed a positive assessment of the general atmosphere. The organisers at national and European level created adequate conditions for a prolific dialogue and a smooth process. Citizens felt honoured by the opportunity to discuss the topics given and remunerated the efforts of the organisers by their commitment. Some Spanish citizens expressed in conversations, that they had actually expected just to sit in and listen as they had done during past conferences. They were positively surprised about the fact that they were expected to contribute their opinion. Corresponding to this, most citizens in the surveys were satisfied with their own opportunities for getting involved in an effective dialogue with the other citizens. The rate of

negative assessments regarding this aspect was very low.⁵⁰ However, the design of the process received significantly less favourable ratings although they were still positive.⁵⁰

The citizens expressed in interviews as well as in the survey their preference for having more time in order to elaborate the results. Time problems were stated by one-fifth of the citizens as problem reducing their opportunities for communicating effectively (cf. Table 5).

Aspect	ASE	NC
Translation Problems	4,1	
Time problems	18,5	21,2
Performance of facilitators	1,5	2,2
Uncomfortable atmosphere	2,1	6,4
Inappropriate setting	0,5	2,2
Insufficient knowledge	4,6	6,6
Insufficient information	1,0	1,9
Complexity of process	2,6	3,6
Process was too much structured by rules	3,1	3,7
Other problem aspect	4,1	6,5
Valid N	195	783

Table 5: Perceived problems for effective communication

Experiences differed between events, event phases, and types of group-work. With reference to the observation of the national consultations, several time problems occurred, for example, in France (especially towards the end), UK, Romania, Germany, Belgium and Greece. In the UK, the problem was actually artificially created as the facilitators and especially the lead facilitator always emphasized time pressure, although the group was ahead of schedule and finished

⁵⁰ The survey-results regarding the Agenda-Setting Event are presented in Figure 3 in Annex B. The survey-results regarding the national consultations are presented in Annex C, Figure 4.

earlier than envisaged on both days. In many countries some groups stayed during the break to finalise their work. The problem of “lack of time” was more frequent in bigger consultation events since there the task was more ambitious, i.e. to aggregate the visions created at the small tables into one common statement.

The design chosen for the Synthesis Event was not optimal due to a complete “laissez-faire”-style during the elaboration session of the Synthesis Report. During the working time of the citizens for editing the report, there was no standardised or even regulated way of proceeding for the edition. As organisational efforts were reduced and citizens could develop their suggestions almost autonomously, the quality of the results depended on the competence and efficacy of the citizens, but it also led to a random effect with no assurance whether “correct” results were produced or not. This was particularly due to the fact that the elaboration didn’t enclose a working session on the report as a whole. The citizen had no overview of all editions of the report during the working process.

Many organisers, for instance IFOK at the German national consultation, put a lot of efforts into creating an “official” ambiance by including speeches from politicians etc. into the program, which surely had positive effects on the impact of the project and the commitment of the citizens. However, this should not be done at the expense of deliberation.

2.3.4.1 Language interpretation and technical equipment

The Agenda-Setting Event constituted a dialogue between 19 different languages. Although some problems with delayed translations occurred, the citizens acknowledged and appreciated all the logistical efforts and the great performance by the organisers.

Two different systems were used for the interpretation at the bilingual tables: the interpreters translated either simultaneously with headsets for the citizens or, at tables without headsets, after each

contribution (consecutive). Both translation systems had shortcomings and benefits. The simultaneous translation systems led to more technical problems, such as batteries that ran out of power. But the dialogue of the citizens proceeded more quickly and interactively than at tables with consecutive translation, where the table dialogue seemed somewhat interrupted through the constant translation of the interpreter after each intervention. The citizens only had opportunity for contribution after the sometimes lengthy translation had been completed.

Also at the European and national level, the use of modern technical equipment, such as laptops, generally supported the dialogue. For the development of the results, the facilitators documented the results on the laptops. The technical equipment provided the possibility to produce and collect a lot of data within a short time. This data could be copied, processed and presented quickly. Also regarding the communication between simultaneously running events, modern technology was beneficial. In France, the organizers even used a special networking software which allowed to track and group contributions.

2.3.4.2 Differences regarding different types of group work

Occasionally, small working groups appeared more efficient and the interactions more lively. During the Agenda-Setting Event, the small table format fostered interaction and dialogue among the citizens, which was more intense than the “European Conference”, which was the working group for table representatives. The “Market place”, i.e. a big meeting opportunity for all participants of the Agenda-Setting Event, was apparently not used frequently for interactions and dialogue regarding the choice of topics.

2.3.5 Competence of the Citizens

Basically, the citizens were able or were enabled to develop the requested outputs during the different phases of the project. Usually, the citizens worked in a concentrated manner and took their task seriously. Many observers and respondents in the interviews were impressed by the level of commitment and the competence of the citizens. The evaluation generally shares these positive assessments. The citizens acted self-confidently and were generally optimistic regarding their own competence to produce high quality results.⁵¹

The topic, the future of Europe, was not a scientific subject, but the citizens demanded sometimes more precise information. Some shortcomings were detected regarding the provided information material and the involvement of experts (see below).

Some citizens signalled in talks with the observers during the breaks in the Synthesis Event that they did not feel fully capable to evaluate all three topics, because they had elaborated only on one topic intensely during their national consultation. An involvement of at least one citizen per topic from every country during the Synthesis Event would have been better.

2.3.5.1 Experts

The involvement of experts was especially concentrated on events at national level. The “resource persons” gave valuable information, invalidated prejudices as in Belgium and sometimes even assisted the facilitator in structuring the dialogue, synthesizing statements and solving small conflicts as was the case in France, Hungary, Spain, Italy and Finland. The basic question is which role experts should

⁵¹ In the evaluation survey conducted during the national consultations, 79,2% of all the participants (N=769) confirmed that “ordinary” citizens have got the capability as well as the knowledge for assessing complex topics; 37,1% gave a very decided positive answer.

play in the participative process. As long as expertise supports the dialogue, this role taking is acceptable. This positive evaluation of the function of experts to inform the participants is also based on the fact that groups without an expert often complained about the absence of expertise, for instance the “social group” in France or the “immigration group” in Finland. In Estonia, the facilitator assumed the role of an absent expert in the “immigration group”.

However, the involvement of experts differed significantly from country to country: in France they were present during the two days of discussion, whereas for example in the UK, Hungary and Belgium they only assisted the citizens for a short time. In Slovenia, the organisers sometimes had to limit the time of intervention of the experts. The involvement should be well balanced for all participating countries.

Some experts succeeded to present their core ideas concisely and adapted their contributions to the citizens regarding the use of scientific terms. This amplified their involvement in the process. At the same time, however, some citizens heavily criticized the experts, for example, in Germany and the UK for giving unbalanced statements and influencing the process. Furthermore, some observers suggested that the experts should have been more familiar with EU-Policies in their area of expertise. Better information by experts might also help to avoid that the citizens make suggestions in the report that have been already implemented and to make the final report more attractive to policy makers. In addition, the experts should inform the citizens about the consequences that are implied by the citizens’ recommendations.

The organisers should provide sufficient support by experts during the events. The involvement of competent experts provides the benefit that information can be interactively adapted to the demands of the situation. In an interview, one German expert requested a better briefing of experts before they face their tasks in the process. Most of the suggestions made in this report regarding a better preparation of the facilitators are also relevant for the experts (cf. chapter 2.3.2.1).

2.3.5.2 Provision of information

Concerning information for the citizens, the European Policy Centre had produced a small brochure with a few pages of information about the three topics as well as about the EU. This brochure was translated and handed over to the citizens by the national partners, in some cases before and in other countries at the beginning of the event.

The information material contained some incorrect statements. For example, the information document states that nuclear waste with low radioactivity can be “simply buried” and highly radioactive waste will remain up to⁵² / more⁵³ than 20 years - whereas this number should have been 20 000 years which is well recognised among scientists and even the nuclear industry.

This incident may have been a single mistake, however one German expert complained in an interview about the information provided on the number of immigrants. In a short conversation during the national consultation, the false specifications in the brochure were recognized by this expert and assessed as being undue influential on the controversial discussion on the integration of immigrants in Germany.

When looking at the feedback of the national coordinators given by the feedback survey, the quality of this information provided by the main organisers was basically appreciated. However, the quality of information (as presented in Figure 11 in Annex E) received the most restrained positive answers.

The provision of prior information for citizens to prepare for the event was generally insufficient in some countries such as Greece, Romania and Estonia. Correct and up-to-date information should be

⁵² cf. project document: Fakten zu den Themen der Europäischen Bürgerkonferenzen, 2007

⁵³ cf. project document: European Citizens' Consultation. UK. Discussion guide, 2007

available before as well as during the events. A positive practice, used in some countries, was the display of information on panels during the event itself so that participants, who had not been able to read the given information before, could do this at the venue. In Germany, high school students enriched the event through a presentation of their ideas about the future of the EU. The citizens could follow this presentation during the lunch break.

2.3.6 Coordination Performance and Logistics

2.3.6.1 Main coordination

With respect to the amount of efforts, the operational and logistic performance of the coordinating organisation IFOK was excellent. IFOK generally provided clear instructions for the implementation of the process such as a guide for sampling⁵⁴ or for the implementation of the national consultations.⁵⁵ On the one hand, a strong coordination can be a burden for national coordinators, who have to implement all guidelines given to them. On the other hand, the ECC-Project with its centralized coordination performed much better than for instance the EPC-Project that followed a bottom-up-approach regarding the coordination.⁵⁶ This smooth performance was due to significant competence in logistics, organisation and coordination.

Looking at the frame conditions, e.g. the time pressure for conducting the main-process, the instalment of the partner network together with the King Baudouin Foundation was a great accomplishment, even if

⁵⁴ cf. project document: Identifying, Inviting and Selecting Participants for the National Consultations, 2006

⁵⁵ cf. project document: Requirements of National Consultations, 2006

⁵⁶ cf. evaluation document: Sellke, Renn and Cornelisse, 2007

some partner organisations were replaced during the course, for example in Hungary and Finland. Looking at the survey results among all national partner-organisations, the partners were highly satisfied with IFOK at the end of the project.⁵⁷

2.3.6.2 National coordination

According to observations and interviews, most national events were well organized. The participants praised the logistics. Some citizens complained about details such as the quality and availability of food. Others complained about the venue of the event, which seemed inappropriate in Italy, France and Romania. Elevated noise levels significantly disturbed the dialogue at the tables in these countries as all groups had to share the same small room. Therefore it is suggested to select locations with enough space to separate the groups during the group sessions.

2.4 Media-Analysis

2.4.1 Intensity

The ECC-Project received a high intensity of external reactions. The 22 sources analysed are only a selection from all press accounts. Except one short notice, all selected media clippings were editorial articles about a half page long. The intensity of media coverage strongly varied from country to country. For instance, the media attention in the UK was considerably lower than in Belgium, where the amount of articles was high and the national consultation even made it on the front page of the newspaper *La Libre Belgique* (26.02.2007). Most reactions came from national media and refer to national consulta-

⁵⁷ cf. Figure 11 in Annex E

tions (cf. Table 6). Additionally, a tendency was detected that national events were covered by national press whereas the events at European level were mostly covered by 'European press' such as EUobserver.com, EurActiv.com.

Event of reference	National press accounts	European press accounts	Total number of press accounts per event
Agenda-Setting Event	2		2
National Consultation	15		15
Synthesis Event	1	2	3
Follow Up Event		1	1
ECC in general		1	1
Total	18	4	22

Table 6: Intensity of media-coverage at national and European level

2.4.2 Direction of Media Coverage

The overall process of the project in general did not attract much attention (cf. Table 6). A number of articles shared a focus on single events and a very similar structure (cf. Table 7). The second most reported topic was the delivery of the recommendations to the respective authorities. The coverage of methodological aspects, however, was rare. The few articles that focussed on the issues discussed by the citizens highlighted controversial issues such as social policy and immigration.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stressing the context of the 'No' to the European Constitution in France and in the Netherlands and stating a gap between European institutions and citizens. 2. Giving a very brief description of the whole ECC-Project with KBF as central agency. 3. Reporting on the citizens' selection mechanism and the total number of citizens participating. 4. Listing the results without commenting them in detail. Their content in terms of advices and positions about the issues is less important in most of these 'typical' media accounts. 5. Announcing the handover of the results to European political institutions.
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Table 7: Core structure of "typical" articles detected by the media analysis

19 out of 22 articles presented citizens' as well as politicians' voices: 8/22 on both actor groups, 5/22 only on the (positive) comments of high level politicians present at national conventions and 6/22 on the citizens, whose personal assessments were directly quoted. Obviously, the presence of high-level politicians such as Prime Ministers and especially of EU Commissioner Margot Wallström attracted the attention of the media. The organisers are rarely quoted and experts are almost not quoted.

2.4.3 Attitude of Media Coverage

Overall, the attitude of external reactions was generally positive: the ECC-Project was evaluated as a unique, path-breaking initiative to bring the EU and its citizens closer together. At the same time, the experimental nature of the project was emphasised.

The results were highlighted as visionary, precise, relevant and interesting and of astonishingly high quality. Only some critical voices stressed superficiality due to the short timing and the outcome orientation of the events. Others praised the outcome as being original and far from being pre-formulated. The results would not be especially comfortable for the European Commission as they demand more changes and actions that had not been undertaken so far. This was considered as an indicator of the independence of the ECC-Consortium from the EC.

The random selection of citizens and the representativeness of the panels were also highlighted. They provided legitimacy and attractiveness to the project. Four voices assessed the debates as free and uninfluenced. The hardest critique refers to the uncertain impact of the ECC-Project on the political arena. The high promises coming from politicians would contrast with the fears that the rhetoric will not match reality. Seven articles criticized that there is no guarantee for concrete follow-up measures in the political sphere. One expert was cited as saying that the ECC-Project can be seen as a success, as it

performed better than a classic opinion poll. However, he did not expect concrete impacts on policies, because there is no formal obligation for politicians to adopt anything.

The citizens' commitment, interest and motivation were highly appreciated. Most citizens who were quoted in the media expressed their feeling that they have been listened to and could express their ideas, what they considered as significant progress towards real participation. The journalists themselves stayed rather neutral about the question if citizens' voices had been heard.⁵⁸ Citizens' capacities to absorb and process all the material were sometimes praised sometimes doubted. For instance, one article stressed the strong consensus orientation of the citizens, others reported about frustrations in cases where citizens were confronted with diverging positions.

2.5 Analysis of Websites

2.5.1 Intensity

Overall, one can state that the ECC-Project has been taken up by internal sources, governmental organisations (GOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In terms of intensity there were more reactions from agencies involved in the ECC-Project (partner organisations, invited politicians) than from external sources. NGOs reacted more frequently and intensely than GOs. Another additional finding is that the label "ECC" was not well chosen because it is a

⁵⁸ Beside one critique regarding considerable facilitator influence on the results during the German national consultation, one argument - based on citizens' quotes - said that the structure was much too "kindergarten-alike", a "TV show format", not serious enough and consequently underestimating citizens' capacities (German and gradual Dutch press).

very common abbreviation and cannot be located with ease on the internet.

2.5.2 Directions of Websites

All five political and governmental entries focused on their own role and activities in the context of the ECC-Project. Most governmental reactions (3/5) listed only the issues discussed by the citizens without further details. One source did not mention them at all. There were no quotes of citizens inserted in these entries. The discussion processes and techniques were not mentioned either.

NGO reactions focused on the content, e.g. the issues discussed during the events and on the different outcomes, advices, positions and reports from all the events. Almost all entries (4/5) quoted citizens' voices and – to a less degree – also politicians, organizers and experts (2/5 for each group). Three NGO entries focused also on the debates and the ECC-Methods. Some sources linked the ECC-Project to similar participatory experiences. GO entries focused primarily on the ECC-Project in general or national consultations. All NGO entries mentioned the national consultations, three reported about the Agenda-Setting Event and two about the Synthesis Event. Planned follow up events were mentioned only by one GO and one NGO source.

2.5.3 Attitude

Overall, the web-sources praised the Pan-European character of the ECC-Project. The GO reactions are all very positive and those of politicians are nearly enthusiastic. The overall assessment of the ECC-Project in general was less enthusiastic but still positive and characterizes the initiative as ambitious and unprecedented, but also as experimental.

GO entries express general appreciation of the results and evaluate the outcome to be very helpful for politicians “to make better decisions”⁵⁹ (Margot Wallström). NGO entries saw the results as giving valuable answers to some of the most pressing problems which cannot be dealt with on the national level alone.

Some voices among the NGOs focused on methods and considered the ECC-Project to be “a model for European citizens’ participation on future topics with an innovative combination of professional facilitation and modern technology”⁶⁰ (European Foundation Centre). Three (3/5) sources praised the sophisticated design, e.g. mixing workshops with plenary sessions or connecting the simultaneously organised national consultations. The random selection of citizens and the representative citizen panels were considered as important by almost all sources. One NGO site expresses doubts if representativeness had really been achieved at the Agenda-Setting Event. One source assessed positively that organizers acted without political bias or favouritism. The discussions have been evaluated as intense and active. One source stressed that the exchange of rather personal statements at the beginning of events developed into to real European debates in the course of the events. Especially one voice was amazed with the capacities of the ‘newly arrived’ European citizens from Bulgaria to embrace an entire European perspective.

GOs promised impact of the ECC-Project on policy making, NGOs and citizens hoped for it but doubted that this will become true. All GO sources stressed that the outcome would be sent to key decision-makers and that the affected politicians would listen attentively and make use of the outcome. Some explicitly stated that decision makers would take up the report and feed it into the EU Council Summit in June 2007, which unfortunately did not happen.

The project has been characterized as the start of a trend. In Germany, several local events already have been initialised and a further big

⁵⁹ cf. http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/wallstrom/index_en.htm

⁶⁰ cf. <http://www.efc.be/content/alert.asp?ContentID=1266>

event is announced for autumn 2007 to continue and further support this process of participation. As to the NGO entries, one source simply informed about the planned delivery of the reports and indicated that European or national follow-up events are planned. One NGO entry identified a gap between hopes and doubts as a problem of accountability: nobody assures that politicians will even listen.

2.6 Evaluation of the ECC-Website

The ECC-Website contains all necessary information on the project's objectives, the process, the partners, and results achieved. The website provides information in different forms, such as direct displayed text or downloadable documents including press releases and press reactions, videos, photos, etc.. There is also information provided about media outreach. The website is well structured, easily comprehensible and presents the events in chronological order.

Unfortunately, the complete website exists only in English. A translation of some parts of the website is offered in German and partly also in Czech, Greek, Slovenian, Swedish, Polish and Portuguese. However, the few translated websites are not easy to find. At least, the homepage with the description of the core process could be translated into more languages. Currently, a non English-speaking person would have difficulties, for instance, to find the national partner or the outcome of the national consultation. There is no "search" function.

In order to maximise outreach of the project, interested citizens and others should be given the opportunity to contribute their opinion. However, the website does not offer any forum or other possibility for interaction, neither for participants nor for other citizens. The website represents therefore rather a top-down offer without possibilities for dialogue.

The internal website called “Partner-Forum” represents an important means for communication and exchange of information, best practices, ideas etc. between the project stakeholders. However, the forum has been mainly used by the coordinating organizers (IFOK and KBF) to transmit information and documents. Sometimes other project partners posted questions or contributions, but the forum was not frequently used for an intensive dialogue on the project, which was criticized clearly by one coordinator in the feedback-survey. In addition, due to the numerous sub-categories, it was sometimes difficult to find the required information.

2.7 Capacity – Building

2.7.1 Results - Satisfaction of the Participants and Persons Involved

2.7.1.1 Participating Citizens

The participating citizens indicated in the different evaluation surveys⁶¹ that they were basically satisfied with the direct outcome of the event they attended, i.e. negative assessments are rarely present. However, in all surveys, the rate of very satisfied participants turned out to be smaller than the percentage of the citizens who gave a restrained positive assessment. For instance, in the survey conducted during the Agenda-Setting Event, 37,4% percent of the participants

⁶¹ The survey-results regarding the Agenda-Setting Event are presented in Figure 3 in Annex B. For information about the survey-results of the national consultations respectively the Synthesis Event please refer to Figure 4 in Annex C and Figure 10 in Annex D.

were very satisfied, 52,8% satisfied.⁶² Obviously, there must be reasons for the decline of ratings when the direct outcome was targeted. During talks at the end of the Synthesis Event as well as during the personal interviews, the citizens confirmed that they were basically satisfied with the outcome, which they considered as the best possible result under the conditions given. However, a number of citizens (2 out of 3) clearly expressed their preference to have more time and information for developing more substantial final statements.

Another important aspect of the evaluation is the perceived relationship between the outcome achieved and the efforts invested for developing this outcome.⁶¹ This variable especially focuses on the subjective efficiency. Overall, the citizens evaluated this relationship positively, e.g. the rates of negative assessments lie mostly under 10%. One detail is worth mentioning: When looking at the assessment of efficiency and the relationship between very satisfied and satisfied participants, the proportion of very satisfied citizens obviously increases along the process from the Agenda-Setting Event to the Synthesis Event. One can assume that the progressing development of results during the process itself was an important factor that contributed to this positive identification effect.

Referring to the rate of very positive assessments, the rate of satisfaction with process-related aspects such as fairness or transparency was

⁶² The results of the evaluation survey indicate a higher satisfaction than the results gathered by a survey of the organisers at the end of the Agenda-Setting Event. Although only 1,7% of the citizens expressed discomfort with the chosen topics, almost half of the participants indicated in the final ballot that they were "neutral" (43,0%) with the selected topics. This survey result corresponds to the finding of the evaluation survey, that some factors decreased satisfaction with the direct outcome. However, the result of the organisers' survey was probably distorted by the polling method. The organizers offered items with three response options that participants who were not completely satisfied had to select the "neutral" option. It is recommended to offer rating items with 5-point-response options.

higher than the rate of satisfaction with the outcomes or the project's results.

2.7.1.2 Coordinators

Nearly all of the 23 national coordinators in the feedback survey expressed a positive view on the results of the entire ECC-Project: 56,5% were satisfied and 39,1% were very satisfied. Therefore, the response pattern matches the citizens' assessments. Like most citizens of the Synthesis Event, the coordinators were strongly convinced that the results were worth the efforts (59,1% gave a very positive answer, 40,9% assessed positively).

2.7.1.3 Perceived Success of the ECC-Project

Overall, the respondents in the interviews evaluated the output of the project as being a success. Yet, there were some minor reservations to this general impression. Of the 35 interviewees in total, one citizen at the Agenda-Setting event deeply criticised the topics and two persons were only moderately satisfied with the results of the Synthesis Event due to uncertain impact and insufficient time. Even those who criticised some elements, such as the non-European nature of the Synthesis Report, were overall satisfied with the results and very grateful to be given the opportunity to express their opinion.

2.7.2 Evaluation of the Synthesis Report as Final Result of the Main Process

The Synthesis Report was formally adopted by citizens from all over Europe. This can be considered a success for the project and constitutes a clear encouragement to involve citizens from different nations in a common participation project. In addition to the other project's

outcomes, this positive feedback is crucial for pointing out the surplus gained by the project to external actors.

However, the citizens signalled a clear preference for further development of the project's outcomes. Additionally, some citizens stressed at the Synthesis Event as well as during interviews that some of the statements in the report offer opportunities for wide-ranging interpretations. This could have been avoided by a deeper elaboration of the Synthesis Report. It would have been advantageous to finalise the main declaration on the basis of a mutual European dialogue among citizens:

- 1) The Synthesis Report⁶³ is a "trans-national" result – located between national and European perspectives, because the report is an aggregated summary of the citizens' statements of the national reports. This means:
 - a. The report presents the statements which were delivered by the different national reports. Concurrent national perspectives were aggregated to core statements. Explicit country references indicate the countries which support one statement so that each national panel was enabled to locate its input in the final document.
 - b. Through the decision of the organisers, the Synthesis Event was not designed to create a synthesis of the national results by a common dialogue and deliberation among the citizens at the European level. Therefore, the citizens were not allowed to identify and develop common perspectives or to explore differences or the extent of differences between the national viewpoints.

It can be suggested to present only the numbers of supporting countries to indicate the importance of a statement (emphasis on European perspective) or to present the national subtleties in an appendix

⁶³ cf. project document: European Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007

with emphasis on the national perspective and the national argumentation line.

- 2) Because of the aggregation method, the document highlights the significance of statements clearly when these statements are shared by an overwhelming majority of countries. This is an obvious benefit. However, when only a minority of countries contributed a statement, the document is too explorative, i.e. it remains unclear about the extent of diversity or communality that is associated with this statement. Since the national perspectives are unrelated to each other (aggregation), it remains open in these cases, how many national panels would have actually supported this particular statement. For example, if one country contributed one special aspect, the viewpoints of 26 other countries and the general importance of the statement remained open. This is a shortcoming. The argument that contributions of single countries increase diversity is true, but contributions of single countries might seem to be “exotic” rather than diverse. A different design of the final event could have solved this problem by adding a session in which statements contributed by a minority of countries are put to the test of the other countries. The question is whether these statements are shared, declined or ignored by the majority of the European citizens. A final dialogue would have demanded more organisational efforts, but the citizens would have been able to add commonly shared new statements. A final dialogue would have provided a clearer indication about the support that each statement is based on.

Additionally, some more pragmatic shortcomings were detected:

- The report is not easy to read and it is also not easy to get an overview on the central statements, which are shared by a majority of citizens. A clearer structure and a simpler indication of countries would have been useful. It can be assumed that a clear presentation of central statements and a handy form of the report would in-

crease the document's impact. A short summary of the most important statements should be developed by the citizens.

- It is suggested to use explicit and consistent labels for indicating how many countries support one statement. Terms such as "some" or "a few" cause irritations since these labels are used inconsistently. They give false impressions regarding the number of countries that support a statement. For instance, once in the report "a few"⁶⁴ is used for six countries and "some"⁶⁵ for three countries, but somewhere else "many"⁶⁶ stands for five countries.

2.7.3 Internal Impact of the Project

Generally, the opportunity to participate in such a project was a very valuable and great experience for most of the citizens of all events. The project absolutely satisfied the expectations of the citizens to provide input to political decision-making and participating in the political sphere. The engagement and the efforts of the organisers can be considered as another source of the citizens' commitment and satisfaction as the organisers succeeded in creating a comfortable and forthcoming atmosphere at the events. Nine interview-partners (citizens and facilitators) emphasised that the project raised an awareness to become more reflective about Europe and its future. Several of them had never before discussed these topics and stated that they were personally gratified by their involvement. The following section provides more detail.

Many citizens appreciated the unique atmosphere of the Agenda-Setting Event, which was an agora for citizens from all over Europe

⁶⁴ cf. project document: European Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 3 – second paragraph

⁶⁵ cf. project document: European Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 3 – third paragraph

⁶⁶ cf. project document: European Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe, 2007: 4 – fourth paragraph, last statement

despite cultural differences or different opinions regarding details. Most of the interviewed citizens (3 out of 5) were sceptical when arriving in Brussels, but left the event very satisfied as they were positively surprised by the fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences with other nations etc.. The participants were grateful for the opportunity to learn about similar and different problems in other countries and that some kind of common group-feeling was created during the two days, at least at their table. The observation results confirm this. Some of the interviewed ASE-participants stated that the event had brought them closer to the EU and the other citizens and increased their knowledge about the EU.

At most national consultations, the connection via the internet to the simultaneously running events fostered the feeling of being a part of a Pan-European process. Depending on the topic, some dialogues also emphasized the European perspective. Especially deliberations on "Europe's role in the world", created a European perspective with arguments along lines such as "We (Europeans) should ..". One British interviewee gave an appropriate description for the overall atmosphere of the national consultations: She stated in an interview that the atmosphere at the national consultation was national rather than European, but that the participants were thinking about Europe and realised that many problems cannot be solved by one country alone.

17 out of 27 national reports include quotes from participants at the national consultations (in total 114 quotes). Almost all of these quotes are very positive, only four are negative. These four negative comments criticise time pressure, that the (Romanian) consultation was like a "deaf dialogue" and doubt the impact of the ECC-Project. However, most citizens highly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the consultations. Some of the citizens stated that attending the national consultation improved their attitude towards the European Union (11) and increased their knowledge about its policies and institutions. While two comments doubted the influence of the project on policy-makers, most others were rather optimistic.

2.7.4 External Impact – Perceptions

2.7.4.1 Expectations regarding the influence of the project

As revealed by the surveys, most participating citizens expect a significant influence of the project, but a considerable proportion of voices remains sceptical.⁶⁷ Many of the interview partners and especially the citizens consider the final influence of the ECC-Project as crucial factor for the assessment of the success. According to an interview with one of the main organisers, one objective of the project had been to provide an input for the German EU-presidency during the first half year of 2007 and to the ongoing debate on the new EU constitutional treaty. According to the respondent, this objective was not met, i.e. the citizens' voices were not used or heard during the negotiation process, which was due to the fact that decisions were finally taken behind closed doors by the European Council. The results of the observation confirmed this finding, since no representative of the EU-Council attended the final press conference after the Synthesis Event in Brussels, whereas representatives from the EU-Parliament and the European Commission, commissioner Wallström in person, were present. According to the interviewed main organiser, the influence of the ECC-Project on European policy is still uncertain and will only be visible in the long run. The interviewed partner expected most potential influence of the citizens' declaration in the area of social policy as the citizens made some innovative suggestions in this area and demanded a transfer of further competence to the EU level.

One employee at the European Commission who works near to Commissioner Wallström explained that the project's results were not a focus at the Commission in the weeks following the Synthesis Event

⁶⁷ The rates of participating citizens, who expect a significant influence of the project are: Agenda-Setting Event=83,0% (N=194), national consultations (overall)=73,8% (N=762) and Synthesis Event=70,4% (N=27).

due to the preparations of the European Summit in June 2007. He expected that the results might be used in the future as one input for European policy-making among others, such as opinion polls. For this interviewed person, the crucial question is whether the results, especially in the field of social policy, are representative of the European population. He suggested to conduct a Eurobarometer survey on the results of the ECC-Project.

Another commentator expressed her impression that politicians feel threatened through participatory exercises such as the ECC-Project and are therefore generally unwilling to implement the citizens' suggestions. The form of the final results was assumed as another reason for the low interest of politicians. The final Synthesis Report was assessed as too long for policy makers. Therefore, an executive summary should be included at the beginning of the document to raise the attractiveness of the final documents for policy makers.

2.7.4.2 Assessments on the influence of the project

In interviews, the organisers signalled that they are very satisfied with the media outreach of the ECC-Project, which was much higher than for other deliberative exercises. Numerous, especially Belgian and Brussels-based journalists reported on the Agenda-Setting Event and almost 50 journalists attended the final press conference at the European Parliament after the Synthesis Event. The journalist responsible for the project's media outreach in Brussels stated that more than 1800 journalists were contacted by email and sometimes by phone during the whole process. In contrast to this, some citizens complained about low media presence, especially after the Synthesis Event (interviews with 3 citizens). They had expected to be contacted by national media after the event, which did not happen.

The observations showed that the media resonance of the national events significantly differed from country to country. For instance in the UK and France, almost no media was present at the national consultation, whereas national TV came to the events in Belgium, Greece,

Estonia and Romania, which sometimes distracted the citizens in the latter case. Some media were also present, for example, in Hungary, Germany and Spain. Usually, if the event took place in the capital of the country it was easier to attract media attention. Furthermore, 10 national consultations were organised during the weekend of the 50th anniversary of the treaty of Rome, i.e. the 24th and 25th of March 2007. Although many countries had chosen exactly this date because of its historical relevance, this selection was counterproductive regarding the media coverage as most journalists specialised in EU-issues, especially from national media, were either at the central celebrations in Rome and Berlin or at least devoted more space in newspapers, radio and TV to this anniversary. As the media analysis also confirmed, this explains the low media presence in UK and Italy. For optimising media coverage, it is therefore better to organise the events at a central location such as the capital and at dates without too much competition from other events.

In many countries, the event was opened by politicians, the mayors or ambassadors from other countries, where the concurrent consultations took place (Estonia), or other national politicians. However, at the end of the event, the delivery of the results to politicians was sometimes either not organised at all, such as in the UK, or less successful, as in France where it was exploited for the election campaign. This was not the case in countries such as Slovenia, Germany and Belgium. The panels in these countries were able to hand over the results to well-known politicians. This reinforces the significance of such participatory events and conveys the impression to the citizens that their voice will be heard. In Slovenia, the document even went symbolically through the hands of all participating citizens. Delivering the final results to politicians actually appeared to be more important than having the event opened by politicians.

Some national coordinators succeeded in inviting high-level politicians to their events what usually raised the visibility of the event for the media (cf. chapter 2.4). Most special guests were members of the European Parliament, followed by ministers or representatives of

national ministries (mostly ministry of foreign affairs, European affairs), members of the national parliament or delegates from the national representation of the European Commission. Small countries were often more successful in inviting many politicians. The following events were attended by the highest numbers of political guests: Slovakia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Malta and Luxemburg. Three EU-Commissioners attended the national event in their country, three other commissioners were involved via video-conference. In addition, six ministers and even two prime ministers attended the national consultations.

3 Conclusion

The European Citizens' Consultations is the largest and most ambitious Pan-European participation project up to date. It involved all the EU countries (27) and included 1800 citizens in the main process, which linked deliberative processes at national as well as European level. How successful was this experimental endeavour? Did the process accomplish its goals and objectives? – These questions are addressed in this final section by referring to the 3 objectives of the project presented in the initial sections of this report.

3.1 Expected Output – Identify Citizens' Ideas and Expectations for Europe's Future

For the first time, a declaration has been created which informs both stakeholders and decision makers about the visions and concerns of EU citizens regarding the future of Europe. After processing and interpreting the data from the evaluation, the evidence was overwhelming that the first objective of the project has been achieved. Overall, the citizens and persons involved expressed their satisfaction with the process, identified themselves with the tasks and objectives of the project and developed a Pan-European understanding of the problems and opportunities for three major topics that they had selected. Therefore, the evaluation considers the main deliberation process and the entire project as a success. Notwithstanding some minor deficits in the provision of information during the processes, the citizens proved to be competent partners and were fully capable of dealing with complex issues.

3.2 Method to Reach the Main Goal –

Development of an Effective Participative Governance Tool

With the development of the final report the project met the main requirements of a fair, efficient, competent and transparent participatory process. The design chosen was assessed to be fair and transparent by most participants. All the events ran smoothly without considerable interruptions and the designs provided a productive atmosphere that generally met the expectations of the participating citizens. Some citizens expressed openly that they were surprised to be involved in a process where their contributions were seriously considered.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of participants articulated their preference for a deeper elaboration of the different outcomes. A significant rate of participants expressed positive, but not very positive assessments of aspects such as fairness, transparency or satisfaction with outcomes. The evaluation team noticed some basic shortcomings:

1. Although time pressure can be seen as an aspect leading to improved performance (Eustress), the narrow time framing was a major constraining factor for the whole project. Time constraints were detected throughout all processes, from the basic designing stage via all implementation activities to the dialogue-conditions of the national consultations as well as the Pan-European events.
2. Due to these time-constraints, the organisers decided to focus on procedural aspects and the progressing of the exercise on the expense of content management (cf. a.). It also caused the problem that deliberative features sometimes received only reduced attention (cf. b.), although deliberation was claimed as important by the organisers. Additionally, the basic preferences of the organisers reduced the involvement of citizens in important procedural aspects of the undertaking (cf. c.).

- a. The organisers narrowed the focus of – at least – one topic, which was not acceptable with regard to the sovereignty of the citizens to set the agenda of the deliberation topics.
- b. The final event did not foresee an active dialogue among citizens on the visions which were developed during the national consultations and synthesised in the Synthesis Report. The citizens reviewed the Synthesis Report, which was drafted by the organisers. Generally, this final report is a declaration based on an aggregation of the national perspectives so that the statements in the report are positioned somewhere between the European and the national level. An active dialogue among the citizens could have been arranged to synthesize the country-specific recommendations to a Pan-European synthesis – a commonly generated European declaration. In addition, a complete assessment of the national statements by all national representatives would have highlighted the basic significance of all statements. Notwithstanding the positive fact that the Synthesis Report includes statements that had been presented and approved by a majority of nations, it also contains statements that were contributed by only one country. Since the other countries were not asked to comment on statements given by one national panel or another, it remains unclear if a statement given by a minority of countries in the final document actually reflects the consensus of many countries or represents just an isolated view by a single national panel. However, arranging an active dialogue among citizens at the Synthesis Event would have required significantly more participants, hence more time and significantly more financial resources to prepare the event. These resources were obviously not available.
- c. Overall, the involvement of the citizens in the writing process was low, i.e. the organisers dominated the finalisation of the pre- and final results. This was especially the case

during the Synthesis Event. Additionally, the events focused on prioritisation and legitimisation of the outcome. The citizens should receive more power regarding the writing process, which could be assumed as an incentive for their procedural commitment, their acceptance and satisfaction with the results.

3. The number of citizens chosen for validating the national visions in the final Synthesis Event should have been larger. Having only one citizen per country places some doubts on the overall accomplishments in terms of legitimisation. There are too many uncertainties related to the subjective assessments of one person, and there is also the question of competence in judging all three topics during the Synthesis Event.

Although some recommendations for improvement were suggested in this evaluation, the process met the core objective to constitute a theoretically sound and feasible design for citizen deliberation on a grand level.

3.3 Basic Objective – Reconnect Citizens to the Development of the European Union

Most participants, in particular the citizens, were deeply affected by their participation in the project. The exercise raised an awareness of Europe and its future. There was a congruence between the intentions of the citizens and the objectives of the project to increase participation of citizens in the political sphere and also to discuss the future of Europe from the view of the affected population. It can be assumed that the citizens were already connected with Europe, but they had no channels for contributing their preferences to the governance level. The project and the organisers opened a door for European citizens.

The long term, overall impact of the ECC-Project is still open. This mainly depends on the “receiving organisations”, especially at the European level of governance. Most participating citizens expect significant repercussions of their input. The organisers invested and continue to invest major efforts in communicating the results of the project to policy makers. This has led to considerable media coverage. Reactions of organisations (GO and NGO) were located on the internet and continue to raise awareness for the project. Early responses by policy makers suggest that they are willing to use the results, but external observers such as many media commentators expressed doubts, that the promises will match reality. As the main-organisers stated, the record on direct political impact is still in the air. The first opportunity, to influence the European Summit in June 2007 did not come true.

Bearing witness to the logistical skills and organisational performance by the main organisers – the King Baudouin Foundation and IFOK – the project was completed within a very short time frame and involved a very high number of actors. This included citizens, who directly participated in the deliberation process, and additionally a large number of organisations and their representatives. Networks of national and European partner and funding organisations were established to implement this ambitious endeavour. These networks are significant resources also for long-term dissemination activities. As experienced in the previous ECD-Project, the King Baudouin Foundation has the esprit and the resources necessary for a successful dissemination process. Therefore, the project definitely contributed to the achievement of the third objective.

In essence, the evaluation of the European Citizens' Consultations confirmed that the main objectives of the project had been successfully accomplished. Furthermore, the project demonstrated the feasibility of organising citizen participation on a complex issue also at the European level and provided sufficient evidence that such a process can produce reliable, substantial and instructive results. Furthermore, the participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with their role and function in the process. They also stated that their interest in EU-policies did increase. External stakeholders have praised the process and its outcomes as well, although it is much too early to expect any policy changes or implementations of the recommendations. The methodological and organizational experiences made within this process will certainly foster and encourage the further development of a European culture of participation. Furthermore, the resources spent on this first project that connected all countries of the enlarged EU had been efficiently used: more than 1800 European citizens were involved in this transformation process and an innovative route of strengthening Pan-European identity and legitimacy has been successfully taken.

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Annex A - Age-distribution of the national consultations

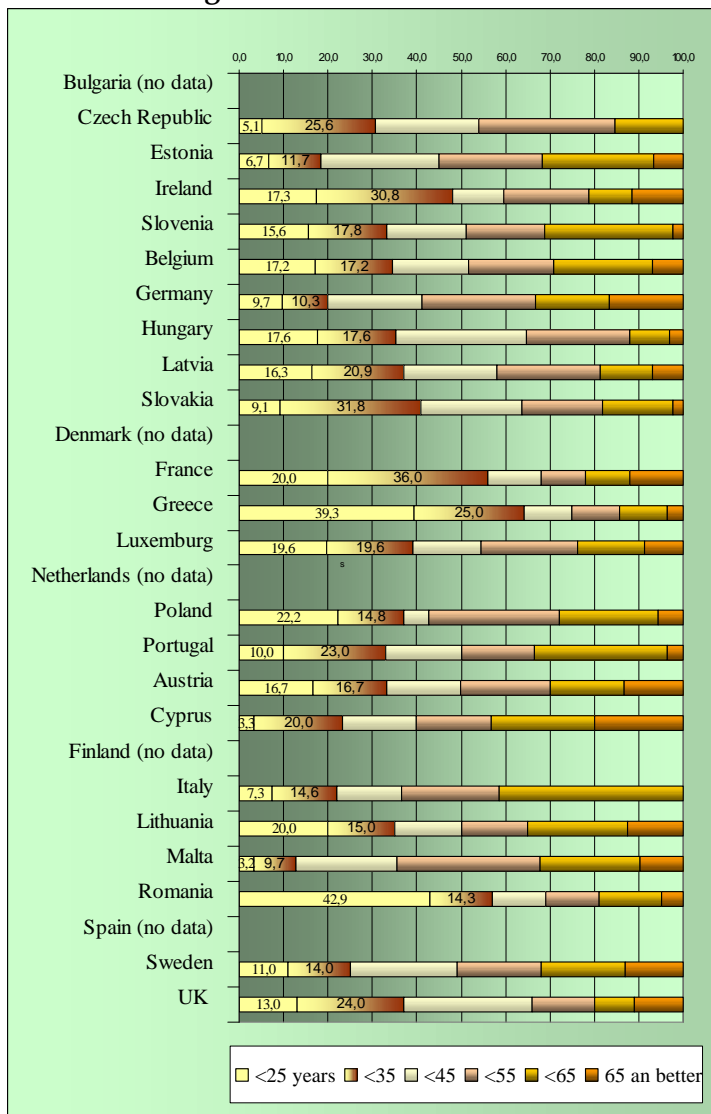


Figure 2: Age-distribution of the national consultation events based on available data presented in the national reports

Annex B – Results of the Evaluation Survey (Agenda-Setting Event)

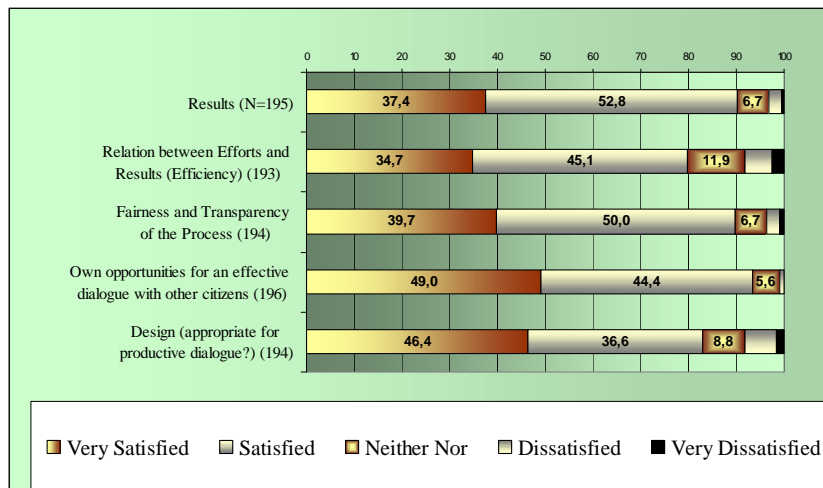


Figure 3: Citizens' assessments of the Agenda Setting Event regarding five **core aspects**¹

¹ Because of heavy constraints regarding time given for conducting the survey, translation costs and other reasons, transparency and fairness were measured together in one question of the questionnaire. For a better overview, the texts and the answer-options of the items were shortened in the figure. Some items were recoded so that high affirmation on the various items always confirms a very positive assessment of the survey answers. This also applies for the figures in the following sections.

Annex C – Results of the Evaluation Survey (national consultations)

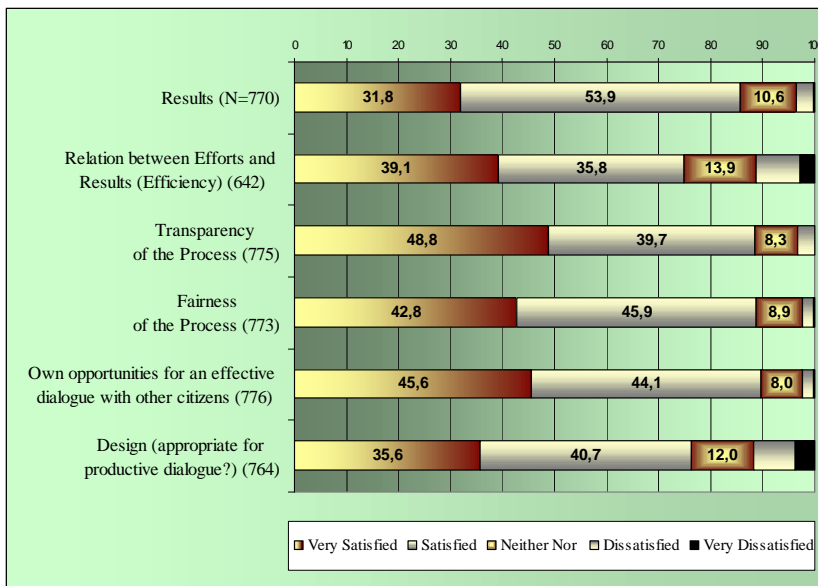


Figure 4: Citizens’ assessments regarding six **core aspects** presented together for all 12 national consultations of the evaluation survey

Aspect	Belgium	UK	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Slovenia	Spain	Romania	Overall
Time problems	21,2	8,6	13,5	16,0	52,3	26,1	25,0	6,3	17,5	13,3	25,3	14,6	21,2
Performance of facilitators	3,8	1,4	1,9	4,0	2,3	2,8			2,5		1,1	2,1	2,2
Uncomfortable atmosphere	12,1	7,1	1,9		2,3	2,8	3,6			2,2	16,5	10,4	6,4
Inappropriate setting	3,0				6,8	2,8	3,6		2,5		2,2		2,2
Insufficient knowledge	6,1	8,6	9,6	4,0	9,1	6,3	10,7	3,1	2,5	2,2	4,4	14,6	6,6
Insufficient information	2,3				4,5	2,3	10,7					6,3	1,9
Complexity of process	3,0	2,9	1,9	4,0	2,3	4,5	3,6	3,1	7,5	4,4	3,3	2,1	3,6
Process was too structured	1,5	5,7	7,7		6,8	3,4	3,6			2,2	7,7	2,1	3,7
Other problem aspect	9,8	8,6	3,8	4,0	6,8	4,5	10,7	9,4	7,5	8,9	2,2	6,3	6,5
Valid N	132	70	52	25	44	176	28	32	40	45	91	48	783

Table 8: Problems perceived by the participating citizens of the various national consultations as hindering an effective communication during the events, rates indicate affirmative answers and are separated by citizens per country

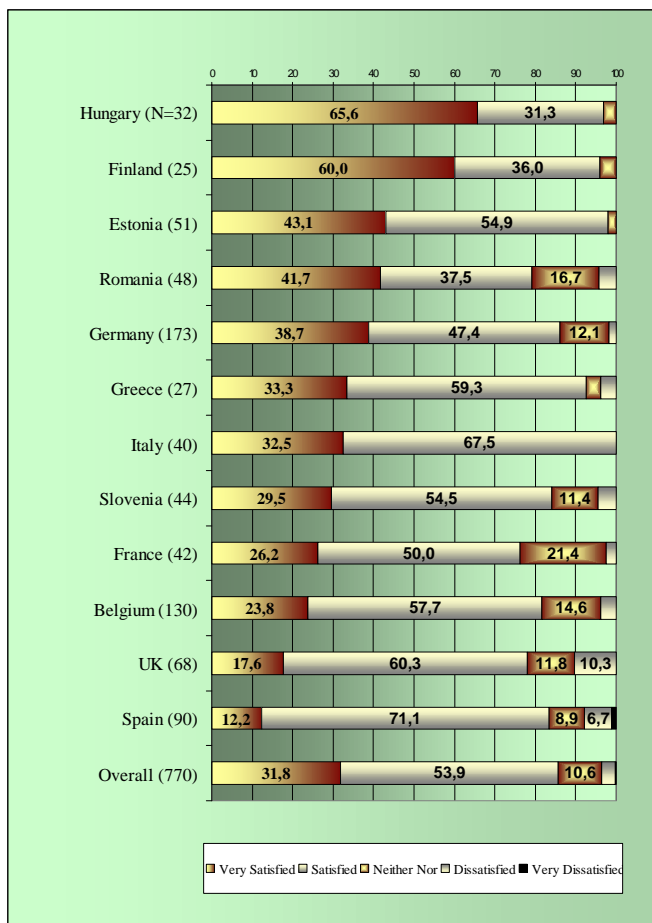


Figure 5: Citizens’ assessments regarding the results of the national consultation they attended, rates are separated by citizens’ assessments per country and are sorted by per-cent-rates that indicate highest satisfaction with the results

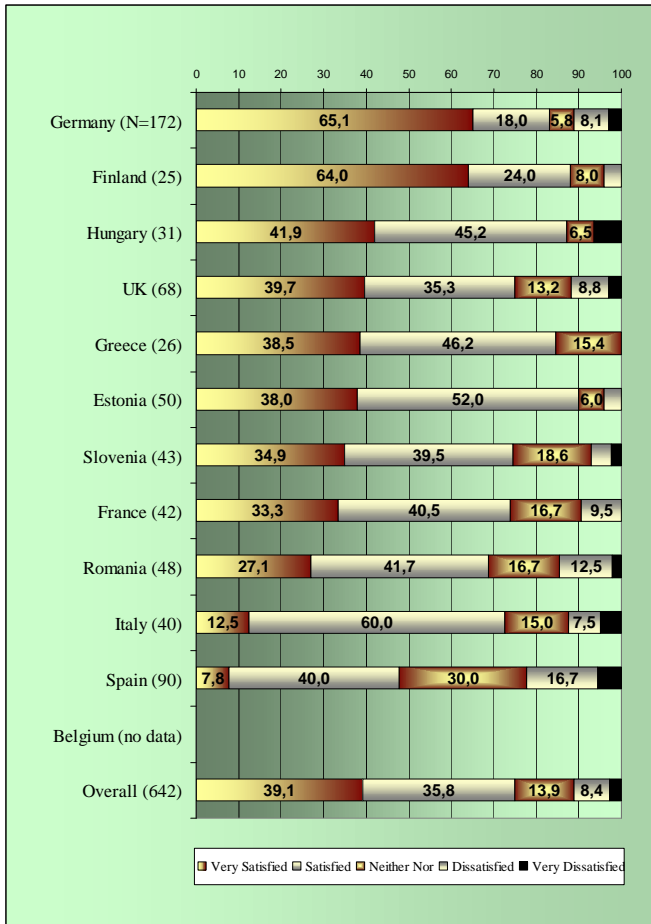


Figure 6: Citizens' assessments of the national consultation they attended regarding the relationship between outcome achieved and efforts invested (**efficiency**), rates are separated by citizens' assessments per country and are sorted by percent-rates that indicate highest satisfaction with the results

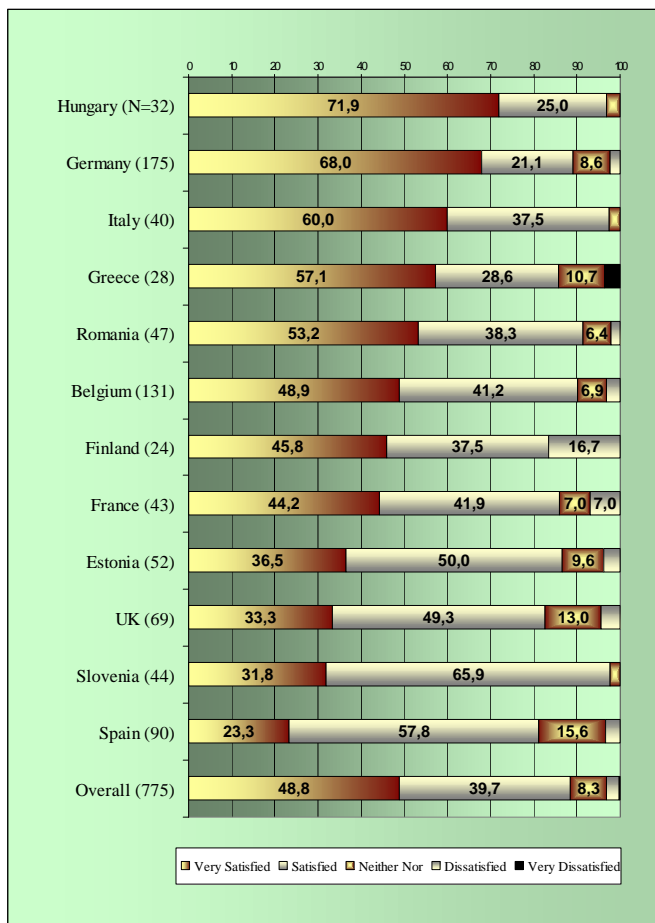


Figure 7: Citizens’ assessments on the **transparency** of the national consultation they attended, rates are separated by citizens’ assessments per country and are sorted by percent-rates that indicate highest satisfaction with the results

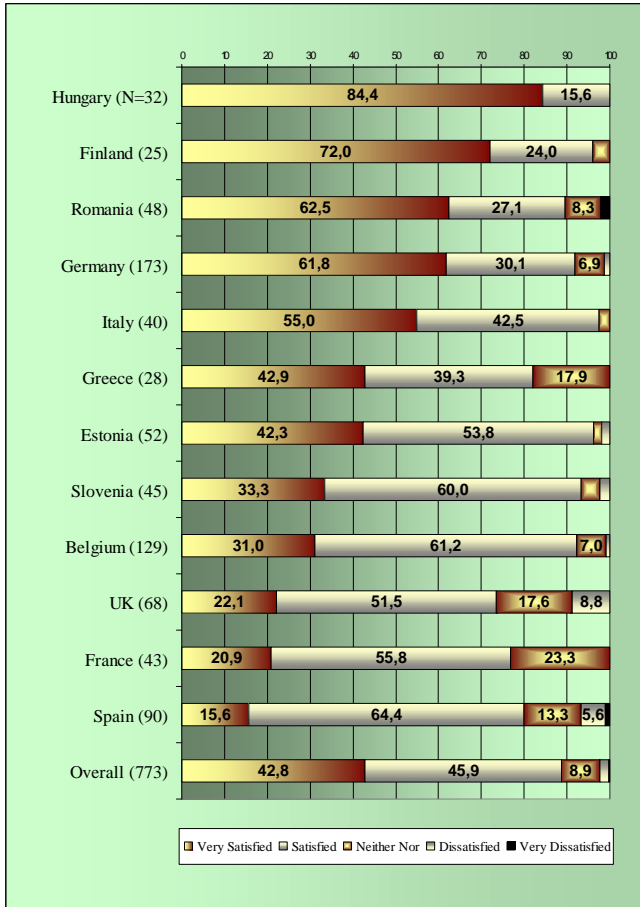


Figure 8: Citizens' assessments on the **fairness** of the national consultation they attended, rates are separated by citizens' assessments per country and are sorted by percent-rates that indicate highest satisfaction with the results

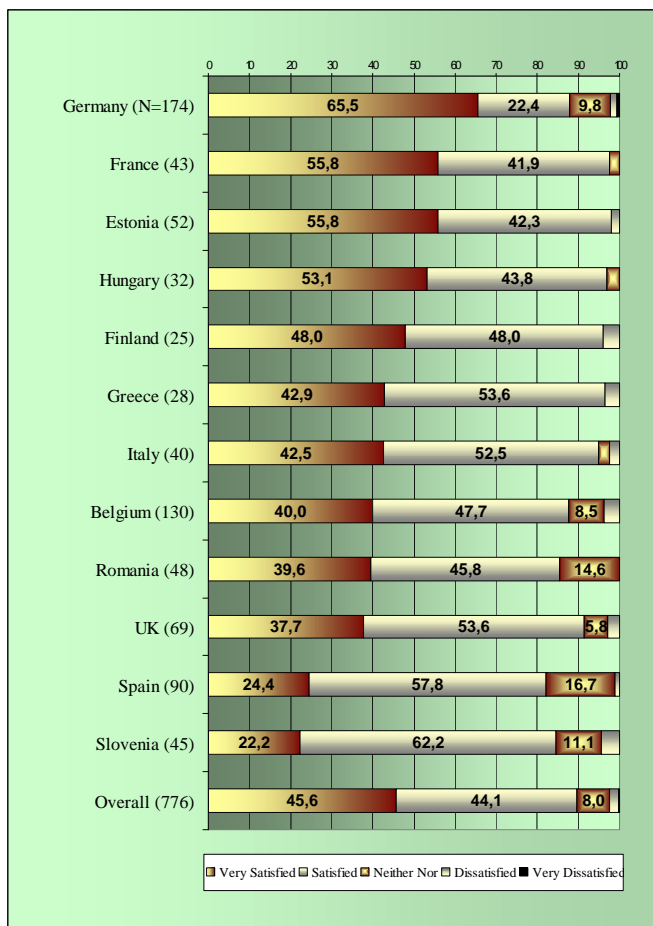


Figure 9: Citizens’ assessments of the national consultation they attended regarding their **opportunities to communicate effectively** and with ease, rates are separated by citizens’ assessments per country and are sorted by percent-rates that indicate highest satisfaction with the results

Annex D – Results of the Evaluation Survey (Synthesis Event)

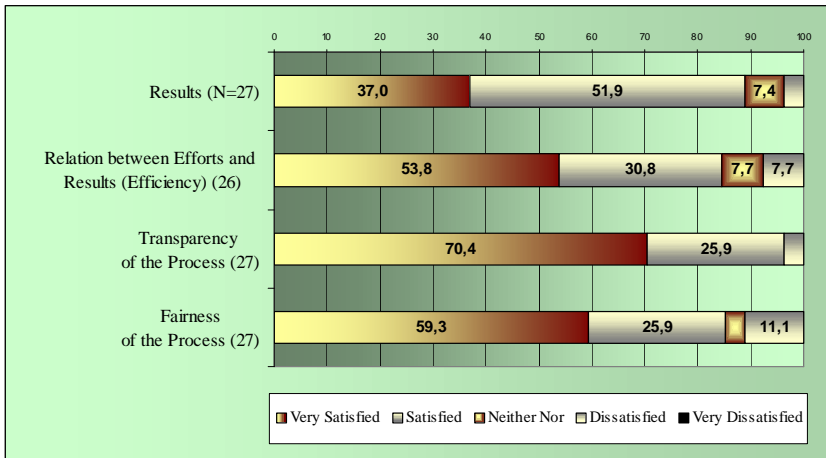


Figure 10: Citizens' assessments of the Synthesis Event regarding four core aspects²

² The core aspects referring on the quality of dialogue were left out in this overview because the design didn't focus on communicational interaction among the participants during development of the outcome.

Annex E – Results of the Feedback-Survey (national coordinators)

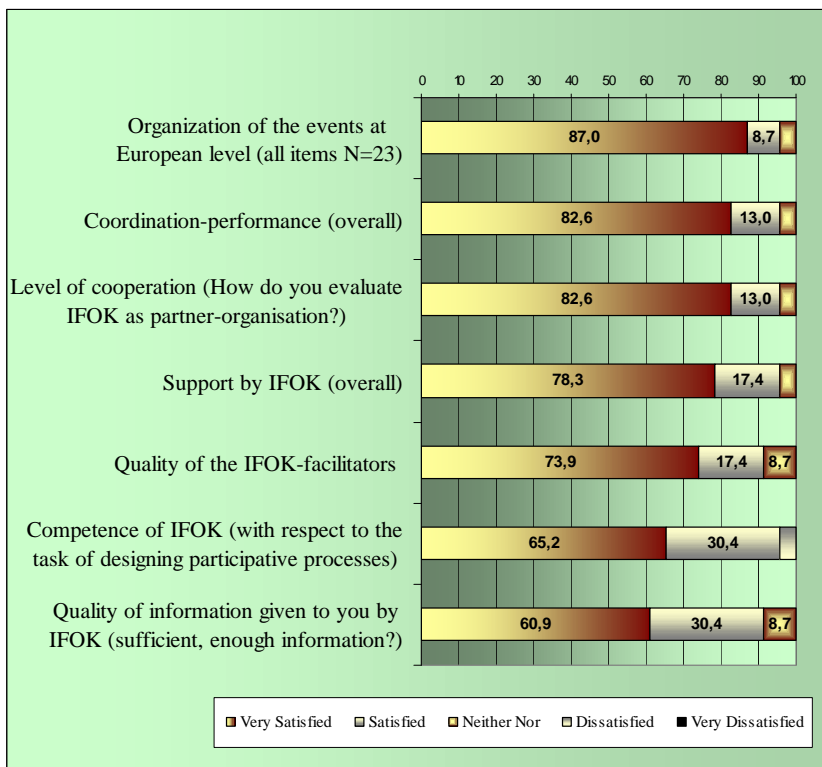


Figure 11: Assessment of IFOK's performance by the national partner-organizations in the Partner Survey conducted after the completion of the main process

Annex F

European Citizens' Consultations Project

Interim Report *[December 29, 2006]*

**Rüdiger Goldschmidt, Ortwin Renn and
Sonja Köppel**

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1 Methods and Procedures

The evaluation team used two methods to assess the Agenda-Setting Event: observation and interviews. Additionally a survey of the participating citizens was conducted.

1.1 Observation

Regarding the observation, three observers attended the event, several team members also participated in the preparatory session on Friday and in the partners' meeting on Monday. The analysis included internal material from the event and external documents.

The three observers who attended the Agenda-Setting Event jointly recorded the interactions that took place during the plenary sessions and the European Conference, while each observer focused on a number of bilingual tables during the table dialogues. Basically, the observers were instructed to document the dynamics of all interactions and to report their impressions with respect to all relevant activities, including those that were not directly located in their observation field.

The observers used a pre-structured observation tool for the documentation. Each observer used an evaluation sheet covering 15 minutes of observation time. The tool included global indicators as well as specific variables related to the process. Every indicator contained several sub-dimensions, which were listed on the observation sheet. The main indicators were: Atmosphere (general conditions of the discussion), Interaction (characterised the style of communication and interaction of the citizens), Discussion (documented how the citizens participated in the discussion), Roles (referred to an aggregate of sub-dimensions focusing on special functions of individual

actors or small groups), Opinion (was orientated to all content-related aspects of the discussion), Language (framed questions such as which types of language were used as well as problems of articulation), Structure (documented “external” influences on the observed process).

The dimensions of the pre-structured tools were explained in depth by background information detailing the purpose and the structure of each dimension. In addition to using the pre-structured tools, the observers took individual notes. The Agenda-Setting Event was also documented by digital recording.

1.2 Interviews

The evaluation team interviewed key actors to receive their impressions and assessments concerning the intentions, expectation and perceptions of the participants. Altogether, twelve interviews constituted the base for the analysis. In addition to two lead facilitators, one person responsible for the content management and organisation, three table facilitators (mostly members of IFOK) and one national coordinator as well as five citizens were interviewed. A semi-structured interview-guideline led through the conversation. All interviews were conducted via telephone and were recorded digitally. The interviews of the citizens consisted of ten questions and focused, for instance, on judgements regarding the results of the Agenda-Setting Event or the influence of the entire ECC-project (short-interviews). The interview-guideline for the facilitators and organisers consisted of twenty open questions and several sub-questions. In addition to the items of the short interviews, the facilitators and organisers were requested to give detailed assessments regarding the methodological design and its implementation (main interviews).

The citizens often expressed criticism only when they were probed to give a detailed account of their experiences. Additionally, they be-

came more communicative and outspoken in the course of the conversation, so that some aspects were mentioned not until the end of the interview when they were asked for additional comments. These experiences underline the appropriateness of qualitative instruments.

2 Results of the Observation

2.1 Agenda-Setting: The Process of Topic Selection

The major objective of the Agenda-Setting Event was the selection of three topics for the national discussions. This aim was clearly achieved: the three topics for the future national events were elected with a relative majority of votes. Although only 1.7% expressed discomfort with the chosen topics during the reflection session on Sunday, almost half of the participants indicated in the final ballot that they were “neutral” (43.0%) with the selected topics.¹ When further instigated, a number of citizens were surprised that “Environment and Energy” was chosen as the most important topic for the EU whereas subjects such as “Economy” and “Jobs” or “Education and Study” were not among the three final topics. Margot Wallström’s speech focusing on environment or more specifically energy and climate change was highlighted by several respondents as an important impact factor on the agenda-setting process. The number of citizens’ contributions on these topics delivered from the table discussions to the editorial team before and immediately after the speech is one indicator for this influence. In the pre-event survey only 16 contributions out of 333 (4.8 %) dealt with the topic environment. In the first time segment of the process before the lunch break, i.e. before Margot Wallström’s speech, 17 citizens’ contributions focused on energy or environment. This was only 3% of all contributions and therefore a much smaller share than, for example, those contributions that focused on education or economy. After the commissioner’s speech 20 contributions focused on energy or climate change and 17

¹ cf. Final Report of the Agenda-Setting Event, 2006, p.21

on environment, i.e. 37 in total representing 13% of all contributions. Since no other major external factors occurred during the lunch break, Margot Wallström's emotional speech on climate change can be considered as exerting a strong influence on the final topic selection. Basically, the attendance of Margot Wallström was an important symbolical asset for the process and fostered the commitment of the citizens, yet it also directed the process to the selection of environmental topics.

Other possible reasons for the selection of the final topics might have been the origin of the participants or the fact that the three selected topics were combined topics from the previous topic list. Combining topics is not generally problematic, but it supports combined subjects instead of not combined topics such as "Economy" and "Jobs". The citizens agreed to all proposed combinations of topics.

2.2 Selection of Citizens for the Agenda-Setting Event

The selection process (sampling) of participants for the Agenda-Setting Event was problematic since the participants of most countries were all selected from the capital and or from one region, probably for saving travel expenses. For instance, the German participants came all from Cologne (cf. list of participants).

Actually, the final report of the Agenda-Setting Event mentioned this practice frankly, but the organisers claimed during the event that the sampling had been based on random selection which created certain expectations. A number of participants, national partners and observers were unhappy with this mismatch between the organisers claim and their experiences.

Such a regional selection distorts the representativeness and narrows down the diversity among the participants. For instance, urban populations are usually more in favour of EU-integration than rural popu-

lations.² The dominance of urban representatives might be a reason for the overall positive attitude of most participants towards the EU at the beginning of the Agenda-Setting Event. In the case of one country, according to the statement of one national coordinator, some of the participants seemed to have known each other before the Agenda-Setting Event since many of them had been participating in several market research panels. Such coincidences raise concerns about further biases during the selection procedure. Furthermore, minorities such as immigrants or racial groups were underrepresented.

From a methodological point of view, it is actually questionable whether the Agenda-Setting Event requires a strong random selection of citizens and whether the requirement of representativeness should strongly be pursued. But the organisers should not leave the impression as if a random selection process had been employed in the recruitment process. In addition, even if a true representation of European populations is not demanded, one would have liked more diversity. This should be seen as a shortcoming of the selection procedure though none that would compromise the results of the process.

2.3 Composition of Bilingual Tables, Basic Setting and Design

The design of bilingual tables was basically effective, but a few participants criticised the unbalanced proportion of nationalities at their tables. Sometimes, one nationality was heavily over-represented. For example, at one table there were 6 Cypriots, but only 3 nationals of the UK. At table 2, 6 Greeks discussed with 3 Danes. Due to requirements of language interpretation it is understandable that completely mixed national tables could not be constituted.

² cf. European Commission 2006. Eurobarometer 64 (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.pdf)

The interaction between bilingual table discussions and the European Conference at the central table was generally effective and successful. The citizens enjoyed the changes between the different discussion styles. The dialogue at the bilingual tables appeared more interactive and fluent than the discussions at the European Conference. The market place was less frequently used for interactions and dialogue regarding the choice of topics.

One elegant feature of the process was the initial presentation of an agenda of topics, as suggested by the citizens in the pre-event survey. This element saved time and facilitated the dialogue because the process began with a common result, which constituted a first base for agreement. A number of citizens actually mentioned at the beginning of the process that they had no additions to the list, which indicated their basic agreement with the topics.

2.4 Time Constraints

The time-management and the design of the Agenda-Setting Event did not challenge the physical constitution of the participants as intensely as during the conventions of the ECD-project.³ The design included sufficient breaks between the working phases. The citizens were set in an active role during most of the time-segments and they had the possibility to contribute in different group-forms and types of activities, which obviously fostered their commitment. The design generally created adequate conditions for a prolific dialogue and a smooth process.

Although most table sessions were longer than at the conventions in the ECD-project, some tables were still unable to complete their dis-

³ The acronym ECD stands for "European Citizens' Deliberation", which is the description of the basic method of the Meeting of Minds-Project. Meeting of Minds is an initiative of a partner consortium led by the King Baudouin Foundation (cf. <http://www.meetingmindseurope.org>).

cussions during the Agenda-Setting Event. The results in the citizens' survey support this finding. However, the experiences differed considerably from table to table and from session to session. It seems that one important factor for the successful termination of a dialogue was the technique of translation: tables with consecutive translation had more time problems than those with simultaneous translation.

2.5 Preparation of the Facilitators

In some cases, due to lack of knowledge and preparation several table and lead facilitators caused irritations and misunderstandings, created ambiguity and lacked clarity during the process. For example, some citizens were not certain about the procedure of how to vote during the preliminary ballot on topics with stickers on Saturday afternoon. A few facilitators did not provide sufficient and timely information on the selection of representatives for the European Conference. Some facilitators did not always follow the time schedule and discussed, for example, certain topics at their table before they were supposed to do so. Such mistakes and misunderstandings caused frustration at a few tables.

To avoid these problems the facilitators should be informed earlier about the structure of the process giving them more possibilities for preparation. The preparatory session one day before the Agenda-Setting Event was obviously not enough to deal with all the necessary questions. Additionally, procedural changes during the event itself caused irregularities. Periodical and short facilitator meetings during the event could foster the correct implementation of every process step and help all facilitators to address open questions before they cause problems.

2.6 Facilitation at the Bilingual Tables

Generally, the facilitators succeeded in sustaining a constructive and fair dialogue at the tables. Although the overall process ran smoothly, the obtained results and the subjective satisfaction of the individual participants strongly depended on the management of the discussion at the tables and therefore on the performance of the table facilitator.

It served in general the process that facilitators were given the freedom to shape “their” dialogue as they felt fit. However, the methodological decision to give more freedom to the facilitators resulted in differences between the outcomes of each table. The qualities and skills of the facilitators greatly varied so that some tables were smoothly guided through the process whereas other tables were led in many directions without clear leadership. The facilitators differed in their:

- ability to lead and guide the dialogue,
- ability to synthesise the results,
- knowledge and experience as well as
- understanding of their role.

Most facilitators actively integrated all participants in the table discussion. Occasionally citizens were neglected or even ignored. The **different involvement of the citizens** into the dialogue was probably due to individual, but also national subtleties. For instance, one Finn called it typical for her nationality to be more reserved when discussing topics with unfamiliar individuals. The dialogues at Table 16 set a good example for a constructive and friendly atmosphere which helped even the reserved citizens to become more involved into the dialogue. This task was not always properly done at the other tables. Generally, the participants from southern nations seemed to feel more comfortable to contribute to the discussion than participants from other countries.

Some participants complained about **insufficient structuring** of the table discussion by the facilitator. Indeed, the observers found that the facilitators' style of leadership differed significantly. Some of the facilitators guided their table participants through the dialogue and used, for instance, flipcharts for visualisation. Other facilitators were quite busy with typing the suggestions and contributions of the citizens into the data sheets on the laptop which took all their attention so that they hardly governed the interaction at all. In this case, their leadership was reduced to suggesting subjects for discussion and requesting more explanations when they had difficulties to understand the citizens' contributions. In these situations, other persons such as the interpreters filled the void and acted as facilitators for structuring the dialogue.

Some interpreters memorised a large segment of a participant's speech and translated this segment completely to the other members of the table (consecutive translation). This led to frequent interruptions of the flow of speech and impeded the dynamic of the dialogue.

At some tables, for instance at table 16, the citizens established an effective form of dialogue and managed the process by themselves. Other discussion-rounds had problems to sustain a dialogue at all as several participants occupied a dominant role by speaking over long periods of time about peripheral issues without interruption by the facilitator.

Some **facilitators had difficulties to synthesise** the results of the discussion especially when the main language at the table was not English and the facilitator therefore had to translate all contributions before typing them into the laptop. At some tables, facilitators took notes after each participant had finished which created artificial breaks in which the dialogue ended abruptly. At other tables, the facilitators typed while the citizens were speaking. This "instant-typing", however, reduced the quality of the notes and led to partly incorrect reproduction of the participants' views.

Therefore it is recommended that the facilitators should guide and govern the process without being burdened to take notes. The typing should be done by an additional person (“rapporteur”), who is responsible for taking notes, at least at those tables where the language of discussion is not the language needed by the editorial team, In addition, it is advisable that rapporteurs or facilitators read out loudly what they have written in order to ensure a correct interpretation of the table results.

In general, all facilitators should be carefully chosen taking into consideration their prior experience, competence and language skills etc.. For instance, some participants expected the table facilitators to be familiar with both table languages, not only one. Some facilitators also had difficulties in translating the citizens’ contributions into English.

2.7 Writing Process, Content Management and Transparency

Synthesising the citizens’ verbal contributions into a common statement turned out to be problematic for several reasons. Firstly, the synthesis at the tables and by the editorial team had to proceed very quickly to produce an output in time. Such a rapid synthesis needs to be interpreted with caution taking into account that the results from 26 tables (!) varied a lot due to different styles of presentation and the diversity in note taking among the facilitators.

- There were different ways to structure each discussion point and assigning it to the underlying topics. For instance, when entering text into the “topic” column some facilitators used correctly the topics of the topic list. Others used more detailed sub-headings and others again wrongly typed the entire contribution in the topic section. Sometimes, remarks of citizens

which belonged to different topics were combined in one entry although this was not intended by the participant.

- Some facilitators used only keywords, others typed in more detailed descriptions of the participants' contributions. Some comments were ambiguous. Occasionally, facilitators typed in different languages such as German or French.

This resulted in a high diversity of the tables' output, which constituted a significant challenge for the editorial team. The synthesis process could have been easier if the typing style had been standardised (or at least semi-standardised) in advance. The free lancing atmosphere entailed the risk of even losing important contributions during the synthesis process.

Another challenge was the mere number of entries in the editors' file. The tables sent more than 400 contributions for inclusion in the second list of topics, which served as a foundation for the discussion on Saturday afternoon. These contributions were edited by a single person with assistance of a small synthesis team during the market place/ lunch break. It is questionable that under such constraints all statements could get the attention that they deserved, especially, when every contribution was related to a special meaning and background. In addition, not all statements that had been collected were actually processed and included in the final version. This could be interpreted as the privilege of the editorial team in order to reduce the number of topics to a manageable volume. But this selection process should have been explained to the citizens in advance. The impression was given that all suggestions would be included in the final version, which was not the case regarding some sub-topics.

The message developed at the tables had to pass several "filters" during the synthesis process. The first filter refers to the varying opportunities of the participants to contribute to the table discussion. The second filter was given by potential biases induced through the translation by the interpreters. The third filter was related to the subjective interpretation by the facilitator, who articulated the contributions in the table-notes. The last filtering process took place during

the synthesis by the editorial team. Such a sequence of filters demands an active and elaborate process of recursive validation and confirmation by the citizens. This is even more important as the whole participatory process has been inspired by the goal of procedural fairness.

The chosen design was a pragmatic and effective solution to the challenge of summarizing 200 citizens' contributions, but the synthesis process and the entire writing process in general were not transparent enough to the participants.

While the problems at the tables could have been solved by more feedback and interaction between facilitators and participants, there was no possibility for the citizens to monitor what happened during the synthesis process by the editorial team and the organisers did not inform the citizens about the details of the synthesis process

Most of the citizens did not realise this practice of how the synthesis was performed since most of them deeply trusted the organisers. During the breaks some citizens mentioned that they were not satisfied with the second topic list criticising that their comments and additions had been ignored, but they did not openly question the organisers' procedures.

On the basis of other evaluations,⁴ it can be assumed that the participants would have voiced an open critique or protest, if they had judged the quality of the results as inadequate. However, most of the participants were satisfied with the outcomes of the processes and hence were much more tolerant about process deficiencies that they interpreted as minor disturbances in comparison with the perceived high quality of the final output.

It is essential to structure the writing process in a way that the need for creative input and the necessity for concise and limited number of suggestions can both be served. It is certainly not easy to encourage a

⁴ cf. Goldschmidt and Renn, 2006

free floating brainstorming of ideas and associations and, at the same time, pursue the ultimate goal of producing a structured list of core topics. Maybe more time is required to develop the synthesis step by step.

Limiting the output of every table to a certain number of elaborated statements per table could have resolved the problem of abundance of suggestions. There would have been more time to explore the true intention of the citizens' statements. The citizens would also have gained more insight when focussing on the most important topics without getting lost in details. Every contribution should be recorded but the table participants should be encouraged from the beginning to prioritise their collection of ideas before transferring their input to the editorial team. Such a design could produce short but clear statements and could save time as well as mental resources. The process would benefit in terms of increased transparency and fairness.

On the more technical side, one suggestion would be to involve English-speaking citizens into the editorial process what should not have negative effects on the efficiency of the process. Lastly, it would be necessary and fair to give more detailed information to the citizens about crucial elements of the processes especially regarding the segments from which the citizens were excluded.

2.8 Visualisation and Communication

When changes were made to the list of topics during the European Conference, only modifications to the main topics were constantly displayed on the screen whereas modifications of the sub-topics were only orally communicated in most instances and not fully visually displayed. The visualisation of the evolutionary process of developing consensus could have been easily improved by displaying constantly the screen of the laptop on which changes were made.

On Saturday afternoon, when the list of topics was constantly changing, the delay of the translation posed a problem for non-English speaking participants at the tables. Unfortunately, participants often waited long times before the listed topics were translated in their national language. This represented a difficulty especially during the discussion phase of the topics and gave an undue advantage to those being fluent in English. Facilitators and translators at some tables were proactive in translating the topics into the respective table languages on the flip chart, but this was not done at all tables.

It is understandable that the translation of topics into all languages takes time. It might have been possible, however, to translate the gradual process of developing the major topics simultaneously into the three major languages (English, French and German) constantly on the screen. Since many Europeans understand either French, German or English, it should be possible to serve those who are unable to understand any of the three languages by providing extra translation at the respective tables by the table members. Additionally, the translations into the three common languages could be given as handouts to the tables for serving as foundation during the next process segments.

One elegant feature of the process was the use of several types of voting procedures. In addition to the pad-voting, which requires trust in the technical equipment, the final voting was preceded by a more transparent pre-voting procedure: The citizens had to place stickers on a special area of a voting board. These stickers were counted after the voting session. As there were several boards at a certain distance from the others all the citizens had the opportunity to place their stickers unobserved by the members of their table. This anonymity reduced group pressure and social control during the ballot.

2.9 Interpretation and Technical Equipment

The translation into 19 different languages was a major challenge. The citizens acknowledged and appreciated all the logistical efforts. They repeatedly expressed their gratitude towards the interpreters.

The central interpretation headset-system used during the plenary sessions worked well except for a few occasions. For instance, the German channel was not operational at the beginning of the Sunday morning session. Normally, such problems were solved quickly.

The noise level was sometimes so elevated that the table discussions were significantly disturbed. Additionally, the location itself suffered from a hall-effect. External noises especially from the caterers disturbed the process temporarily, but considerably. The catering should therefore be located apart from the place where the dialogue processes occur. Some facilitators but also interpreters suggested to use a headset-system with mikes all the time at every table, which would solve the problem of the significant background noises.

In contrast to the general audio system, the electric systems for the interpretation at tables with simultaneous translation experienced more serious problems at times. The batteries for the table translation sometimes ran out of power causing time losses, especially on Sunday. It was also confusing for some participants at the beginning to familiarise themselves with two different technical systems.

Tables equipped with simultaneous translation systems had more technical problems, but the advantage was that the dialogue happened more rapidly. At those tables with consecutive translation the participants experienced the disadvantage of waiting for the interpretation, but the translation service was always available.

In comparison, both translations systems had their shortcomings and benefits. None of them were without flaws. Solving these problems would probably necessitate a substantial increase in technical re-

sources. But some low cost alternatives could be considered. Several tables, for example, started using English as the operating language what facilitated the communication and interaction among the citizens. Such efforts should probably be supported instead of requesting that each participant should use his native language irrespective of his or her command of English.

3 Results of the Interviews

3.1 Reasons for Participation and Assessment of the Topic

The twelve interviews serving as base for the analysis were conducted with two lead facilitators, one person responsible for the content management and organisation, three table facilitators (mostly members of IFOK) and one national coordinator as well as five citizens. The interviews were conducted from the beginning of November until mid-December.

The reasons that respondents expressed for taking part in the European Citizens' Consultations were primarily interest and curiosity. The European context of the project and the innovative methods for developing the European dialogue were stressed as motivating reasons to participate. The citizens emphasised the opportunity to learn about new topics and to have an influence on European policy. Several citizens expressed that they felt honoured to be selected for representing their country in Brussels.

All respondents described the topic (future of the EU) as well chosen. The causes mentioned most frequently were the recent failure of the referendum on the European Constitution and the accession of new member states to the EU.

3.2 The Major Objectives of the ECC-Project

The facilitators and the national coordinator stated similar objectives when asked about the perceived purpose of the project. They can be summarised in four aspects:

- Development of concrete recommendations for policy makers concerning what Europe's citizens consider as most important topics and subtopics to be set on the European Agenda
- Involvement of citizens into a European dialogue
- Demonstration to the EU policy makers that citizens are interested in shaping policies
- Methodological objective: Development of new methods for organising a participatory dialogue among citizens at the European level.

Asked about their objectives, the interviewed citizens added the following points:

- Identification of concerns and requests of the European citizens
- Development of a common understanding between citizens and policy makers about European problems and their solutions
- Experience of a mutual benefit to the policy makers as well as to the participating citizens. The participants perceived the project as an opportunity for the citizens to learn more about the EU, to become more aware of their European identity and to have an impact on European policy.

3.3 Success of the Agenda-Setting Event and the Project in General

The ECC-project so far was generally assessed as a success by all interviewed actors. The facilitators stressed that the citizens really had the opportunity to shape European policy making by means of a participatory dialogue. One of the national coordinators pointed out that the final success cannot be specified until the project is completed. All interviewees were satisfied with the outcome and the quality of the results of the Agenda-Setting Event. The three selected topics were judged as a good starting point for the upcoming national discussions because of their future relevance. In agreement with several citizens, one table facilitator mentioned the fact that all participating citizens had voiced similar questions and thoughts during the event despite their totally different national backgrounds.

The interviewed citizens were satisfied with the selected topics except for one Dutch person who indicated great disappointment that his topics were not chosen. He also criticised that there were too many topics to select from. In confirmation of the results obtained during the observation, one facilitator found it astonishing that the topic "Jobs" was not selected and that the subject "Labour Market Policy" was no central issue of the dialogue. In addition, one citizen from Greece would have preferred if five topics had been chosen instead of three because so many subjects were equally interesting.

The difficulties with the synthesis of the results that were outlined above in the observation section were confirmed by the statement of a citizen from table 24. She complained that many aspects were inadequately summarised by the facilitator, new phrases were introduced without further discussion, and not much was left of the statements that had been voiced by the participants in the beginning. Due to time constraints, there was no possibility to correct the synthesis.

3.4 The Process of the Agenda-Setting Event

The facilitators assessed the process and the dialogues as being very effective. However, some critical aspects were mentioned with respect to the process and the methodological setting:

- The sampling of citizens was seen as critical by several respondents. The participants were mostly selected from the capital of each nation. The sample was therefore not representative as it was claimed by the organisers. An atypical group of 200 citizens resulted from this selection procedure with a bias towards pro-European views (cf. observation results).
- One national coordinator and one German citizen complained that there were too many German facilitators which countered the impression of a pan-European activity.
- The schedule was perceived as being too tight: there was not enough time to get to know each other in the beginning and also for polishing the final results. At the same time, however, some respondents complained about a tedious and a dragging on process in the middle of the deliberations, for instance, the sessions on Saturday afternoon or the first round at the central table.
- The pad-voting was judged by some as being not very useful and a waste of money, only few ballots had been conducted via pad.
- The market place was regarded as being the least effective and was not accepted neither as method for gaining valid results nor as an instrument for informal gathering. One national coordinator had expected more comments from the market place. It was also counter-productive to organise the market place in parallel with the lunch break. The participants were not encouraged to make use of the market place. The speakers at the

Speakers' Corner lacked an attentive audience and the results of the market place were simply disregarded. The huge effort of presenting the market place in 19 different languages was disproportionate to its benefits (statement by one member of IFOK).

- Despite major efforts to create a European atmosphere, the central table was not as successful as the bilingual tables. A real dialogue among the participating citizens did not develop, it was rather turned into a question-and-answer-exercise with the facilitator. Another criticism was that each contributor had only one or two minutes time to make a statement.

3.5 Transparency, Fairness and Possibilities to Contribute

The facilitators jointly stated that the process (e.g. the editing) was transparent and that the citizens had equal opportunities to express their views on the topics and explore the opinions of the other participants. Those persons, who remained reserved during the discussions at the tables, received another opportunity to express their views in written form through comments at the market place.

The citizens were also satisfied with the overall transparency and fairness of the process. Everybody could express her/his opinion even if the rest of the table did not agree. One citizen was discontent with the process at the central table. She criticised that the established rules had been broken. Everybody said what she/he wanted and she didn't have the opportunity to say anything to represent her table and was angry that the facilitator did not intervene. A national coordinator remarked the great differences concerning the quality of the facilitation.

3.6 Commitment and Competence of the Citizens

The commitment of the citizens and their competence to discuss were described as higher-than-average by facilitators and national coordinators. All participants appeared well prepared. Some of them had invested considerable efforts for participating in the Agenda-Setting Event such as a long journey during the whole night. In spite of the length and intensity of the process, the citizens showed nearly no signs of overstraining, were not bored and continuously demonstrated their interest in the topics discussed, for instance by expressing their desire to be kept informed about the future handling of their recommendations and to have the opportunity to meet the other participants again for discussions in their home countries.

Although most of the citizens shared a positive view of the process and felt well integrated into the exercise, four of the interviewed citizens reported about other participants who did not actively take part in the deliberations and expressed doubts regarding the entire project. According to the same sources, some participants allegedly came to the event for the sole purpose to travel to Brussels for free. Other participants complained about disinterested persons who expressed their views only once or twice when they were personally addressed. One citizen from Finland allegedly did not say a single word at the table during the whole event. As reported by the observation, this may be caused by personal but also national traits - independent of personal interest or involvement.

3.7 Atmosphere

Most facilitators described the general atmosphere of the event as truly European. The participants dealt with each other with respect,

there were no personal hostilities. A lead facilitator observed that the nationalities did not matter much and that national groupings were rare. One of the national coordinators, however, had the exactly opposite impression. He observed that the national groups remained separated, e.g. at lunch and dinner, possibly due to language barriers.

The citizens characterised the atmosphere as unique and overall positive based on the expectation that their involvement would influence and change something in the end. Three citizens expressed their willingness to participate again. This raises the question concerning the design of the overall process, if the organisers should be permitted to invite the citizens of the Agenda-Setting Event again to take part in the National Consultations.

3.8 Performance of IFOK

The staff members of IFOK judged their own performance as being competent and successful. The other facilitators and the national coordinator felt well informed by the IFOK team and praised the excellent organisational skills of the team and appreciated IFOK's strong presence on the podium. Most organisational and technical problems that came up in the beginning of the event were solved before causing any major damage to the process. In spite of the overall positive evaluation, there were some critical points:

- IFOK continuously emphasised the value of participation, but in reality, they retreated to decision-making within their own team. They often excluded other key persons involved in the project (=> participatory philosophy is not consistent).
- IFOK changed the program of the event without providing a clear justification, let alone consulting the table facilitators.
- One table facilitator (not IFOK) criticised that the facilitators did not have contact to people in a leading position for reviewing the process after the event on Saturday.

- IFOK prepared the scenarios for the National Consultations, but did not contact the national coordinators directly, but chose the detour via KBF.
- IFOK facilitators occasionally demonstrated little sensitivity for some procedural aspects of the design although they appeared confident and well structured in their approach. One example is set by the market place.
- Many citizens complained that the party on Saturday evening did not serve the purpose. Several citizens from Poland criticised that it would have been better to invest more money into a less expensive but more effective process for all citizens to get to know each other. The accommodation in an exorbitantly expensive hotel was considered exaggerated.

Four of the interviewed citizens assessed the performance of IFOK as excellent or good. One citizen and one IFOK staff member complained that there was not sufficient food in the evening. One citizen was also bothered by the insufficient command of the English language by the main facilitator, in particular with respect to sentence structure and pronunciation.

3.9 Role-Description and Preparation of Facilitators

The facilitators described their roles as follows:

- Lead facilitators: responsibility for the overall design and for the training concept for table facilitators
- Table facilitators: Empowerment of each citizen at the table to express her/his view and to contribute to the dialogue, to rephrase the citizen statement afterwards in a form that everyone

can understand, slow down or interrupt citizens when they would leave the topic and summarise the statements at the end

All facilitators felt well prepared for their work assignment, which was not totally confirmed by the results of the observation. A member of IFOK stated that there is no ideal preparation for a project like that. Instead, according to her, facilitators have to stay flexible as adjustments and modifications are essential during the facilitation process. One national coordinator felt under-utilised in her role as an observer: She would have preferred to take over the facilitation of a table and to contribute to the drafting of the synthesis report. The ECC-forum was mentioned as a good starting point for getting basic information about a European participatory process and to learn from the experiences made in this project. A national coordinator criticised that this forum is not adequately used by other partners. With regard to the National Consultations she saw it as an advantage that her country takes part in the last turn in March 2007, what will give the opportunity to the national coordinators to learn from the experiences of the previous national events.

3.10 Problems so far and in the future

Notwithstanding the criticism concerning the process and the organisation, two citizens complained about a lack of media coverage about the event. After the event they searched through the national media, but could not find any coverage. One of the interviewed national coordinators acknowledged the request for more media attention but found it rather difficult to attract the media for the national event. A member of the IFOK team and a table facilitator described the generation of comparable results on national levels as a difficult challenge for the future success of the ECC-process. In addition, one weekend was seen as a too short time interval for producing valuable and reflected results. One citizen expressed concerns that some people will come to the National Consultations for the money offered rather than

motivated by personal interest. The participants should be carefully chosen, one could check the interest of the invited people beforehand by having them respond to a questionnaire. The biggest fear of the citizens is that the politicians (the European Council/Commission/Parliament) would not seriously consider the results, that the event would be misused as a PR boost for the EU.

3.11 European Identity

All respondents indicated that the Agenda-Setting Event has definitely contributed to the development of a European identity. Three citizens stated that the event has changed their opinion about the EU. Previously, they were rather inattentive to the EU and had not formed opinions on most European topics. The EU was something abstract for them without any applications to their personal life. At the Agenda-Setting Event, they recognised that Europe's citizens were more similar to each other than they had expected. Two other citizens acknowledged that the European feeling of solidarity was encouraged through the event.

Two table facilitators criticised the process of the National Consultations with respect to the goal of fostering a European identity. They would have preferred multinational consultations even at the bottom level of the process. They feared that the participants of each country will work well on their own national agenda and that it will be difficult to put these pieces of the puzzle together at European level. It would be better to bring three or four nations together during one weekend and then synthesise all the results at the end.

3.12 Influence on European Policy

Three of the interviewed facilitators were convinced that the results of the event will shape European policy and enhance, at least partially, public participation in EU governance. They believed the promise of Margot Wallström that the results will be taken into account by politicians. The citizens were also expressing their hope that the results will have an influence on policy making as they have invested a lot of time, enthusiasm and passion. Two of the interviewed citizens were sceptical, however, and feared that politicians may not be interested in the results and that their voice will not be heard. The results might be (publicly) acknowledged but not implemented. They did perceive an opportunity for impact, which depends on the quality of the National Consultations.

In the end of the interview the respondents were asked if ECC has been organised at the right time. Most of them expressed their opinion that the project should have been undertaken 10 or 15 years ago, but that it is never too late to start such a participatory process. Everybody agreed that these processes should be organised regularly from now on building upon the learning experiences of each round of participation.

4 Findings based on the Citizens' Survey⁵

196 citizens answered the evaluation questionnaire of the Agenda-Setting Event.⁶ The participation of nearly all citizens in the survey and the fact that almost every respondent completed all questions can be seen as an indicator for the true commitment of the citizens.

4.1 Balance-Assessments

A great majority of the respondents (90.2%) was satisfied with the outcomes of the Agenda-Setting Event. Comparing the relationship between results and invested efforts (efficiency), most of the participants (79.8%) assigned the process a positive balance between effort and results.

With respect to the evaluation of the process, the respondents were also positively impressed. 89.7% of the citizens considered the process transparent and fair. A large proportion of the participants (83%) assessed the process design appropriate for the development of a productive dialogue. Nearly all respondents (93.4%) stated that they had been able to communicate effectively and with ease with other citizens. One salient feature of the two previously mentioned questions is that the participants answered to these items more decided than to the previous questions – in fact, the highest rate of answers lays at the most affirmative answer-option (cf. table 1). This decided-

⁵ All variables with negative item-formulation were recoded for the analysis. All items focussing on attitudes were measured by 5-answer rating items.

⁶ 200 citizens (8 per country) were expected for participating in the Agenda-Setting Event.

ness can be considered as another indicator for the strong dynamic of the process and the citizens' satisfaction with the procedural features of the design.

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total number of
I am very satisfied with the outcomes of the Agenda-Setting Event.	37.4	52.8	6.7	2.6	0.5	195
The results achieved in the Agenda-Setting Event were worth the tremendous effort invested in this project. (recoded)	34.7	45.1	11.9	5.7	2.6	193
The process of the Agenda-Setting Event appeared fair and transparent to me.	39.7	50.0	6.7	2.6	1.0	194
I found the process design of the ASE not cumbersome and appropriate for developing a productive dialog. (recoded)	46.4	36.6	8.8	6.7	1.5	194
During the Agenda-Setting Event, I was able to communicate effectively and with ease with the other citizens.	49.0	44.4	5.6	1.0	-	196

Table 1: Balance Assessments of the Agenda-Setting Event

4.2 Differences between Nationality Regarding the Assessment-Variables

The analysis of the five assessment variables mentioned above (cf. table 1) included an exploration of statistical differences regarding external variables such as gender or nationality. For an additional comparison, the nationalities were assigned to 4 categories representing an approximate but handier typology of the participants' origin:

Northern,⁷ Central,⁸ Southern⁹ and Eastern¹⁰ Europe. The analysis included statistical techniques such as cross-tabulation, but also variance-analysis, t-test and cluster-analysis. The statistical processing of the data did not detect any statistically significant differences neither between nations nor between men and women. Looking at table 1, one reason for this homogeneous picture is the overall low variance of the assessment-variables; almost everyone agreed with the positive evaluations. Furthermore, the low number of cases per country makes statistically significant results less likely.

However, some (non-significant) tendencies regarding national differences were detected when taking a closer look at the response patterns by inserting each dependent variable in a cross-tabulation¹¹ with the citizens' country of origin.

For the comparison the majority or at least half of the citizens' individual answers that indicated a peremptorily positive assessment were counted for each country (maximum of 5 ratings) as well as over all countries for each of the 5 dependent variables (maximum of 25 ratings per variable).

Focussing on the five dependent variables, the response-patterns at the level of nationality follow the distributions of the variables based on the individual citizens' answers. 8 countries answered peremptorily positive to the item regarding the satisfaction with the outcome. The items measuring perceived efficiency, perceived fairness and

⁷ Includes Denmark, Finland, Sweden

⁸ Central Europe includes the following countries: Austria, Belgium, UK, Netherlands, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxemburg

⁹ Includes Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain

¹⁰ Includes: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

¹¹ The cross-tabulation can be used for analysing whether the distribution of one variable is dependent from the distribution of another one. So, the base of the analysis are frequencies, which are statistically always computable. Statistical methods for testing of the statistical relevance of the relation could not have been computed because of the low number of cases per nationality.

perceived transparency were positively affirmed by the respondents of 9 countries. The assessment of the design (12 countries) and the item measuring the perceived effectiveness of communication (15 countries) received the highest positive evaluation.

Highly affirmative to all five dependent variables were the citizens from Austria, Belgium and Germany. Most affirmative ratings were detected among participants from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia. The citizens from other countries gave more differentiated responses. The Dutch, the Italians but also the citizens from Poland answered slightly more sceptical than the members of the other countries regarding all five variables.

4.3 Indicated Problems of the Dialogue

The citizens also had the possibility to indicate problems that might lead to the obstruction of an effective dialogue. Although an overwhelming majority of the citizens confirmed that the dialogue conditions were appropriate, 18.5% (every aspect N=195, multiple answers were possible) of the respondents criticised that they experienced time problems. Some citizens reported that they had not enough knowledge about the topic (4.6%) or that translation problems hindered an effective communication (4.1%). A very small minority criticised the over-structuring of the dialogue by rules (3.1%) or complained about the complexity of the process (2.6%). 2.1% of the respondents were unsatisfied with the atmosphere of the event and 1.5% criticised the facilitators for not providing equal speaking opportunities for everybody. 1% of the citizens considered the information provided as insufficient and 0.5% complained about communication problems due to an inappropriate setting. 4.1% of the respondents mentioned other reasons.

4.4 Objectives and Expected Impact of the Project

The majority of the citizens indicated as reason for their participation in the Agenda-Setting Event (62.2%, N=196) that they were primarily interested in the issue. 17.9 % mentioned the process itself as being the main motivation for participating. 15.8% wanted to meet people from all over Europe. Some very small minorities (each with 2%) participated for having fun or for travelling or due to other reasons.

What did the citizens perceive as key objectives of the process (every aspect N=196, multiple answers were possible)? Most of the respondents considered the communication between citizens and policy makers (57.1%) as the main objective; a comparable proportion (56.1%) rated the empowerment of citizens to influence European policies as an important goal. Nearly half of the sample (47.4%) expressed the objective of encouraging the debate on the future of the EU. Roughly a fourth of the respondents saw the events as an opportunity to resolve the current crises of the European Union (23.5%). Strengthening national goals against a unified European policy (16.3%) was chosen less frequently. 3.1% of the citizens mentioned other objectives as being important.

Most of the respondents (56.7%, N always >193) expected a significant influence of the project on political decisions and decision makers at the European level. One third of the sample (34.5%) assumed that such an impact will also be achieved at the national level. 32% of the citizens thought the project will have significant repercussions in the media. A more sceptical view emerges when it comes to changes in society. Only 24.7% are convinced that the results will have an influence on society. 18.9% of the respondents did not expect any influence at all.

4.5 Assessments of the Process and Satisfaction with the Results

The questionnaire included three assessment questions regarding the process and its design (cf. table 1). The numerical results of these three questions were all pooled for a combined analysis of the main drivers for the evaluation of the results.

The first item focused on the effectiveness of the communication among the citizens and is more related to mere procedural aspects. The second item referred to the design of the process. The third item comprised a judgement regarding the fairness and the transparency of the process, which basically can be seen as important background dimensions for the evaluation of participative processes in general (Renn 2004, Webler 1995). In addition to the direct measurement of the satisfaction with the outcome of the Agenda-Setting Event, another item focused on the relation between outcome and investments in the process (efficiency).

The satisfaction with the outcome was chosen as dependent variable and then fed into a linear regression model.¹² The analysis showed

¹² This statistical method enables the analysis of the causal influence of one or more predictor-variables on one dependent variable (cf. Bortz, 2005, p.183ff). Each influence is symbolized by a beta-coefficient and will be computed free from the influence of the other predictors. Statistically relevant influences will be indicated by * or ** or ***. The last-named symbol indicates that the error-rate is under 1/1000 by assuming the computed relationship, ** means the rate is under 1/100 and * means it is under 5/100. The mathematical range of the beta-coefficient includes -1.0 to +1.0, which symbolize perfect relationship between predictor and dependent variable. If the coefficient is positive, the relation between the predictor and the dependent variable is positive. This means the higher the affirmation in variable one the higher the confirmation to variable two respectively the lower the affirmation in variable one the lower the confirmation to variable two. A negative coefficient indicates

that satisfaction with the outcome can be explained by the three process variables ($R^2=.231$), whereby the evaluation of fairness and transparency is the most important predictor ($\beta=.308^{***}$). With a beta-coefficient of $.199^{**}$, the assessment of procedural aspects has a stronger statistical influence than the citizens' evaluation of the design ($\beta=.153^*$).

If the regression model includes the citizens' assessment of efficiency as dependent variable, the evaluation of fairness and transparency ($.266^{***}$) has slightly more statistical influence than the assessment of the design ($\beta=.262^{***}$). The procedural aspect of effectiveness has no influence at all.

The effectiveness and procedural aspects have statistical influence on the satisfaction with the results. The assessment of the efficiency seems to be more determined by structural and fundamental factors such as evaluation of design. The evaluation of fairness and transparency can basically be seen as the core aspect of the citizens' evaluations.

the higher the affirmation at variable one the lower the affirmation at variable two or visa versa.

5 Content Analysis of the Website

A website is an excellent possibility to increase the external visibility and raise additional impact of the project. The evaluation team observed the project's website since its creation in September 2006. The internet presentation includes essential information on the past and future events of the project written in English. It contains a description of the aims and procedures of the project, provides contact and media information as well as a section on the project as a model for European participation.

The website is informative, but stirs no emotions. Some information is difficult to find or missing and there is no possibility to search within the site. For example, the website did not contain any information on the citizens' juries in Berlin and Budapest two weeks after the events. Furthermore, it includes only few external links except for those to the funding organisations and national partners. Information and links could be added to the European Union or in relation to the three selected topic areas. In addition, links to the other projects selected under the Commission's Plan D might be useful.

5.1 Forum

The homepage of a large participatory event such as the European Citizens' Consultations aiming to reach a wide audience should offer an opportunity for online discussion or postings of comments. However, the existing forum on the website actually requires a password. Establishing an open forum is easy and would have great potential for fostering a dialogue among participants of the events as well as non-participants who want to contribute to the discussion or just would like to share experiences from and with others. Once it exists,

the organisers should invite the participants of the major events to join the forum and install salient links at the project's website.

5.2 National WebPages

Currently, national websites seem to exist only for Germany and Cyprus. The German web page is a translation of the English main page whereas the web page of Cyprus has a different layout and content and is partly written in English and partly in Greek. At least the Cypriot website is not clearly linked to the general website.

Furthermore, several national partners have included a notice about the project on their own institutional website. Since it is important that all European citizens can get essential information about the project, translations of the basic pages of the project's website into all languages would be welcomed. If the costs for installing complete websites in all languages are too high, at least an English, French and German version should be offered.

5.3 Other Websites About ECC

A few non-governmental organisations such as *open democracy* or research centres as well as a few individuals whom participated in the process have set up web blogs or inserted reports about the Agenda-Setting Event on their websites. The comments were mostly positive and lauded the mere opportunity of a dialogue among citizens from all over Europe. The project was considered as a valuable possible starting point for more influence of citizens on European policy. Most contributors were sceptical, however, about the potential influence of the project on European policy making. One critical point mentioned was the sampling procedure for selecting the participants.

Generally, the number of contributions found in English or German language was low.

In general, the Agenda-Setting Event did not lead to many repercussions on the European or national media and had therefore only a moderate outreach. The German newspaper "Süddeutsche Zeitung" published one article. The database LexisNexis contained only a limited number of articles. One important point of reference in the press was the fact that the Vice-president of the European Commission Margot Wallström visited the Agenda-Setting Event.

6 Summary

The Agenda-Setting Event of the European Citizens' Consultations can be considered as successful, and met the desired objectives. The event delivered the envisioned output and constituted a valuable base for the further proceeding since three topics were selected for the future national debates. The general atmosphere during the event was productive, constructive but also relaxed. Critical situations were not detected during the deliberations which indicates that the chosen process design generally performed well. All the persons involved, especially the citizens, showed high commitment and involvement. The design elements such as the bilingual tables and the time management generally served the purpose. Therefore, most of the citizens were actively engaged in the dialogue in spite of the language barriers. The interviews and free conversations with citizens and facilitators during the event as well as the participants' answers in the evaluation questionnaires provide sufficient evidence to conclude that all actors in the process were on the whole satisfied or even very satisfied with the results and the process. Critical voices emerged regarding particular aspects such as the sampling of the citizens. A number of citizens in the Pad-survey of the organisers did not agree with or, at least, questioned the final list of topics. The response patterns of the citizens in the evaluation survey also demonstrated a rate of restrained judgments with respect to the end result, but the majority of the assessments remained positive if not enthusiastic.

Several interview partners considered the selection process of the topics as being unduly influenced by the speech of Margot Wallström. The high priority given to environmental and climate change issues are an indication that her speech did affect the participants' choices of main topics. However, this could be the result of more detailed deliberations inspired by her speech or a result of the prominence of the speaker.

In general, the process design included a lot of elegant features such as a common agenda of topics gained by a pre-event survey as a starting point for the deliberations. Overall, the design offered also an adequate frame for timing all the necessary activities. The participants found the general atmosphere productive and constructive. The design focused on accomplishing results which was appreciated by all actors. However, the process would have benefited from a decision to prioritise the results at the tables and to restrict the number of contributions per table. Such a disciplined approach would have simplified the work of the editorial team and it would have given more time for elaborating and integrating each citizen's contributions. This proposed change in the design would have involved the citizens already into the first step of synthesis and would have made the writing process more transparent and balanced. The facilitators, who were also responsible for writing the citizens' contributions, were sometimes overtaxed and unable to master both tasks simultaneously: moderating and reporting. The performance of the facilitators varied a lot; some mastered all the tasks in an exceptional manner while others had major difficulties in providing even basic services to the table.

The impact of the event is not easy to assess at this early stage, but the media coverage was limited to very few articles in European and national newspapers. The website contains important information, but some aspects could be improved since a forum for an open online-dialogue, additional links, a search function and some websites in national languages are missing.

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