



e-panels



www.e-panels.eu

e-panels

Fostering citizens'
participation
and volunteering
in a wider Europe

Project results





Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme

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A. General facts on the project

1. Introduction - presentation of the project

The project “e-panels: fostering citizens’ participation and volunteering in a wider Europe” was designed to address the issue of bridging the gap between citizens and the European Union in an innovative way. Bringing the EU closer to the citizens is one of the biggest challenges the EU is facing today. The need to promote and explain the “European project” to citizens, but also to involve them in its definition itself, is well understood by the partners of this project.

The project tried to foster citizens’ participation and interaction between citizens’ and EU institutions through debates about how to improve citizen participation, with a focus on tools or processes such as ICT tools and the process of volunteering. e-panels aimed at producing opinions and recommendations on these issues in order to collect and submit them to EU institutions. The precise aim of creating e-panels was to enable the citizens from EU countries, but also from candidates countries, to be directly involved and to participate.

Moreover, the project sought to promote the full involvement of all European citizens in the EU decision-making process through the fostering of active European citizenship, giving to citizens involved a greater sense of ownership of the EU.

Furthermore, the project tried to contribute to intercultural dialogue by promoting numerous international events where people from all over Europe met, with a particular focus on pre-accession countries, to create an

inclusive process. Together, they discussed key EU issues, such as citizen participation and volunteering, paying a particular attention to multilingualism and promotion of diversity.

In order to achieve these general and specific objectives, the project involved the following 7 steps:

1. First steering committee and launching conference
2. Training of citizens’ panels activators/partners and preparation of a Kit for e-panels
3. Set-up of the online platform for debates
4. Day of Europe: Information day on e-panels
5. Local online workshops
6. Final international conference and last steering committee
7. Final publication “e-panels: fostering citizen participation in the wider Europe”

One of the most important activities of the project was the creation of “e-panels” including citizens from different ages, nationalities and backgrounds. Throughout the project, various local, transnational, international and online activities will be organised.

The partners involved all have extensive experience on the themes and methodologies relevant to this project, and the partnership was built on the basis of previous experiences of collaboration between partners and ALDA. Moreover, a good attention was paid to include complementary partners, in the sense that some of them have a strong experience in the field of citizen participation and volunteering whereas others have a relevant expertise in the field of new technologies.



2. Partners

2.a Maison de l'Europe de Caen Basse - Normandie (France)

Maison de l'Europe de Caen Basse-Normandie is an association dedicated to promoting the construction of Europe. It encourages initiatives likely to bring about mutual enrichment through the peculiarities of the EU countries, and aimed at supporting citizenship education. In a spirit of public services, it has set itself a mission to make Europe more comprehensible and closer to Lower Normandy citizens.



It is affiliated to the "Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe" and places local authorities, educational establishments, associations and private persons among its members. It enables both people and institutions to commit themselves to a supportive action in favour of the European idea within an organisation in which all political leanings are welcome.

It works in partnership with local and international parties.

Find out more on: www.maisoneuropecaen.free.fr

2.b Fundacion Insula Barataria (Spain)

The Fundación Insula Barataria (FIB) is a public non-for-profit organisation in charge of developing the information and knowledge society and promoting innovation in Castilla-La Mancha. Their support structure is composed by Regional Government, Bank of Castilla-La Mancha and the University of Castilla-La Mancha.



It is an actor in the implementation of regional policies in the topics mentioned. The main objective is to promote and improve the use of new technologies, research and innovation, and to drive the information society technologies in Castilla-La Mancha.

Many of our projects are focused on citizens. Other actions implemented are focused on regional SMES. These actions are implemented through several European, national and regional projects addressed R&D and Innovation into SME.

Fundación Insula Barataria hosts the Information on Research, Development and Innovation Network for SME: RED PIDI. This network provides the necessary support regional SME need to implement the project ideas to improve their competitiveness through its participation in R&D projects, at regional, national and European level informing about the public research and innovation funding available for a particular SME.

Find out more on: www.ibarataria.org

2.c Association for European Partnership (Bulgaria)

The [Association of European Partnership \(AEP\)](#) is a non-profit NGO, established in 2005 in Bulgaria, dedicated to the European perspective and strengthening civic society in the context of EU enlargement. Some of our main objectives involve working for a better Europe, in which Bulgaria is a full and active member, by provoking a debate on various EU matters; consolidation of the European values in society; promotion of EU policies and instruments for their implementation; raising awareness of the public on EU institutions, requirements and rules, financial instruments and programmes.

We also provide assistance in the identification of partners in the EU for joint participation in projects, joint organisation of events and business cooperation. Other activities of the Association include consultancy in entrepreneurship, tourism, and multicultural dialogue; training on EU matters – organization of seminars, courses,

workshops; event management; benchmarking and dissemination of “good practices”; carrying out cross-section and comparative analyses and studies at a national and EU level, etc.

Find out more on:

www.aep-bg.org



2.d Local Democracy Agency Osijek (Croatia)

[Local Democracy Agency in Osijek \(LDA Osijek\)](#) is a non-governmental and non-profit association established in 1993 as a support programme of the

Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to foster local democracy,

human rights, sustainable development and local economic development in war-stricken Eastern Croatia. The agency is established on principles of de-centralized international cooperation and since 1999 is a member of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies – ALDA (www.ald-europe.eu), a large European network with its seat in Strasbourg, France.

Since its establishment in 1993, LDA Osijek supports and fosters democracy at local level in accordance with its mission by strengthening and building capacities of different local stakeholders and target groups in order for them to become efficient actors in their local communities and practitioners of democratic rule of law and therefore positively influence social and economic development of Eastern Croatia.

You can read more about our activities on:

www.lda-osijek.hr



2.e Local Democracy Agency Sisak (Croatia)

The Local Democracy Agency Sisak (LDA Sisak) is nongovernmental and non-for-profit organisation established in 1996 as a pilot project of Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Council of Europe. Its aim is to support local democratic processes and promote human rights.



In our work we use the specific methodology of multilateral decentralised cooperation in partnership with local and regional self-governments and other nongovernmental organisations in and out of Croatia. Since 2006 we work as a domestic organisation. LDA Sisak a member of Association of the Local Democracy Agencies.

More about us see on www.Lda-sisak.hr

2.f Studiorum (Republic of Macedonia)

The Centre for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation “Studiorum” is a non-governmental think-tank working on economic and social aspects of EU integration and globalisation processes that are of essential importance for the Republic of Macedonia and the countries of Southeast Europe.



This mission is accomplished through different policy-oriented programs and research projects, which contribute to and complement the attempts of policy-makers in policy design and implementation, and support central and local governments, business and non-governmental sectors in their communication and cooperation.

CRPRC Studiorum works on a number of projects, including policy analyses and research oriented programs, in fields relevant to the EU integration processes, including the publication of the Journal for European Issues “Evrodijalog” (Eurodialogue).

For further information, please visit: www.studiorum.org.mk and www.evrodijalog.eu

2.g NGO Horizont (Albania)

NGO *Horizont* is a scientific, non-political, non-governmental and non profit organization. Its aim is to assist and support the Albanian society on the way toward:

- social developments, reinforcement of the communities' role, democratization and civil integration;
- reinforcement of efforts for peace, democracy, respect of human rights,
- economic prosperity, stability and construction of a new mentality of civil and human values.

The Association has following objectives:

- Social interventions at three levels: individuals, groups (children, youth, elderly, minorities etc.).
- Contribute to development of new policies and implementation of social, educational, cultural and human protection.



- Direct and publish scientific researches as well as studies in able to assist the public and the scientific opinion, accepting willingly any kind of critique.

• Connect the community to the central and local government aiming the best description and orientation of the community's need to the decision maker bodies.

- Cooperation with other non-governmental organizations to reinforce the civil government in Albania.

For more information: www.horizont-albania.com

2.h Association of Local Democracy Agencies (Lead partner)

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) was founded in 1999 with the support of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. Its first mandate is to coordinate the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) established in the Balkans in the 1990s, which promote human rights, local authorities and active citizenship.



ALDA also leads other projects, funded by the European Commission, as this present one, funded by the programme Europe for Citizens, always on the principle of multilateral decentralised cooperation. We have 200 members across Europe (local authorities, NGOs, individuals...) and provide services such as trainings on European programmes or active citizenship for them, and we try as much as possible to set projects in cooperation with our members.

ALDA has its headquarters in Strasbourg, with an office in Brussels and in Vicenza (Italy), counting 12 staff members in all.

For further information, please check on www.alda-europe.eu

3. Project Activities

3.a Launching Conference in Skopje

“Citizen Participation in a Wider Europe: Role of Volunteering and ICT”

Skopje, 3rd and 4th March 2010



The e-panels launching conference gathered the partners and panels activators of the project for the first time and introduced the topics to be developed by the e-panels, i.e. citizen participation, the role of volunteering in the wider Europe and ICTs.

The first day of the conference began with presentations of the Europe for Citizens programme in the Balkans and of experiences from a previous e-panel project. Participants then gathered in two round tables.

The first one debated on how ICT promote citizens' participation and on e-panels methodology, stressing that different target groups need different approaches (e.g. many older adults who first need to learn how to use ICT) and that facilitators of the project should provide solutions and tools to citizens, but not ideas.

The second round table discussed the importance of volunteering for citizens' involvement and stated that volunteering needs to be developed in all project countries.

The second day was dedicated to a fertile debate

on the format of the e-panels website and the topics to be discussed. The participants came up with numerous ideas on the future website: they suggested using social networks and Skype conferences, including chat rooms and simple forums, inserting Internet radio and using the local and national media.

Results also included the need to identify leaders who would attract participants, to create a separate website for the credibility of a project. In order to inspire participants, articles and comments should be posted regularly on the website.

The main ideas for topics to be discussed were: European and local citizenship, migration, ecology, education in Europe and topics common to several countries (e.g. future EU integration for the three Balkan countries).

Generally, it was stated that the topics should be kept simple. An interesting proposition was to create a topic present in each forum so as to be able to compare the results between countries – an idea all the more important as the multi-linguistic dimension of the project was seen as an obstacle to international discussions in the panels.

All these propositions were collected for use during the e-panels trainings in Skopje and Brussels. Moreover, as a conclusion of all the ideas that were proposed by the audience, all the partners and activators had to gather their thoughts on a document, ready to be discussed in the next activity in Brussels, that will definitely shape the website for e-panels.

The e-panels launching event in Skopje was a great success. A great amount of participants was present, and thus a lot of debating and ideas came up, especially during the second morning. This set the basis for the future of this project, and promised to continue the promotion of citizen participation in Macedonia, using ICT tools, even outside the e-panels project.

3.b Trainings of citizens' panels activators

Volunteering and ICTs – e-panels methodology

12th-15th April 2010

The training session in Brussels, gathering a majority of partners of the project, allowed to define a “e-panels tool-kit”, and provided a certain knowledge on the content and the framework of the volunteer’s involvement, and on the use of the website and forum.

The training was addressed to activators of the e-panels project. Its aim was to train them on the topics of active citizenship in EU context, volunteering and the use of ICT, to visit EU institutions and meet EU officials, and thus to bridge the gap between EU citizens and institutions and to produce a “KIT” on how to set-up an “e-panel”.

On the first day, the participants discussed the concept of Active Citizenship, concluding that to be active, citizens need to be aware of their opportunities. Education is thus the first target, even if Western and Eastern Europe face different challenges.

The new European citizens’ initiative was also discussed.

In order to raise the activators’ awareness for their responsibility for the e-panels project, they defined the project’s agenda

themselves. Some already knew what target group they were going to concentrate on (e.g. students), others planned to organise open promotional activities. A debate about the advantages of participatory and representative democracy followed.



The participants then visited the European Parliament.

The second day was dedicated to the structure of the e-panels website. The participants decided to create a main English language homepage that will lead to a homepage in each national language. Each homepage was to have the same categories (Partners, About the Project, News and Download) as well as a national forum. All forums would present two common topics: “What can the EU do for you?” and “What can you do for the EU?”. It was up to the national delegations to choose three additional subjects for the national forums.



The role of social media for the promotion of the site was stressed, and likewise the presence of pictures and short texts on the site. Participants were taught how to upload articles and other media on the site.

A visit to the European Commission on the last day gave the group a thorough impression of the institution’s functioning and of the “Europe for Citizens” programme.

3.c Partners' Activities

The partners organised several local activities in order to promote the project at the local level and to reach the highest number of ordinary citizens. During the local activities much information were disseminated about the EU with the aim of raising the awareness about European Union and to promote the active participation of ordinary people at the local level as well as at the European one.

Among the different activities organized locally by the partners, the celebration of the Day of Europe on the 9th of May had a great success among the local communities. During the celebration, the partners had the opportunity of launching and promoting the project and in particular the e-panels forums. Moreover, information about the project but also about specific topics such as the EU, citizen participation, ICT tools and volunteering were provided to the local communities. Furthermore, it was a great chance for the partners to explain the functioning and the aim of the online local workshops highlighting in particular the role of the citizens and the participatory modalities.

Apart from the celebration activities, the partners focused their attention on the promotion of the whole project and in particular on the dissemination of the forums.

Local online workshops were organized on specific questions related to citizen participation, ICT and volunteering, to allow citizens to debate on the above mentioned topics in a flexible manner and to draft recommendations to be exchanged during the final conference and submitted to EU institutions. Partners had the role to identify the citizens' panels activators and to organise the local online workshops, that lasted 6 months.

Moreover, partners together with citizens' panels activators were free to define their own questions and



to moderate the workshops. However, the questions asked to lead the discussions on the forum were closely related to the general topics of the project, i.e. citizen participation, ICT tools and volunteering in the EU and candidate countries.

Apart from the general topics: "One thing the EU can do for me" and "What can you do for the EU", the activators defined several additional topics to be added on the forum. These topics reflected the local communities' interests and concerns about the European Union.

The workshops were important in several ways, allowing citizens involved to debate on the above mentioned topics in a flexible manner and to draft recommendations that were exchanged during the final conference and submitted to EU institutions.

Partners, together with citizens' panels activators, were also responsible for gathering the results of the discussions and drafting reports containing some recommendations for EU institutions about the above-mentioned topics. These reports and recommendations were put on the website of the project in order to allow citizens involved in the online panels to read them and eventually suggests comments and modifications.

All the partners had a central role in project providing publicity, visualisation and promotion of the project objectives, activities and results by regular publications on the web site of the project. Moreover, they all attended the international activities and they played an important role in the implementation of the international events.

3.d Final Conference Zagreb

Closing conference

“Civic Participation, Volunteering and ICT”

Zagreb, November 3rd 2010

As a conclusion to the 6 months online forums of the e-panels project, the final conference gathered the project partners with interested citizens from Zagreb and high quality speakers to discuss the results of the project and the chances of ICT in volunteering and civic participation in general.

1. e-panels forum

After the President of ALDA had introduced the conference and ALDA's project manager had presented its framework and the past activities of the project, the core e-panels activity, the forums, were presented.

Each partner in Croatia, Albania, Bulgaria, Spain, France and Macedonia had designated 3 activators, that had the responsibility of promoting their national e-

panels website and forum, and attract as many participants as possible to register and post comments online on the several thematic forums each country had decided on.



During the conference, one activator for each country presented the results of their national forums to the audience. ALDA also presented the English forum it was in charge of, that had the objective to launch international discussions on one two topics it had in common with the national forums.

Each partner country had the floor throughout the day, not only to report on the discussions on the e-panels forum, but also to debate directly with the audience about the different themes that were in focus on the forums. In this way, EU integration, youth and mobility were also subject to debate.



Participants from the audience also expressed their opinion about the looks of the e-panels website and the important communication and promotion that needed to be done to make this kind of project successful. The methodology run by e-panels was then put into question for a better approach in the future, for such electronic panels in Europe. The question of linking the website and forums to social networks was very much emphasized, in order to attract more participants.

2. “Wishful thinking or real opportunity? Fostering active citizenship and volunteering with the help of ICT”

The second part of the day was dedicated to two external experts on e-participation and volunteering. Mr. Sašo Brlek-Slaček, Researcher and teacher at Ljubljana University, and Ms. Ingrid Charlotte Baken, UNV Programme Officer Albania, had the possibility to share with the audience two important topics related to the main core of the project.

Mr. Brlek-Slaček presented the “Civic Web” research programme, an EU-funded cooperation between universities in Sweden, the Netherlands, Hungary, Spain, Slovenia and Turkey that was active between 2004 and 2007.



The research focused on the role of the Internet for young people's interest and involvement in politics and in civil society.

In his speech, Mr. Brlek-Slaček presented the most important result of the project which was the necessity of rethinking the relationship between offline and online activities.

They are not distinct worlds, but rather closely linked to each other. Thus, it is not the design of websites that is decisive for their success. The sites that are linked with the "real world" are most successful, **offline connectivity is more important than special features of sites**. Some sites are popular because there is a lot of advertising done for them, but these usually demand little involvement of the users.

As to the idea inherent to e-panels Mr. Brlek-Slaček related his experiences with a similar Slovenian project in which youth had communicated with politicians. Generally, the research suggested that the internet can be a valuable tool for young people who are already engaged in civic and political activity. However, policy-makers and practitioners should beware of assuming that the internet will be a very effective means of engaging young people who are currently disengaged and/or.

The "Civic Web" research suggests that the most engaging online content is that which relates to issues arising in the local neighbourhood or community, or to aspects of 'identity politics'.

The results of the "Civic Web" programme can be downloaded on the following site: www.civicweb.eu.

The intervention of Ms. Baken gave a general intro-

duction to volunteering, getting more into detail concerning volunteering and the UN volunteers in Albania.

She stated the three main characteristics of volunteerism: it is undertaken out of one's own free will, benefits a third party and yourself and is not undertaken primarily for financial reasons.

Concerning volunteering in Albania, Ms. Baken related the celebration of volunteering day (December 5th), on which ideas of young people were collected, highlighting also the fact that the Youth department of the Albanian government showed interest in these opinions. But since volunteering was used as a form of punishment during the dictatorship, it has a negative connotation in Albania even today.

Moreover, it is really important to remark the fact that United Nations online volunteering helps development work. In 2009, 14300 people participated.



Concerning e-panels, Ms. Baken suggested connecting the forum to other interesting sites, e.g. of organisations providing possibilities of participation. This should give ideas on how to actually have one's opinion followed by actions.

Generally, political participation is born from a concrete local problem. To have this fact benefit to e-panels, one should get into contact with existing local groups, find out what they are concerned about and encourage their connections to a higher political level. Community volunteering can also be a way of integrating marginalized minorities.

B. Focus on the e-panels website: analysis and recommendations of the citizens, addressed to the European Commission Officials

4. Analysis of the participation on the forums

The e-panels website is a tool for disseminating the information about the project and to allow ordinary citizens to actively take part in the online forums created to encourage citizens discussion on the topics defined during the online workshops. The website has a general part in English, that contains information about the project, the partnership and a section where it is possible to download general documents about the project and important EU documents, such as the Lisbon Treaty and the Europe for Citizens guidelines.

Moreover, the website, apart from the English version, has other versions in the six languages of the partners: Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, French, Macedonian and Spanish. These sections contain detailed information on the project and on the partnership in the languages of the partners, ensuring a better dissemination of the project.

All versions of the website, including the general one in English, host a forum where the citizens had the possibility to express their own point of view on the topics se-

lected by the partners and the activators in a flexible and interactive way. Two general topics were identified and several others were identified locally by each partner communities. The general topics identified are "One thing EU can do for me" and "What can you do for the EU". The forums had a great success, they received many visits and all the users expressed their own points of view very seriously.



It is very important to highlight the fact that many other topics were identified and discussed on each local forum, and all the discussions reflected each local communities' problems and concerns. They really felt of contributing to the forum as a tool to bring their voice directly to EU.

To conclude, the website had a central relevance in all the project as a tool for disseminating itself and some key information about EU. Moreover, the online forums played a crucial role as tool for the citizens that wanted to express their own opinions on EU and on some local relevant topics concerning the relations between the local communities involved and the EU.

Now follows the specific descriptions of each forum where the characteristics of each and the specific topics discussed locally are highlighted. The last paragraph collects all the relevant opinions of the citizens that contributed on the forums to be addressed to relevant EU Officials.

5. Forum Results

5.a General Forum (English)

Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://e-panels.eu/forum/>

Language: English

The forum was started with the general topics:

- “One thing EU can do for me”
- “What can you do for the EU”.

Topic “One thing EU can do for me”

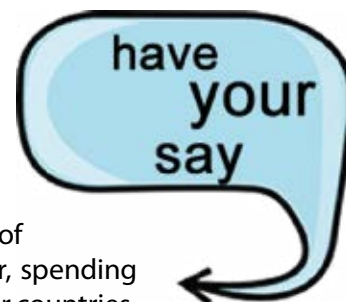
Most users interpreted the topic as the question of what the EU actually does for them. The top mention in this context was that the EU facilitates mobility (Erasmus, Schengen, common currency), but users also repeatedly mentioned the following points: economic benefits (single market), environmental protection, stronger position of member states in the world, improving health care abroad, establishment of common rules and judicial cooperation, having financed infrastructure in Spain.

The few users that expressed their wishes/expectations mainly mentioned the same aspects of European integration: They expect help with living or studying abroad, hope to improve peace in the world by spending military money on education, industry and agriculture, hope to save water by improving installations, reduce economical differences between member states and respect ethnic and religious groups more.

Topic “What can you do for the EU”

Several participants stated that they could not do very much personally. But even these found replies. The two top mentions were to improve the situation in one’s country (integration, equality, help in NGOs,

participate politically) and to take care of the environment (recycle, save energy, water and CO₂). Helping other EU countries was also mentioned often, e.g. by exchange of know-how, being a doctor, spending or donating money in other countries.



Users also stated several times that they could try to be better persons and respect laws, improve their own education, take part in European elections, consume and be tolerant. Single mentions concerned having more children, participating in cultural events and integrating women into the labour market.

One drawback was certainly the low participation. In addition to this, it seems that only Spanish persons contributed to the forum (judging by user names). Mobilisation will need to be improved to reach the goal of the exchange between Europeans.

The forum had a respectable number of members, 63, and 37,5 posts were created. Except for some commercial posts that were soon removed, the quality of posts was satisfying. Users seemed to express what they felt seriously.

Technically, the forum worked very well.

5.b Albanian Forum



Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://al.e-panels.eu/>

Language: Albanian

This local forum was also started with the general themes:

- “What can EU do for you” and
- “What can you do for EU”

Moreover, during the local activities some really interesting topics were set to be discussed in the forum. The topics identified during the local workshop are very important to Albanians with regard the pros and cons of joining the European Union. For instance, the following topics were discussed:

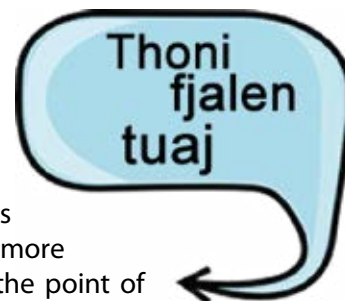
“Visas Liberalization: What this means to the Albanians”, “EU is seen as one more liberty or one more commitment” and “In what aspect is Albania still far from being European”

The topics discussed in this forum tried to bring the attention of the members to the present situation of the Albanian reality, and especially on the process of integration of Albania into the EU and on the liberalisation of visas.

The local themes were more popular than the general themes. However, in the discussion about “What can EU do for you” and “What can you do for EU”, most of the participants discussed about the opportunities that rise from becoming part of the EU and in particular what the EU do for them. What came out of the discussions was that the EU can contribute by supporting programmes of development in cultural, social and even financial fields.

More intense discussions were carried out on the local themes.

The topic “Visas Liberalization: What this means to the Albanians” was the most active topic on the forum.



The topic “EU is seen as one more liberty or one more commitment” was about the point of view from which Albanians see the integration in the EU. Various opinions were expressed on this. Some believe that integration into the EU means one more liberty and a possibility to realise what Albanians have always wanted but from which they were deprived for a long time.

As for the topic “In what aspect is Albania still far from European Standards”, most of the participants think that political and economical stability must be achieved in order to avoid any possible drawback.

Another aspect that must be taken into consideration however is the social one. The topic “Why is EU so attractive for post-communist countries” was the final topic that was discussed in the forum and was meant to offer an insight on the attraction of the EU for post-communist countries such as Albania. What came out from the discussions was that indeed EU is very attractive for them because it represents a kind of forbidden “dream” for Albania since a long time.

5.c Bulgarian Forum



Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://bg.e-panels.eu/>

Language: Bulgarian

The common topics in the national discussion were about the relationship between Bulgarian citizens and the EU:

- **What can I do for EU?**
- **What can EU do for me?**

Topic **“What can I do for EU”**

According to many participants of the forum, Bulgarians should start to act more as European citizens, gaining the right and the confidence of being part of the EU. Moreover, it is really important to act a exemplary EU citizen, living by the European norms and standards in order to contribute to the creation of a better Europe. Anyway, what emerged more from the discussion is the fact that the EU can do more for Bulgaria as a country and less for each Bulgarian citizen.

Topic **“What can EU do for me”**

Most of the participants stressed the fact that EU could give more information of citizens rights in order to make the local communities' life better. Moreover, since most of the participants were students, participants pointed out the importance of promoting opportunities for young people in terms of job and study opportunities. To conclude, many participants highlighted the fact that EU can stabilise the overall political and social situation in Bulgaria, pushing the country at the same prosperity level of the other European members.

During the local workshops other topics were identified, in particular the participants of the forum discussed on the followings topics: “Bulgarian education

– how to improve it” and “What do other countries have, that we wish to have in Bulgaria, too”.

The forum had a great participation, there were over 250 visits of all topics, but only 23 posts were created – that means that most of the visitors preferred to observe the discussion rather than to write their own opinion. 42% of the registered participants expressed their opinions. There were also numerous guests to the e-panel forum, who only read, didn't write, nor register.

To conclude, we think that E-panel forum created brainstorming on the themes, which are important for Bulgaria to feel a true EU member. Moreover, we think that there are really interesting points of view and practical ideas, suggested by participants, and the posts were fairly long and serious, there was no spam or hate speech.



5.d Croatian Forum



Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://hr.e-panels.eu/>

Language: Croatian

Moderators posted the first post in topics “**One thing I can do for EU**” and “**Mobility - are we ready for EU?**” Those topics they chose like most attractive and in their opinion the ones that could attract people to post their responses. With their posts they managed to activate others to post on those topics, but also to open new topics. Topics created by users were: “National identity-instrument for future”; “View on EU- before and after?”; “Minimizing of agricultural properties”; “Educational movie about myth and legend of EU”; “How to make EU better?”; “Selling agricultural products on market”; “Tourist attractions of Europe”.

The most interesting topic for forum members was “**One thing EU can do for me**”. Within the topic they discussed most about travel, education and job opportunities. They all stated that entrance in European Union can bring only better conditions for them concerning all of the mentions topics.

Another topic that attracted members is “myths and legends about EU”. It is the topic that open discussion and collected different views and opinions on becoming a part of EU. While some stated that they are against Croatia in EU, and that we can manage better on our own, other stated that that being a part of EU could help us economically and generally raise quality of living without losing our own identity.

In open topic “Other” that was left for posts not connected with already mentioned subjects; most attention was given to subject about selling agricultural products on market. Here was also stated that EU can bring us only better conditions and that EU policies

will not be a threat. In subject “How to make EU better”, some interesting propositions are given by user, especially on informing public about EU policies, laws and regulations.



Forum was technically very good and for that point no changes were necessary. Biggest problem that Croatian and other forums encountered is low participation. Despite all of the promotion, response was low. Also, among members that registered on forum, more of them were just reading the posts and not contributing to the discussion. Contributions of ones that posted their opinions are various, some just agreed with others and some tried to explain and to give their own view. Low participation problem could be solved with more promotion directed to young people since they use forum the most.

Also, as we agreed on final steering committee, awards for users with most quality posts could be a good tool for encouraging participants to contribute the discussions.

5.e French Forum



Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://fr.e-panels.eu/forum/>

Language: French

The forum started with the general topics:

- “One thing EU can do for me”
- “What can you do for the EU”.

Topic “One thing EU can do for me”

Most of the people focused their attention on Europe in Lower Normandy, and in particular on the European funds which are allocated to the region but also the about the European financial support for actions contributing to creativity and active youth participation at a local and European level.

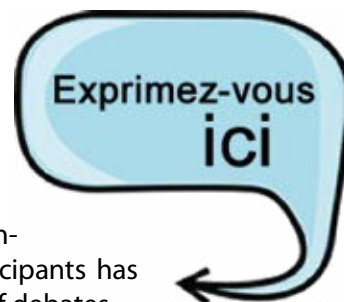
Topic “What can you do for the EU”

The discussions about the second question mainly dealt with interculturality, common traits and differences between European cultures, as well as the effectiveness of European Civil Society Organizations dealing with the dissemination of information concerning Europe to the citizens. Moreover, topics concerning youth, engagement and interculturality were always present on the local forum.

On the occasion of the European Year of fight against poverty and social marginalization, some discussions were raised on the topic, in particular about different forms of discrimination and the present French policy concerning Gipsies.

All the discussions of the forum received a great interest: young people shared their experience, issues of topicality etc. They allowed exchanges between persons of different social circles and generations, which in turn made the debates interesting. However, it was difficult

to engage a greater public in these actions because of several factors. In particular, the concept of citizenship is still not so clear to a large part of citizens. Nevertheless, we consider that the lack of participants has hindered the enrichment of debates.



The group of participants was mainly composed of young people aged between 15 and 20 from Twining Committee of Demouville and MJC du Chemin Vert. These young people were often helped by facilitators to express their opinions on the forum. Several members of the Maison de l’Europe, as well as former trainees also participated on the forum. The forum had a quite high participation with 63 subscriptions and 38 posts created.

To conclude, we can say that even if the majority of the participants were young, many adults have participated on the forum and expressed their opinions. The majority of them were of French nationality, and there was a great gender balance in the participation on the forum.

5.f Macedonian Forum



Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://mk.e-panels.eu/>

Language: Macedonian

This local forum was also started with the general themes:

- “What can EU do for you” and
- “What can you do for EU”

Morover, during the local activities some really interesting topics were set to be discussed in the forum: Active citizenship; EU funds; Better education through student mobility; Youth programs; think-thank funds. Among them discussions on EU funding an mobility of students and citizens had a great success. Indeed, some of the users pointed out the fact that it is really important for Macedonian going abroad in order to raise their awareness about European Union and to improve their intercultural skills. In this regards, they firmly sustain that is necessary the improvement of the mobility programmes for Macedonian.

During the implementation of the forum the role of motivators was excellent, but the motivation was low as they were engaged on voluntary basis – a concept that still needs to be developed in the country. The sub topics were interesting and provocative towards the audience but in general the quality of the discussion in overall was not on very high level. Nevertheless, a satisfactory number of topics was created and most of the users submitted more than one contribution to the forum.

The administrator for the Macedonian forums had placed a spam filter in order to avoid malicious content and to prevent forum glutting with unnecessary and non-related information and spam. Technically the forum worked quite well.

The motivators and the administrator have jointly put efforts to increase the discussion on the forums with involvement by the nominated moderators



All in all, the e-panels seem to be a good tool for increasing the citizen participation, at least of those who have access to computer/internet and who are computer literate (most often times, young people). In the future, it would be better to use the e-panel model for forums in the communication of issues of local/national or regional importance, by placing or advertising them on the sites of relevant institutions, such as local government, association of local governments, etc. The conclude the Macedonian forum had a satisfactory satisfying success.

5.g Spanish Forum



Title: e-panels forum “Have your say”

URL: <http://es.e-panels.eu/>

Language: Spanish

Also on this forum the discussion was open under two general topics:

- **“One thing EU can do for me”**
- **“What can you do for the EU”**

FIB decided, with the agreement of the municipality of Toledo, to enlarge the discussion on other specific topics linked to Europe and to cultural identity.

As for the topics created by citizens, they can be summarised as follow:

Under the discussion **“One thing EU can do for me”**, 70 topics were posted in the forum by local citizens. Many answers and comment were related to the economic cohesion that has produced benefits for the European countries. The single currency (€) is also very well evaluated to facilitate the single market and the movement of EU citizens. Many comments were also about the benefits to travel in the EU without borders.

Most of the answers were related to: A unified Europe; Erasmus and employment conditions for young people; European education and Bologna Process; Employment and unemployment; Health.

As for **“What can you do for the EU”**, 28 topics were posted in the forum by local citizens. Most of the answers were related to: More personal efforts to build Europe. Contribution to respect for the environment. Sustainable development and respect for the environment. Respect of EU law. Respect for religious and cultural differences. Contribution to the economic cohesion. Solidarity of the European governments in case of economic diffi-

culties of other member States. The main contributions were related to education matters and employment conditions.

That is due to the fact that most part of participants were students and they are worried

about their future in the labour market and now as student. They also expressed a kind of European solidarity among the different member states and the need for a better and unified Europe.



Other themes were also included in the discussion of the forum, and they were identified during the local activities. The “European Cultural Identity”, the “European Cultural Cities”, “El Greco-European Cultural Heritage”.

The forum was opened together with the celebration of the International Internet Day on May 17th, 2010 as one of the activities programmed that day. This day was chosen given the activities programmed and the high participation expected, especially from young people. Promotional actions were disseminated early enough to let young people know about the project and the possibility to contribute with the fulfilment of its activities.

Activators were in site explaining how the e-panels project works and how people can contribute with the debate and questions proposed on line. The participation to the forum was high, and 145 people subscribe the forum and they produced 104 topics.

Citizens had a PC to participate in the forums provided by the Fundación Insula Barataria and the Municipality of Toledo in a public internet space.

6. Recommendations of the citizens by themes

In all the discussions implemented on the different national forums and on the general one is possible to extrapolate some really interesting recommendations for the European policy makers.

First of all, in most of the forums was highlighted the need to bring the EU institutions more closer to the citizens through a better dissemination of the information about EU, European citizen rights and opportunities for its citizens.

Another aspect stressed many times was the need of strengthen particular European programmes addressing youth and youth unemployment. The users of the forums have the impression that EU policy makers should do more on this field.

Moreover, some of the users expressed the importance of moving resources from the military expenses to key sectors: such as education, industry and agriculture. In this respect EU policy makers should lobby the national governments to reach these objectives.

Furthermore, also the economic sector was interested by the users. Most of all think that EU should improve its efforts in facing the economic differences among the member States and among all the EU citizens.

In addition, the importance of strengthen minorities rights and to respect ethnic and religious groups is still seen as a key priority for the European policy makers.

Some of the users were students, they all stated that EU should ensure them more educational and mobility opportunities in order to improve their skill to face the difficult situation of the labour market. Erasmus programme is still seen as the main way for improving



the European education and mobility system but other ways should be identified.

Some of the users had the impression that the EU is not an united entity since are still present too many economic and social dif-

ferences in it. More effort should be made to make UE effectively united.

Other users expressed the importance of protecting the environment, and they stressed the fact that European policy makers have the important role of fostering environmental protection policies for Europe and for the whole planet. Moreover, they also stated that the policy makers should ensure a more fair and efficient health system for all European citizens.

As for the users from Albania, they stated that the liberalization of the visa system would help them to raise their European awareness since they think it is one of the first steps to join the European citizens community.

Nevertheless, most of the users are satisfied with the creation of a closer Europe and they wish to push European policy makers to continue in this way in order to ensure the creation of an effective European Union composed by different people who live in the same big family.

To conclude, users of the forums wish to have Europe closer to its citizens that is able to ensure them real opportunities to improve their life.



Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

Contact person: Antonella Valmorbida
E-mail: antonella.valmorbida@aldaintranet.org
Address: c/o Council of Europe, European Palace
67075 Strasbourg - France
Tel. +33 (0)390 214 593 Fax +33 (0)390 215 517
Web site: www.alda-europe.eu



House of Europe

Contact person: Luigi Romildo
E-mail: projets@maison europe-caen.org
Address: 10, Rue de Formigny 14000 Caen - France
Tel. +33 (0)2 31 34 54 31
Web site: www.maisoneurope-caen.org



Fundacion Insula Barataria (FIB)

Contact person: Miguel Ayllon
E-mail: miguelangel.ayllon@ibarataria.org
Address: C/ Rio Valdemarías s/n 45007 Toledo - Spain
Tel. +34 925233850
Web site: www.ibarataria.org



Association for European Partnership

Contact person: Beata Papazova
E-mail: office@aep-bg.org
Address: 20, Macedonia Blvd. 1606 Sofia - Bulgaria
Tel. (+359 2) 9521829 Fax (+359 2) 8524235
Web site: www.aep-bg.org



LDA Osijek

Local Democracy Agency Osijek

Contact person: Miljenko Turniški
E-mail: Ldaosijek@aldaintranet.org
Address: Šetalište k. F. Šepera 8b 31000 Osijek - Croatia
Tel. +385 31 203 088 / +385 98 200 687 Fax +385 31 203 087
Web site: www.Lda-osijek.hr



LDA Sisak

Local Democracy Agency Sisak

Contact person: Paula Rauzan
E-mail: Ldesk-si@sk.t-com.hr
Address: S. I A. Radica 2° 44000 Sisak - Croatia
Tel. +385 44 521 227 Fax +385 44 521 231
Web site: www.Lda-sisak.hr



Center for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation "Studiorum"

Contact person: Ivana Tomovska
E-mail: ivana@studiorum.org.mk
Address: Str Nikola Parapunov bb, kompleks Makoteks 1 kat
POB 484 1000 Skopje Republic of Macedonia
Tel. +389 2 3065 837 Fax +389 2 3065 837
Web site: www.studiorum.org.mk



Non Governmental Organization "Horizont"

Contact person: Teodor Bilushi
E-mail: teodor.bilushi@libero.it / sh.horizont@gmail.com
Address: NGO Horizont, Lagjia "Varosh" 92 Gjirokaster - Albania
Tel. +355 68 4023608 Fax +355 84 263039
Web site: www.horizont-albania.com

Contacts of the partners



For further information:
www.e-panels.eu