

European Citizens' Consultations

Latvian Citizens' Perspective on the Future of Europe

National Consultation in Latvia,
Reval Hotel Latvia, Riga,
24-25 February, 2007



The National Citizens' Consultations are part of a pan-European dialogue project called the "European Citizens' Consultations". Each of the 27 national events is coordinated and organised under the responsibility of a national partner, independent non-for-profit organisations all over Europe. The consultations at national level are co-funded by national foundations.

The European Citizens Consultations are organised by a group of independent organisations led by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium) in collaboration with European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), the European Policy Centre (EPC) and the Network of European Foundations (NEF). They are supported by Compagnia di San Paolo, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Robert Bosch Stiftung and co-funded by the European Commission.

Consultations Européennes des Citoyens

Faites entendre votre voix

Rozhovory s občany Evropy

Nechte zazníť svůj hlas

Europæiske borgerkonsultationer

Lad din stemme blive hørt

Europese Burgerberaadslagingen

Laat uw stem horen

Euroopa Kodanike Foorum

Tehke oma hääl kuuldavaks

Euroopan kansalaisten konsultaatiot

Saada äänensä kuuluville

Europäische Bürgerkonferenzen

Bring deine Stimme ein

Διαβουλεύσεις των ευρωπαίων πολιτών

Κάντε τη φωνή σας να ακουστεί

Comhairliúcháin na Saoránach Eorpach

Ag Cinntiú go mBíonn do Ghuth le Cloisteáil

European Citizens' Consultations

Making your voice heard

Eiropas pilsoņu debates

Izsaki savu viedokli

Граждани за Европа

Твоят глас е важен

Európai Polgárok Konzultációja

Hallatjuk a hangját

Consultazioni Europee dei Cittadini

Fai sentire la tua voce

Debata obywateli Europy

Niech nas usłyszą

Consultas aos cidadãos europeus

Fazendo ouvir a sua voz

Konzultácie s občanmi Európy

Využite svoj hlas

Posvetovanja z evropskimi državljani

Naj se sliši vaš glas

Consultas a la ciudadanía europea

Haz oír tu voz

Europeiska medborgarråd

Gör din röst hörd

Pasitarimas su Europos piliečiais

Tegul jus išgirsta

Il-konsultazzjonijiet tač-ċittadini Ewropej

Sempe jgħalli



European Citizens' Consultations

Making your voice heard



The European Citizens' Consultations

The European Citizens' Consultations provide the **first-ever opportunity** for members of the public from all Member States to debate the future of the European Union **across the boundaries of geography and language**. Citizens reflecting the diversity of the population are chosen randomly to take part in the deliberations. They identify common ground and make recommendations to policy-makers. The results aim at inspiring European as well as national institutions as they prepare to take decisions on the next phase of Europe's development.

The consultations create a **truly European discussion**, bringing citizens together at European events and linking simultaneous national debates on a shared agenda of broad ideas and visions set by the citizens themselves. The debates ensure that every voice is heard through an **innovative combination of professional facilitation and modern technology**.

The European Citizens' Consultations process is driven by a consortium of independent and non-political European foundations and civil society organisations led by the King Baudouin Foundation and co-financed by the European Commission's Plan D.

The Agenda-Setting Event

The Agenda-Setting Event was the first stage of the ECC process. Randomly selected participants from all European Member States met in Brussels to **set the agenda for the following dialogue process**. The following three topics were selected by **eight citizens from each of the Member States**:

- 1) Energy & Environment: The environmental and economic impact of Europe's energy use
- 2) Family & Social Welfare: The social and economic conditions for Europe's families
- 3) EU's Global Role & Immigration: The EU's role in the world and the management of immigration

National Citizens' Consultations

At the heart of the project are the National Citizens' Consultations – simultaneous, interlinked debates in all 27 Member States. From February to March 2007 they debate the three topics identified at the Agenda Setting Event and identify common ground to recommend broad policy directions in "National Citizens' Perspectives on the Future of Europe". Each consultation has five to ten other consultations in other Member States happening at the same time following a shared timetable. Within this timeline there are pre-defined integration points with the other national consultations. At these points in time the consultations exchange their results and thereby enable a European dialogue across locations and languages.

The consultations are organised by national partners and supported by a European coordination team. National Citizens' Consultations do not work according to a one-size-fits-all approach. They are shaped by a broad consortium of national foundations and non-profit organisations from all over Europe that adapt the events to their respective national contexts. While all consultations follow the same basic format, the size of these events varies between a minimum format of 30 participants and up to 200 participants and additional follow-up activities, depending on additional support that can be mobilised in each country.



The European Citizens' Consultation in Latvia

The Latvian Citizens Consultation on 24-25 February gathered 43 citizens in Riga to develop the Latvian perspectives on the future of Europe. The citizens participating in the Latvian consultation were randomly invited according to criteria of representativeness: different age groups, different educational levels, gender, and other Member States-specific criteria are considered to ensure an approximately representative composition of the consultations.

European Citizens' Consultations in Latvia were organised by the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS – a leading think-tank in Latvia, established in 2002. It is a non-governmental, non-partisan and not-for-profit organisation.

PROVIDUS mission is to facilitate comprehensive policy change in areas important for Latvia's development. PROVIDUS also provides expertise to other countries undergoing democratic transformation. PROVIDUS areas of expertise are good governance, anti-corruption, criminal justice, European affairs, education and tolerance. PROVIDUS activities include: publishing research and policy analyses, providing expertise to the government in the policy-making process, advocacy and monitoring, consultancy services and training as well as promoting public participation in the policy process and holding of an annual Public Policy Forum. PROVIDUS also provides institutional home for the largest on-line policy resource in Latvia – public policy portal Politika.lv (www.politika.lv)

The Latvian Citizens Consultation took place on 24-25 February in Reval Hotel Latvija, in Riga. The participants were welcomed by Krista Baumanė, deputy director of PROVIDUS, Valdis Zagorskis, political analyst of the European Commission representation in Latvia, and Ģirts Salmgriezis, Radio SWH journalist and the 2006 European man of the year in Latvia. Latvian minister of Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks also spoke to the participants about the future of Europe. The consultation was observed by the representatives of media, non-governmental organizations, as well as Latvian and EU institutions.

This report is a short record of the outcomes of the Latvian Citizens Consultation and was distributed at the end of the event. A long report will be available by 15 April. Please contact the organisers or visit www.providus.lv to obtain a copy and find out more.



National Perspective

1) Energy & Environment: The environmental and economic impact of Europe's energy use

The participants agreed on the following vision for the future of Europe in this field:

"We want to live in a Europe where people live in harmony with the nature, using biologically clean food, where energy is produced from sources that are renewable and economically sound, where waste management is environmental-friendly, and where the significance of environment is promoted."

This vision gathered the full support of 42 participants, 1 participant partly agreed, nobody was fully disagreeing to this vision.

The participants agreed on the following role of the EU in achieving the above-mentioned goal:

"The EU should be involved because, by providing information about the labelling of biologically clean products and creating a favourable market, increasing the financial support for research and the implementation of research results, by improving legislation on environment and the compliance with it, by introducing a common approach to energy effectiveness and the use of renewable resources according to the development of each country, people will be able to live healthy and economically."

This vision gathered the full support of 42 participants, 1 participant partly agreed, nobody was fully disagreeing to this vision.

Other ideas that gathered the support of the participants but were not included in the common vision:

*"We want to live in a Europe, ...
... where the harming to environment done by factories and production units is controlled (16 votes of the participants),
... where the recycling of waste is organized (10 votes),
... where paper is recycled (8 votes),
... where there is a short-term and long-term development plan, with control clauses (6 votes),
... where the environment is clean: forests and rivers not polluted by waste (4 votes),
... where the quality of waste water purification is good (4 votes),
... where the polluters of environment are severely punished (4 votes),
... where one can drink clean water from the tap (3 votes)".*



2) Family & Social Welfare: The social and economic conditions for Europe's families

The participants agreed on the following vision for the future of Europe in this field:

"We want to live in a Europe where family is a priority, where favourable conditions for the development of children are secured including a well-organized education system, where health care is of good quality and accessible for everyone, with an effectively-functioning support system for the disadvantaged, full employment and wages adequate to the high cost of living."

This vision gathered the full support of 41 participants, 2 participants partly agreed, nobody was fully disagreeing to this vision.

The participants agreed on the following role of the EU in achieving the above-mentioned goal:

"The EU should be involved because, to achieve these goals – in the field of social protection, health care, education and employment – the following is necessary: common EU policy, common minimal standards, effective control mechanisms, the existing and new support programs, the protection of the EU's social system and market, an economy based on the latest scientific achievements, active and socially responsible individuals, politicians who are ready to listen and take into account the opinion of the people. The EU can do this!"

This vision gathered the full support of 37 participants, 6 participants partly agreed, nobody was fully disagreeing to this vision.

Other ideas that gathered the support of the participants but were not included in the common vision:

"We want to live in a Europe, ...

- ... where there is one minimal wage in all EU member states (12 votes),*
- ... where there is support for pensioners, by implementing a pension system that increases prosperity (10 votes),*
- ... where there is a differentiated tax system, taking care of the disadvantaged (10 votes),*
- ... where family is a priority and an environment favourable for improving the demographic situation is created (9 votes),*
- ... where education fees are decreased (9 votes),*
- ... where there is an adequate infrastructure for children (9 votes),*
- ... where the differences in income between the countryside and the cities are diminished with the help of education (8 votes),*
- ... where there is a common support for families within the whole EU (8 votes),*
- ... where there are possibilities to combine having a career and a family (7 votes),*
- ... where the child care allowances cover the costs of raising a child (6 votes),*
- ... where there is a social worker and a psychologist in every school (5 votes),*
- ... where more attention is given to the elderly living alone (5 votes),*
- ... where more attention is given to the children, especially the orphans, and there is a rehabilitation program for the children of orphanage (5 votes),*
- ... where all people are socially protected (4 votes),*
- ... where all violations of laws within a family are called by their real names, introducing the necessary laws and observing them (4 votes),*



... where every individual that establishes a family can and is capable of taking social responsibility (3 votes)".

3) EU's Global Role & Immigration: The EU's role in the world and the management of immigration

The participants agreed on the following vision for the future of Europe in this field:

"We want to live in a Europe where the flow of immigrants and emigrants is controlled, keeping the national values and respecting the values of other nations, as well as providing an equal level of prosperity and security, and at the same time having friendly relations with other countries."

This vision gathered the full support of 39 participants, 4 participants partly agreed, nobody was fully disagreeing to this vision.

The participants agreed on the following role of the EU in achieving the above-mentioned goal:

"The EU should be involved, because the outside borders should be strengthened to regulate migration and enhance security, by introducing a common data base (about the labour force that is needed in the EU and the issues of international security) and flexible tax policy, enhancing cultural exchange and respecting the cultural values of other nations without losing national identity; having a friendly foreign affairs policy in line with the common position of the EU."

This vision gathered the full support of 41 participants, 2 participants partly agreed, nobody was fully disagreeing to this vision.

Other ideas that gathered the support of the participants but were not included in the common vision:

"We want to live in a Europe, ...

... where – by raising the standard of living in all EU member states – the issue of migration (within the EU) will not be topical (16 votes),

... where people are given the opportunity to earn one's living in his/her own country, not only abroad (15 votes),

... where there is a multicultural society with a positive understanding of other cultures (14 votes),

... that trains specialists on the spot so that it does not need to invite them from other countries; states should support studying as much as possible (9 votes),

... where human trafficking decreases (9 votes),

... that supports domestic businesses (7 votes),

... where there are jobs and prosperity and there is no migration (5 votes),

... where borders are totally organized (5 votes),

... where inflation is decreasing and the common currency is introduced (5 votes),

... where immigrants are treated as the national citizens of that country (4 votes),

... where the dignity of Latvia is increased (4 votes),

... that increases the prosperity of the world (4 votes),

... where there is no discrimination on the grounds of a different color of skin, sexual orientation and religion (3 votes)".



How were the results achieved?

The result of the national consultations is a combination of carefully facilitated table discussions among citizens, the exchange of results across locations and the prioritisation of their ideas through voting mechanisms. At each event, groups or tables of citizens were overseen by a table facilitator who kept the discussion going and made sure that every voice was heard. Results were shared at pre-defined points in time by exchanging information through an online forum and live conferences. Prior the event, citizens received background information on the project and the 3 topics. No prior knowledge was required. Citizens were chosen in random selection and based on demographic criteria that ensured diversity.

	Setting	Activity
Day 1: Morning	Plenary	Welcome / Introduction Citizens obtain information on schedule of the day, process as a whole, their role, and the format of expected outcomes.
	Plenary	Voting Citizens share demographic data (gender, age, profession etc.) among themselves and across locations
Day 1: Afternoon	Table groups	Generating objectives: Citizens are split into three groups (one per topic). For each of the 3 topics, all citizens complete the phrase "In 2020, I would like to live in a Europe that...". Their input is recorded on cards and put on a pin board.
	Table groups	Grouping objectives: In each group, citizens try to group or categorise these ideas and to name this category. They thereby condense the variety of ideas to several strong objectives.
	Table groups	Challenging the objectives: Resource persons, i.e. experts, join the groups. Citizens try to detect problems or trade-offs regarding their objectives. Experts complete missing challenges.
	Rotation	Citizens visit other groups to learn about the objectives they came up with
	Plenary	Opinion snapshot: Each citizen is given 15 votes (5 for each of the 3 topics) to express which of these objectives he/she consider most important. This serves as a rough guideline to help citizens focus their subsequent discussions
	Tables groups	Formulating an achievable vision: Based on their objectives, trade-offs and the results of the opinion snapshot each group is asked to come up with one achievable vision on the Europe they would like to live in.
	Table groups	Role of the EU: Citizens define whether they see a role of the EU or not in achieving this vision.
Dinner and Party		
Day 2: until early afternoon	Plenary	Presentation and sharing of results: Citizen representatives present the results (vision, definition of the EU's role) of their group. They then learn what the groups in the other countries have come up with.
	Rotation	Content Feedback : Citizens visit other groups and obtain and exchange feedback on the results.
	Table groups	Editing: Citizens work the feedback into their results. Last chance for final amendments.
	Plenary	Confidence Voting: After being presented the final results, citizens vote to express whether they are satisfied or feel comfortable with these results.
	plenary	Closing Ceremony / End of National Consultation



About the participants

The recruitment of participants was organized by the market and opinion poll company Latvijas Fakti that in its monthly Omnibus survey asked respondents whether they would be interested in taking part in the European Citizens' Consultation in Latvia. The respondents were not asked about their attitudes towards the European Union. They were also not asked whether they had special knowledge in the topics discussed.

The participants come from different age groups and different regions of Latvia (Zemgale, Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale and Riga), they have different professions and levels of education. Among them there were Latvians, participants with other nationalities, as well as non-citizens (special status for the permanent residents of Latvia, mostly of Russian-origin, not having Latvian citizenship). The recruiters aimed at achieving gender equality.

43 people took part in the European Citizens' Consultation in Latvia – 28 women and 15 men.

They were of the following age:

- Younger than 25 – 7 participants,
- In the age between 26 to 35 – 9 participants,
- In the age between 36 to 45 – 9 participants,
- In the age between 46 to 55 – 10 participants,
- In the age between 56 to 65 – 5 participants,
- Older than 65 – 3 participants.

Participants had the following professions:

- Pupils, students – 5 participants,
- Employed – 21 participant,
- Clerks – 5 participants,
- Self-employed – 4 participants,
- Housewife – 1 participant,
- Not working/ retired - 7 participants.

There were 36 Latvians and 7 participants of other nationality, 40 citizens and 3 non-citizens.



Impressions from the Latvian Citizens' Consultation



"Europe is at the crossroad. This is exactly why decision-makers turn to the people, and you (the participants of this project) have the responsibility to give your answers which way to go. ECC is a real contribution and I believe that the results of this debate of the weekend will be of a high quality so that the decision-makers will not be able to disregard them," Foreign Affairs minister Artis Pabriks speaking to the participants on 24 February.

"Latvian citizens didn't have the opportunity to vote for or against the EU draft constitution, but you have the possibility today to express your opinion on very down-to-earth issues concerning the EU. PROVIDUS will make sure that your opinions are heard and transmitted to the EU decision makers", Krista Baumane, deputy director of PROVIDUS, in her introductory speech on 24 February.

"I was worried that my knowledge was scarce and insufficient for this kind of a debate, but everything went well," a participant, 21 years old, employed.

"This kind of process should be used to decrease the number of bureaucrats in a country in general and municipalities in particular. They would only need to have a few people doing nothing else but listening to the people," a participant, 34 years old, military.

"This event in our lives is like a spring flower that surprises one unexpectedly – something bright, wonderful and unseen. The organizers have scored a direct hit with the selection of participants because there is such a diversity here," participant, 63 years old, working in the private sector.

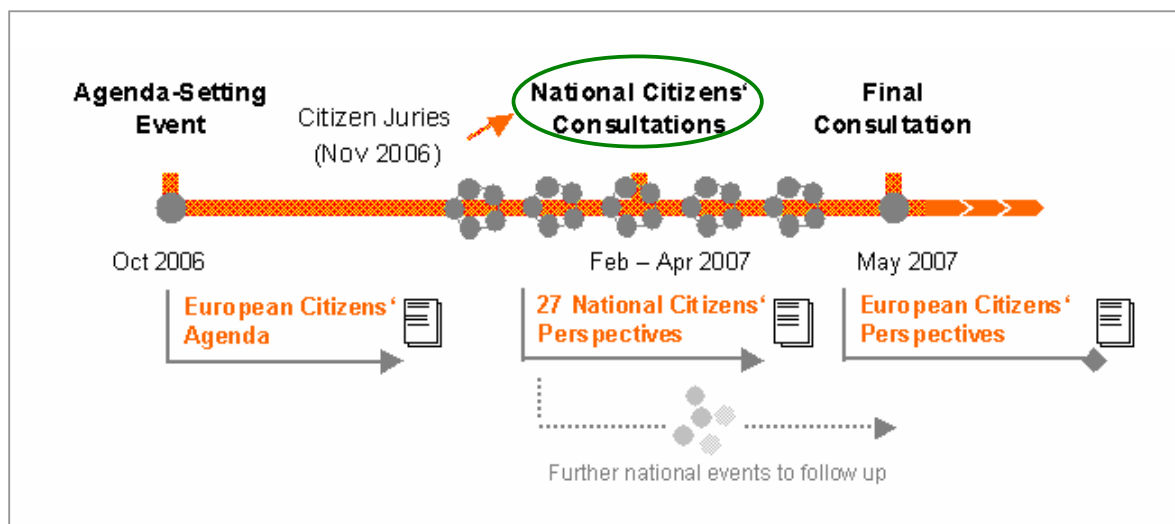
"You should go to the government with these results of the debates as if they are the results of a very serious working group of the government!" observer.



What happens with these results?

Until the end of the “period of reflection” in May 2007, and in time for the June Summit of the European Council, the European Citizens’ Consultations will produce a unique input for policy-makers as they chart a course for the European project.

The Latvian Citizens’ Consultation is one of 27 national consultations taking place in all EU-Member States in February and March 2007. Each national consultation produces national perspectives on the future of Europe.



All national outcomes serve as the basis for a European-level synthesis during the **Final Consultation** on 9/10 May 2007, highlighting the common ground and the areas of divergence between the national outcomes. The final event also kicks off a comprehensive follow-up process, which actively communicates the outcomes to policy-makers on national and European level and provides feedback to the participating citizens and the broader public.

The European Commission will present the main outcome of the European Citizens’ Consultation at the European Summit gathering all heads of state or government of the 27 EU-Member States in June 2007 in Brussels.

Through active outreach activities by all partners, the results of the European Citizens’ Consultations will be disseminated at national and European levels to achieve two objectives:

- 1) to inform a substantive debate within the framework of the three topics about the citizens’ views on the future of Europe
- 2) to demonstrate that citizen participation across Europe is not only feasible but also adds value to policy-making



How to get involved

The European Citizens' Consultations are more than a one-time exercise in citizen involvement. They are designed as a model for dialogue across the boundaries of geography and language and thereby aim at establishing a template for future European citizens' participation projects that create dialogue in a multilingual and decentralised setting, empower randomly chosen citizens to set the agenda and lead informed debates, use innovative facilitation methods and modern technology to make every voice heard.

There are many ways to get involved in the European Citizens' Consultations:

As a participant

- Contact the national partner to learn about follow-up events in your country
- Write to your national partner to let them know about your experience at the event
- Leave your contact details to the national partner if you wish to be informed about the next steps of the European Citizens' Consultations
- Leave your contact details to the national partner if you wish to be invited to follow-up events or discussions / interviews with media and policy-makers
- Stay in contact with the friends you met at the national consultation

As a citizen

- contact the national partner in your country and ask about ways to get involved.
- use the results of this initiative to talk to your family and friends about the future of Europe.
- contact your regional, national, and European representatives and let them know about your experience.

As a policy maker

- contact the European lead partner or the national partner in your country to discuss how to contribute to the project (e.g. with venues, contacts, information, or funding) and how to get involved personally.
- reference the European Citizens' Consultations in your statements.
- talk to other policy makers about the value of new forms of dialogue with citizens.
- inspire and initiate more projects like this. The partners will assist in every way.

As a journalist

- contact the European media and PR coordinator, Maria Laura Franciosi at franciosi@brusselsreporter.eu
- contact the national media coordinator or the national partner in your country to request images, quotes, interview partners and other material.
- consider the potential of the European Citizens' Consultations for feature articles, TV documentaries, news stories, interviews, personal stories of participants and many other forms of reporting. The partners will be happy to assist you with material and ideas.

As a researcher or practitioner

- sign up for the observer programme at the Final Event on 9/10 May 2007
- contact the European lead partner to obtain more detailed information on the methodology and raw results from the events.
- contact the European lead partner or the national partner in your country to discuss opportunities for knowledge-building and research as well as to establish contacts with like-minded researchers and practitioners.



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www.european-citizens-consultations.eu

Also, please have a look at www.european-citizens-consultations.eu for updated information and contact the Webmaster (info@european-citizens-consultations.eu) to give us feedback or to let us know about your information requirements.



The ECC all over Europe

European Consortium

- **Project Lead /Co-funding:** King Baudouin Foundation, <http://www.kbs-frb.be/>, Gerrit Rauws, Rauws.g@Kbs-frb.be
- **Media Coordination:** European Citizen Action Service, www.ecas.org, Nathalie Calmejane, nathalie.calmejane@ecas.org, +32 (2) 512-01 13
- **Policy Advice:** EPC – European Policy Centre, www.theepc.be, Jacki Davis, j.davis@theepc.be
- **Scientific Advice:** University of Siena, www.unisi.it, Pierangelo Isernia, isernia@unisi.it
- **Coordination of Funding:** NEF – Network of European Foundations, www.nefic.org
- **Evaluation:** Dialogik gGmbH, www.dialogik-expert.de, Ortwin Renn, renn@dialogik-expert.de
- **Process Management / Events:** IFOK GmbH, www.ifok.de, Felix Oldenburg (General Mgmt), felix.oldenburg@ifok.de, +49 (30) 53 60 77-32, and Stefan Schäfers (Partner Mgmt), Stefan.schaefers@ifok.de, +32 (2) 500 88-11

National Partners (Operating partner if not otherwise indicated)

- **Austria:** Centre for Social Innovation, www.zsi.at, Sigrun Bohle, bohle@zsi.at
- **Belgium:** King Baudouin Foundation (Funding and Operational Partner), www.kbs-frb.be, Hervé Lisoir, Lisoir.h@Kbs-frb.be, Chancellery of the Belgian Prime Minister www.belgium.be, Belgian Chamber of Representatives www.lachambre.be (Funding Partners)
- **Bulgaria:** Open Society Institute (Funding Partner) www.soros.org/about/foundations/bulgaria, Centre for Liberal Strategies, www.cls-sofia.org, Antoinette Primatarova, cls@cls-sofia.org,
- **Cyprus:** Institute of Statistical Research, Analysis and Documentation, www.aueb.gr/statistical-institute, John Panaretos, opan@aub.gr
- **Czech Republic:** Partners Czech, o. p. s., www.partnersczech.cz, Veronika Endrstova, veronika.endrstova@partnersczech.cz
- **Denmark:** Danish Cultural Institute, www.dankultur.dk, Lars Høgh Hansen, lhh@dankultur.dk
- **Estonia:** Open Estonia Foundation, www.oef.org.ee/et, Kadri Ollino, kadri@oef.org.ee (Funding and Operational Partner)
- **Finland:** Svenska Studiecentralen, www.ssc.fi, Björn Wallén, bjorn.wallén@ssc.fi
- **France:** Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation (Funding Partner), www.fph.fr, Fondation de France (Funding Partner, www.fdf.org, Economie et Humanisme www.economie-humanisme.org, Bernard Pellecuer, bernard.pellecuer@economie-humanisme.org
- **Germany:** Robert Bosch Stiftung (Funding Partner), www.bosch-stiftung.de, IFOK GmbH, www.ifok.de, Felix Oldenburg, felix.oldenburg@ifok.de
- **Greece:** Bodossaki Foundation, www.bodossaki.gr, Alexander Onassis Foundation, www.onassis.gr, Leventis Foundation, www.leventisfoundation.org, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, www.snfoundation.org (all funding partners), Institute of Statistical Research, Analysis and Documentation, www.aueb.gr/statistical-institute, John Panaretos, stat-inst@aub.gr
- **Hungary:** Partners Hungary Foundation, www.partnershungary.hu, Almási Judit, partners@partnershungary.hu
- **Ireland:** National Forum on Europe, www.forumoneurope.ie, Eileen Kehoe, info@forumoneurope.ie
- **Italy:** Compagnia di San Paolo (Funding Partner), www.compagnia.torino.it, University of Siena (Operating Partner), www.unisi.it, Pierangelo Isernia, isernia@unisi.it
- **Latvia:** Centre for public policy PROVIDUS, www.providus.lv, Dace Akule, akule@providus.lv
- **Lithuania:** Baltic Partners for Change Management, www.partnersbaltic.lt, Gaila Muceniekas, gaila@partnersbaltic.lt
- **Luxembourg:** Université de Luxembourg, Etudes sociologiques et politiques www.uni.lu/recherche/flshase/stade, Philippe Poirier philippe.poirier@uni.lu, Raphael Kies raphael.kies@uni.lu
- **Malta:** Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit, www.ftz.org.mt, Brian Restall, brian.restall@pim.com.mt
- **Netherlands:** European Cultural Foundation (Funding Partner), www.eurocult.org, Ivo Hartmann, i.hartman@publiek-politiek.nl
- **Poland:** Partners Polska, www.fpp.org.pl, Maciej Tanski, maciej.tanski@partnerspolska.pl
- **Portugal:** Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, www.ics.ul.pt, Pedro Magalhães, pedro.magalhaes@ics.ul.pt
- **Romania:** Romanian Academic Society, www.sar.org.ro, Ana Maria Dorobantu, deliceana@yahoo.com
- **Slovakia:** PDCS - Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia, www.pdcs.sk, Lenka Raposova, lenka@pdcs.sk
- **Slovenia:** CNVOS - Centre of non-governmental organisations of Slovenia, www.cnvos.si, Alenka Blazinsek, cnvos@mail.ljudmila.org
- **Spain:** Luis Vives Foundation, www.fundacionluisvives.org, Alia Chahin Martín, a.chahin@fundacionluisvives.org
- **Sweden:** Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Funding Partner), www.rj.se, Global Utmaning (Operational Partner), www.globalutmaning.se, Erika Augustinsson, erika.augustinsson@globalutmaning.se, Pernilla Baralt nenen, pernila.baralt@globalutmaning.se
- **United Kingdom:** Barrow Cadbury Trust, www.bctrust.org.uk, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, www.jrct.uk, Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, www.irrt.org.uk, Carnegie UK Trust, www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, www.irf.org.uk, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk (Funding Partners), Power Inquiry, www.powerinquiry.org, Oliver Henman, ohenman@gmail.com
- **Citizens' Juries:** nexus e.V., www.nexus-berlin.com, Nicolas Bach, bach@nexus.tu-berlin.de



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