

# European Citizens' Consultations 2009



**Bulgarian Perspectives on  
the Economic and Social  
Future of Europe**



**European Citizens'  
Consultation in Bulgaria  
28-29 March 2009**



**European Citizens'  
Consultations**

**The economic and social future of Europe**



## About the ECC 2009

The European Citizens' Consultations 2009 (ECC 2009) bring together citizens from all 27 EU Member States to in the run-up to the 2009 European elections the question:

**“What can the EU do to shape our economic and social future in a globalised world?”**

### **An Online Debate**

A pan-European online debate marked the first stage in the European Citizens' Consultations 2009 process. Between the 3rd of December 2008 and March 2009, everyone was invited to take part and to make proposals for our economic and social future. These proposals then fed directly into the European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria as material for discussion.

### **27 Identical Conferences**

The 27 European Citizens' Consultations were attended by a total of 1,500 citizens selected at random by professional opinion research institutes reflecting their country's demographic composition. These identical conferences, held simultaneously in nine countries at a time over three weekends in March 2009, are the heart of the ECC process. They enable citizens to develop recommendations on Europe's economic and social future, and to discuss these with key national and European policy-makers. The European Citizens' Consultations do not work according to a one-size-fits-all approach. While all consultations follow the same basic format, the size of these events varies between a minimum format of 30 participants and up to 150 participants. On the second day citizens are given a unique opportunity to debate their recommendations in the run-up to the European elections – with national MEPs.

### **A European Citizens' Summit**

A European Citizens' Summit, attended by 150 participants from the 27 Consultations, will be held in Brussels on the 10th – 11th May 2009. Here, citizens will finalise a set of European recommendations and debate these with European policy-makers.

### **Regional Follow-up Debates**

The citizens' recommendations will be discussed with newly elected Members of the European Parliament and more opinion-leaders at regional conferences in autumn 2009.

### **Partners**

The European Citizens' Consultations are organised by a group of independent not-for-profit organisations including foundations, NGOs, universities and think-tanks from all EU Member States led by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium). The ECC 2009 is co-financed by the European Commission under its “Debate Europe” programme, the King Baudouin Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Robert Bosch Stiftung, ING and further foundations supporting activities at national level.



## The European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria

The European Citizens Consultation in Bulgaria gathered on 28-29 March 2009 **50** citizens in Sofia to develop the Bulgarian perspectives on the economic and social future of Europe. The citizens participating in the consultation were randomly invited according to criteria of representativity: different age groups, different educational levels, gender, geographical distribution, and other Member States-specific criteria were considered to ensure that the citizens attending the European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria represented the demographic composition of the country as a whole.

The event was organised by the Centre for Liberal Strategies. CLS was created in 1994 as an independent NGO. The emphasis in CLS's research and analytical work in the recent years lies on a wide range of issues: democratization of post-communist countries, corruption, rule of law, economy, populism, anti-Americanism and the new world order. More information on [www.cls-sofia.org](http://www.cls-sofia.org)

The Bulgarian consultation was held at Dedeman Princess Sofia Hotel, hall Rubin. The discussion was addressed by Mrs. Gergana Passy, Minister of European Affairs.

For two days the participants were engaged in developing recommendations for the future of the EU. First they shared their concerns, and then they developed ideas on "What can be done?" and then they focused on giving opinions on "What should the EU do to shape our economic and social future in a globalized world?" The deliberations in groups, the reflections and the comments from the economist Dr. Georgy Ganev, and also the informal contacts during the weekend helped them to come out with 10 common recommendations covering different aspects of the topic. At the end the participants debated their views with Nikolay Mladenov and Evgeni Kirilov, MEPs.

This report is a short record of the outcomes of the European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria and was distributed to citizens and other participants at the end of the event. A long report will be available by mid April. Please contact the organisers or visit [www.grajdani-za-evropa](http://www.grajdani-za-evropa) to obtain a copy and find out more about the project.





## National Concerns

In the first day of the National Consultation the participants voiced more than 120 concerns regarding the social and economic future of Europe. Here is a Synthesis of the concerns shared by the participants:

- Economic crisis and standard of life in EU
- EU Energy Security
- Ineffective spending of the EU funds
- The problems of the competitive power of the EU in the global world and also the member-states in the framework of the EU Common market
- Civil Society and media
- The lack of control of the quality of goods
- Agricultural problems and Ecology
- Crime and the Judiciary
- The disbalance of the EU member-states
- Corruption and grey economy
- Problems of national identity
- Demographic problems
- The lack of common EU policies in the education, social and health areas
- Problems of labor market

After sharing concerns the participants developed **ideas** on “What should be done for the economic and social future of Europe?” Here are the Top 10 summarized headlines voted by the citizens:

- Clear rules and stricter control on spending the EU Funds
- EU to introduce more consumer protection policies
- Common policies for guaranteed access to health care
- More public information about the EU and its programs
- EU should regulate the common and the regional labor markets
- Stricter environmental standards, control and incentives for clean technologies and productions Common European policy in the area of education
- Stricter control over the financial policy
- Anti-corruption policies
- Support for production

The participants developed 10 recommendations based on the summarised headlines of the ideas.



## National Recommendations

✳ The EU should develop a common code of conduct for the public servants, require disclosure of the personal assets of those who work in European and national institutions and promote legislation on lobbying on national and European level.

Approved by 100% of the participants.

✳ The EU should strengthen the consumer protection policies through systemic production and lab control in the food processing, pharmaceutical and light industries for goods produced and imported by the EU. Measures for the protection of children on the Internet as consumers of electronic games should be taken.

Approved by 98% of the participants.

✳ To ensure equal access to health and rehabilitation services in all member - states. All 27 member - states should be equal members of the European Organs Bank. The EU should provide guarantees that health services will be offered on a competitive basis, including that the national health markets will be liberalized.

Approved by 96% of the participants.

✳ To strengthen the EU policy on introducing new green technologies and preserving traditional clean production processes through economic incentives and severe sanctions for those who violate the rules. The EU should take harsh measures against the cutting of forests and construction in protected areas in all member-states.

Approved by 96% of the participants.

✳ The EU should introduce common criteria and standards for the different educational levels which to be recognized in all member-states. A common European subject should be made part of the curriculum which contributes to the inter-cultural exchange between the member-states.

Approved by 94% of the participants.

✳ The EU should increase citizens awareness about the EU (objectives, good practices, achievements and news) and the member-states. We recommend that a common European web portal be created containing: cultural and educational exchange programs, information about the member-states, geographic, cultural, historical, tourist information, recipes, traditions and customs.

Approved by 92% of the participants.

✳ The EU should adopt a common labor migration policy and stimulate more active information and media campaigns aimed at changing the discriminatory attitudes on the labor markets.

Approved by 92% of the participants.

✳ A common policy and centralized control on the part of the European Central Bank over the financial banking and non-banking institutions aimed at reducing the risk of market distortions.

Approved by 86% of the participants.

✳ The EU should appoint an ombudsman for the Operational programs in Bulgaria who to refer corruption and conflict of interest practices to the European and Bulgarian institutions and to publicize the received signals and stimulate civic participation at national level for reporting corruption and conflict of interest cases.

Approved by 86% of the participants.

✳ The EU should support production by liberalizing the entrepreneurship requirements, limiting the restrictions on the free movement of goods and setting a unified tax rate.

Approved by 82% of the participants.



## How were the Results achieved?

### The Online Debate

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2008 right until a few days before the national consultations, a pan-European online debate took place inviting people from all over Europe to discuss and put forward their ideas on what the EU can do shape our economic and social future. This debate took place in the national languages of each country, enabling all members of the general public to make their voice heard and to make their proposals. The top 5 proposals from the online debate in Bulgaria were one of the inputs given to citizens attending the European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria. In addition, citizens were given the top idea from the online debates in the 8 other countries holding their national consultation at the same time.

### The Deliberative Process at the National Consultations

The outcomes of the national consultations are a combination of carefully facilitated table discussions among citizens, the exchange of results across national consultations taking place across Europe. Discussions with experts helped ensure the feasibility of the recommendations drawn up by citizens. 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 by inputting agreed upon contributions into a central database system. Prior to the event, citizens received background information on the project and the EU's competencies and activities. No prior knowledge was required.

	Activity
Day 1: Morning	<b>Welcome / Introduction by</b> Gergana Passy, Minister of European Affairs, Bulgaria; Ingrid Shikova, Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria; Fabrice de Kerchove, KBF; Ivan Krastev, CLS and Rumiana Bachvarova, MLinks
	<b>Exploration of Citizens' Concerns</b>
Day 1: Afternoon	<b>European Exchange</b> with other events happening simultaneously across Europe.
	<b>Development of Ideas.</b> Citizens generate their own ideas on "What needs to be done?"
	<b>Challenging the Ideas.</b> Resource people, i.e. experts, join the discussion challenging the citizens' ideas.
	<b>Reflection of Input.</b> Citizens reflect on the input from the resource people.
	<b>Selection of 10 Final Ideas by the Citizens (Voting)</b>
Day 2: until early afternoon	<b>Presentation and Sharing of Results</b>
	<b>Input on the Competency and Responsibility for Action.</b> Resource people highlight to citizens who is responsible for action and, where applicable, what the EU is already doing in this field.
	<b>Drafting of Recommendations in Groups</b> Citizens work at tables to develop their ideas into recommendations.
	<b>Revision of Recommendations after feedback from other Groups</b>
	<b>Final Confidence Voting by all Citizens</b>
	<b>MEP Debate</b> - Nikolay Mladenov, MEP, EPP-ED; Evgeni Kirilov, MEP, PES These MEPs took part in a unique debate with citizens about their recommendations for the economic and social future of Europe.
	<b>Closing Ceremony / End of National Consultation</b> Nikolay Mladenov, Evgeni Kirilov, Antoinette Primatarova, CLS and Fabrice de Kerchove, KBF



## About the Participants

### Demographic Information on the Participants

#### Number of participants: 50

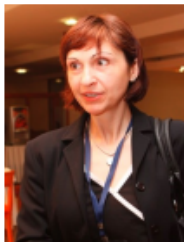
Men: 23 Women: 27	Women 54 % Men 46%
up to 35: 17 36-55: 18 more than 56: 15	Age 18 - 35   34% Age 36 - 55   36% Age 56 - 80   30%
In education: 7 Employed: 20 Self-employed: 3 At home: Unemployed: 7 Pensioner: 13	In education   14% Employed   40% Self-employed   6% At home   0% Unemployed   14% Pensioner   26%
<b>Where have you been?</b>  Germany 18 Slovakia 11 Italy 10 Latvia 5 Netherlands 5 Cyprus 2 Portugal 2 Denmark 1	<b>Where would you like to go?</b>  Netherlands 14 Italy 9 Denmark 7 Germany 7 Portugal 5 Cyprus 3 Slovakia 2 Latvia 0



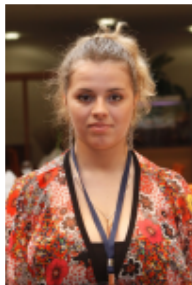
## Impressions from the European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria



Opening: Gergana Passy, Ingrid Shikova, Ivan Krastev, Rumiana Bachvarova, Fabrice de Kerchove



"It is an extraordinary experience - I didn't expect it! People are speaking freely in public, and not in their living rooms. I saw faith, I saw hope."  
Aleksandra Gesheva, Sofia, Bulgaria



"It is successful! Because solutions are found, and not only questions raised."  
Plamena Todorova, Sofia, Bulgaria



"We may be different in terms of age, education and ethnicity, but we are united in our views on global issues."  
Dessimira Krasteva



"What is good about this debate is that there is both diversity of opinions and tolerance."  
Rayna Samardzhieva







## What Happens with these Results?

The European Citizens' Consultation in Bulgaria is one of 27 Consultations taking place in all EU Member States in March 2009. Each National Consultation produces national perspectives on the economic and social future of Europe.

All national outcomes serve as the basis for a **European overview of national recommendations**, drawn up shortly after the last round of National Consultations are held on the 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> of March 2009. This overview of all recommendations from all 27 Member States will be vetted by citizens, debated on by the general public and the final 15 European Recommendations will be selected by those citizens who attended the National Consultations.

These 15 European recommendations form the basis of the **European Citizens' Summit** which will be held in Brussels on the 10th and 11th of May 2009. Here 10% of the citizens who attended their National Consultation will discuss the European recommendations, as well as the feasibility and policy relevance of their demands and suggestions. The heads of the European Institutions as well as Heads of European political parties have agreed to continue the debate with the citizens themselves.

The European Citizens' Summit also kicks off a **comprehensive follow-up process of regional outreach debates**, which actively communicate the outcomes to policy-makers on national and European level and disseminates the results via the participating citizens to the broader public and civil society. Following the European elections this is an important step in cementing the importance of citizen participation in policy making and in furthering the reach of the European Citizens' Consultations 2009.

## Contact

For further information about the European Citizens' Consultations in Bulgaria, including information for the media and about how you can stay involved in the process, please contact

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