



## **National Debate “Your Europe – Your Future”**

**Lisbon, 2 - 3 March 2007**

The national debate “Your Europe – Your Future” took place in Lisbon, from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, organized by the Portuguese National Youth Council, in close collaboration with the Commission Representation and the European Parliament Information Office in Portugal, the National Agency of the Youth Programme and the Portuguese Youth Institute. This event brought together 45 participants from all over the country to debate the following themes: The Future of the Constitutional Treaty; Democracy and Civil Society; The Social and Economic Model; Sustainable Development; Youth and Education; The EU in a Globalising World.

### **The Future of the Constitutional Treaty**

Regarding the value of the Constitutional Treaty, the young participants agreed on the importance of:

- Building a more democratic, transparent and efficient Europe;
- Primacy of the rights of the citizens;
- Increasing the power of the European Parliament;
- Consecrating the values of the Union, human rights, freedom, fraternity, tolerance, justice, cooperation, among others;
- Simplification of the architecture of the legislative system;
- Deepening the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Social Model.

On the other hand, the young participants express their reticence about the fact that the Constitutional Treaty does not remove the lack of proximity between voters and representatives, since the citizens cannot choose the “Government of the Europe”. The debate was also focused on the reinforcement of the laic principle. Finally the working group concluded that European citizens need to have a better knowledge of the Constitutional Treaty and be more aware of its importance.

### **Democracy and Civil Society**

The participants recognised the urgent need of the EU to bring the decision-making process closer to citizens, creating and promoting participation mechanisms. For a global participation, it was suggested:

- To reinforce the dissemination of the information services among the citizens, developing tools such as the “Europe Bus” or the “Parliament for All”;
- To improve the electoral participation, testing the electronic voting system in the European Parliament elections in 2009;
- To study the implementation of an incentive voting method (tax benefits; compulsory vote);
- To promote and strengthen the European associativism.

## **Social and Economic Model**

The European social and economic model must be reformed to respond to demographic changes in Europe and globalisation. In respect of employment, the debate was focused in the concept of flexicurity. Despite its success in the Nordic countries, the young participants stressed the need to adapt this model to the cultural, educational, social and economic specificities of each country. The social and economic model must promote the personal accomplishment and the professional achievement of each person. The unemployment and precarious employment among young people were voiced as major concerns, together with the labour migration and migrant integration. In this regard, the participants insisted on the need of an effective Integration Policy, including education, employment, health, housing, among other areas, in order to enhance social cohesion. Taking into account the above considerations, the participants call for implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, to be done by each Member State responding to its concrete situation, and a clear definition of EU priorities in the short, medium and long term.

## **Sustainable Development**

The Kyoto protocol and the environmental responsibility concept were the main topics of the debate regarding the development perspectives for the next decades. To the question "How can the European Union promote the Sustainable Development" the conclusions were divided in four areas: Energy, Awareness, Planning and Resources, in which were offered several recommendations:

### Energy

- Development of the consumer/producer concept;
- Credit facilities and support to candidature processes to energy projects of proven environmental value.

### Awareness:

- Awareness raising actions through the Media, schools and ONGs;
- Support local authorities and schools that present participative projects on environmental awareness.

### Planning:

- Look over the present spatial planning mechanisms;
- Tax benefits for projects with proven environmental relevance and increase the taxes for interventions that do not meet this criteria;
- Support public transportation improvement plans;
- Provide incentives for urban recovery projects.

### Resources:

- Optimizing and recycling the existing resources;
- Financial incentives for research and innovation in face of the need to replace the resources and non-renewable fossil fuels;
- Fight against water waste.

## **Youth and Education**

The Youth and Education working group stressed the need for recognition of the value of non formal education and the importance of the competences acquired in its context. For that, the young participants recommended the following actions:

- Development of partnerships in order to enhance non formal education;
- Enable teachers and educators to meet non formal education methodologies, keeping in view its promotion in formal context;
- Provide financial and political support to non formal education activities;
- Give more visibility to the value and benefits of non formal education.

As regards formal education, the young participants agreed on the importance of:

- Increasing the investment in higher education;
- Changing the paradigm of education/learning;
- Recognizing non formal education as compliment to formal education and an effective way to fight against school failure and drop out;
- Acquiring knowledge and competences in a continuous evaluation;
- Standardize the effectiveness of secondary and higher education, minimizing the gap between them;
- Consider the pedagogical performance in the teacher's career evaluation.

## **The EU in a Globalising World**

Globalisation is a reality in today's world. We must deal with the challenges and opportunities it presents, strengthening the EU global role. Thus, this working group emphasised the need for policy coherence, namely between the agriculture and development policies – the allocation of funds in a structured way with benefits for all different areas. In order to ensure that the EU has a coherent and consistent image and action in the world, the dialogue between Member States must be further reinforced and the flag of inclusion and diversity must be raised.

As the world constantly changes, strengthening the relations between Europe and Africa and the perception of enlargement as a way to enhance the competitiveness of the EU were identified as necessary conditions for its success.