



Europe for Citizens Programme – Focus Groups and Support for Impact Assessment

Progress Report, 5th July 2011



Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Purpose and scope of report.....	1
1.2	Objectives of the study.....	1
1.3	Research undertaken.....	1
2.0	Methodological approach	2
2.1	Research questions and pertinent issues.....	2
2.1.1	Information sources.....	5
2.1.2	Focus groups.....	5
2.2	Next steps	9
2.3	Timetable.....	9
	Annex One: Report from Vienna Focus Group	1
	Annex Two: Report from Warsaw Focus Group.....	7
	Annex Three: Report from Paris Focus Group	17

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of report

This brief report sets out progress achieved to date on work to provide additional research support for the forthcoming Impact Assessment of a future Europe for Citizens Programme from 2014. The document is structured as follows:

- Objectives of the study;
- Research undertaken;
- Proposed methodology;
- Research questions;
- Information sources;
- Initial findings from focus groups;
- Next steps;
- Proposed timetable for completion.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study builds on the findings of the Interim Evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme, and the stated objectives are as follows:

- Organise and run focus groups with programme beneficiaries and stakeholders in Paris, Vienna and Warsaw in conjunction with the local Europe for Citizens Points.
- Identify ways in which supported projects and organisations can achieve (and obstacles preventing them from achieving) greater sustainability and impact in the following areas:
 - Involving more and different types of people
 - Achieving greater impact on those taking part
 - Developing activities that are interesting for citizens and relevant to their needs
 - Bringing target groups together (especially multipliers or intermediaries between citizens and policymakers)
 - Connecting the European / transnational and local levels
 - Encouraging greater dissemination or communication of results

1.3 Research undertaken

The work carried out so far has focussed on organising and carrying out three focus groups, plus developing our understanding of the aims of the study and designing an approach to the remaining research tasks. The following focus groups have been carried out:

- **Vienna, 12th May 2011**, with a thematic focus on Action 4 – Active European Remembrance.
- **Warsaw, 16th May, 2011** focussing on twinning and associated measures under Action 1, including projects that bring together different types of organisation.
- **Paris, 1st June 2011**, focussing mainly on civil society projects and stakeholders.

2.0 Methodological approach

2.1 Research questions and pertinent issues

Achieving greater impact and sustainability from projects supported through the Europe for Citizens programme raises a number of important questions including:

- *What should projects seek to achieve?*
- *Which subjects and themes should be covered?*
- *What types of organisation should be involved?*
- *At which target groups should support be aimed? (e.g. citizens, multipliers, intermediaries)*
- *What types of activities, events, outputs should be supported?*
- *How should results be communicated?*
- *For how long should activity be supported (project duration)?*
- *What long-term impacts should projects aim to deliver?*
- *How should the impacts of projects be measured?*

In one sense several of these questions are already answered by the way that the framework of the Programme is constructed, since this defines objectives, themes and target groups. In particular, the approach adopted allows access to the Programme from across a broad range of interests and themes; maximising the benefits of a bottom-up approach, where stakeholders can define the scope and nature of the support they require from the EU to best help to meet their needs. Therefore the question of how to increase the impact of projects has three key dimensions:

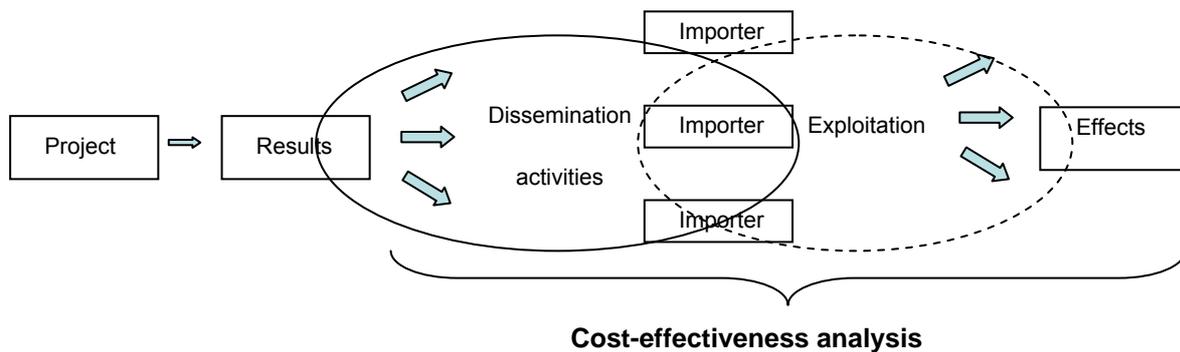
- Firstly, the extent to which, in future, different projects (in terms of activities, participants, delivery agents and project structures for example) might be supported, which are more likely to have an impact than has been the case up until now (this implies changes to the detail of the Programme framework);
- Secondly, how might the results of (current and future) projects be used more effectively (not necessarily requiring significant changes to the current Programme framework); and
- Thirdly, how best to measure and map impact to help the future direction of the Programme.

Impact has a range of meanings and applications. For example, it may concern the immediate (largely experiential) impacts of taking part (including some groups who are considered under-represented or 'hard-to-reach'); it may mean increasing the overall impact of the Programme by supporting types of activities that might appeal more directly to citizens (emphasising issues with strong local relevance for example); it may also include an element of raising the visibility and profile of the Programme, which would favour sustainability and increase 'reach'; looking at increasing impact through better integration of actors and between levels (EU, national, regional and local) to stimulate synergy effects; or focusing on the impact that improved dissemination and communication might have.

Using a simple input-output model, on a very basic level the approach might be to identify and support projects that are, *a priori*, more likely to have an impact (focusing on the upstream side of the project

procurement process where the levers are selection and assessment criteria), or conversely focusing on making the most of the results that are generated (the downstream component of the process). The former implies a more strategic approach, with greater scope for the EU to direct the types of projects supported, perhaps placing a stronger emphasis on dissemination at the project application and selection stage for example. The latter implies that not all projects have the same potential in terms of the external impact of the results (i.e. outside of the project and its partners). A combination might also be used, depending on the nature of each detailed measure within the Programme.

In terms of the role of dissemination, the diagram below provides a useful conceptual model:



There is evidence from previous studies¹ on impact, that insofar as it depends on effective dissemination and exploitation of results (rather than simply on participation), there is a risk that resources are spread too thinly and project delivery organisations and partnerships all too often lack the necessary skills to make the most of the outputs generated – content experts are not always best equipped to deliver communication and dissemination activity effectively; and dissemination can be relegated to become an afterthought at the end of the project, rather than an integral dimension from the start.

Another issue concerns content – the difference between participation in a project as an end-in-itself has already been mentioned. This is a valid, though intangible, impact on individuals in particular, but should be compared with projects where impact relies on more tangible outputs such as training, toolkits, DVDs and events. Intangible impacts also include those at an aggregate (rather than an individual level), for example awareness raising or policy learning. The table below presents a draft typology, taken from the study mentioned above, and may provide a useful starting point for this aspect.

¹ Notably a study by ECOTEC for DGEAC: "Cost-effectiveness analysis of dissemination and exploitation actions", May 2008, from which the diagram is taken.

Results	Activities
TANGIBLE Products Methods	Targeted distribution of books and other paper publications (project results, brochures, catalogues, best practice guides etc.) Promotion and showcasing of products at larger-scale events to bring potential users into contact with project promoters Visits by decision-makers to see methods in action Website downloads CD-ROMs, DVDs and films for specific target groups Capture method in written and/or electronic format Executive briefing notes and policy papers Training in use of method Visits by decision-makers to see methods in action Website downloads CD-ROMs, DVDs and films for specific target groups
INTANGIBLE Experiences Policy lessons European cooperation	Events aimed at specific target groups – seminars, workshops and networking events Debriefing of beneficiaries (returning staff, students and volunteers) Seek to influence European and national "mainstreaming strategies" via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy papers and briefing notes - Visits by project promoters to policy-makers - Use of policy "champions" - Identify key policy frameworks and bodies to feed lessons to Activity driven by national agencies – conferences, policy papers etc.

There are therefore different ways to deliver an impact. Some of the challenges of projects disseminating and exploiting their results are well known, and tracking impacts is a notoriously difficult process. This current work focuses on **creating more opportunities for future impact**. To do this, we first of all need to understand how those closest to the Programme view its impact and sustainability and how they suggest this might be improved. This is an important line of evidence. However we must also look at the data and information we have on the projects currently supported and how they are performing in terms of impact and sustainability.

Accordingly, we propose to frame the next stage of work around the following broad topics:

1. What are the main areas of concern in relation to impact and sustainability? This builds on the criteria set out in section 1.2, informed by the focus group discussions.
2. What evidence do we have concerning specific problems relating to impact and sustainability (e.g. lack of dissemination capabilities)? Are any patterns evident, what implications is this likely to have?
3. Are there examples of good/ effective practice where supported projects and organisations have achieved greater impact and sustainability effects in these areas?
4. What are the options available and what is the potential for expanding impact through modifications to the Programme?

2.1.1 Information sources

Then information sources that will be used to inform the next stage of analysis are as follows:

- Three focus group reports (annexed in draft);
- Results of online consultation on future programme;
- Results of stakeholder consultation event;
- Interim evaluation, specifically;
 - Beneficiary interviews
 - Stakeholder interviews
 - Interviews of ineligible and unsuccessful applicants
 - Project case studies
 - Review of project final reports
- Participant survey (Impact study from 2009);
- Follow up interviews.

This includes the acquisition of new evidence as well as drawing on the evidence gathered previously for the interim evaluation. At this stage we have completed one of the key elements of this evidence base – the three focus groups and the findings are now discussed.

2.1.2 Focus groups

The focus groups gathered delegates' views on ways in which the programme could seek to achieve greater sustainability and impact. Although we encouraged a mix of organisations and individuals to take part (across a specific theme of activity) and invited a number of delegates from outside the circle of project promoters and key stakeholders, these groups formed the majority of participants. The groups did however include representatives of local and national government, and a small number of researchers, social scientists and journalists. Many of the delegates expressed gratitude at being invited, especially considering that there is still scope to make changes to the future programme.

The groups tended to be structured in the following broad way, with local variations depending on the composition of delegates and any changes made in response to the suggestions of delegates:

- Discussions around good practice at project level
 - Agreeing what makes a successful or high impact project
 - Comparing success criteria as defined by projects with those defined by the Commission (see section 1.2)
- What kinds of activity could have even greater levels of impact?
 - Assessing levels of interest in and demand for different types of project/ activity
 - Identifying barriers to greater impact and sustainability
 - Discussing the need for and feasibility of changes

The broad findings of the groups have also helped to shape our approach to the next steps, as demonstrated in table

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Table 2.1 Initial observations from focus groups

Criterion	Finding	Sub-questions
<p>Involving more and different types of people</p>	<p>Recognise importance of reaching new people, those least likely to be active in events and other hard-to-reach groups.</p> <p>Recognising the impact and value of volunteers and in-kind benefits.</p> <p>Difficulties around finances connected with daily rates for participants.</p>	<p>How well does the programme reach new people, how could this be improved? How to achieve a balance between accessible, small activities and in-depth, higher impact projects?</p> <p>Is it possible to collect evidence on the leverage effect, and potential impact on cost-effectiveness at programme level?</p> <p>What evidence do we have on the extent of this problem and what impact is it likely to have?</p>
<p>Achieving greater impact on those taking part</p>	<p>Many wish to have an impact in the longer term, influence long-term processes, change perceptions, develop skills, promote further action.</p> <p>Value of longer-term, follow-up, and projects with multiple events.</p> <p>Allowing space for experimentation, for original ideas, risk, unexpected impacts.</p> <p>Recognised value of educational, capacity building projects and activities.</p>	<p>How should this impact be measured and ways of ensuring that the Programme doesn't favour activities which are easiest to measure.</p> <p>How can follow-up meetings and repeat activities be encouraged without limiting new applicants? Importance of qualitative assessment, feedback and long-term tracking. Can information on unsuccessful applications be shared, used to develop new networks, new ideas?</p> <p>Is there anything that discourages innovative applications or risk-aversion in implementation?</p>
<p>Developing activities that are interesting for citizens and relevant to their needs</p>	<p>Importance of knowing what the needs of citizens are, proximity to citizens, and what they are interested in.</p> <p>Recognition of the flexibility that the programme provides, but a need to avoid over-regulating themes and prescriptive sets of outputs/activities. Others highlighted the way the programme's flexibility requires skill in completing applications and many would value greater information exchange with the funder (to reconcile aims, objectives, target groups, activities)</p>	<p>Exploring ways of promoting bids from organisations with direct links to citizens or with good knowledge via research or surveys.</p> <p>Assessing the aims and achievements of projects rather than outputs. Focus on sharing information between EU, national structures and organisations that support the programme's objectives.</p>

Criterion	Finding	Sub-questions
	Disagreements over the need to limit remembrance to Nazism or Stalinism, need to focus on great historical events that have shaped Europe, and value of self-critical, historical-political approach as a way of understanding and linking to the present and informing transnational discussions/ exchange.	Are there changes that can be made to the scope or content of remembrance activities?
Bringing target groups together (especially multipliers or intermediaries between citizens and policymakers)	<p>Value of defining target groups recognised, but difficulties in reaching them and assessing how well they have been reached. The target group should be defined by theme of activities and vice versa.</p> <p>Relatively low level of awareness of programme outside project and stakeholder, circles, amongst decision-makers.</p> <p>Value of networking recognised, but only when relationships are productive or strategic, not a requirement of funding. Local, cross-border or transnational networks felt to be more valuable than multinational networks.</p> <p>Important to recognise potential impact on non-participants (through participants, intermediaries etc).</p>	<p>Explore issues around target groups: can they be specified at programme level or application stage?</p> <p>Links to dissemination actions.</p> <p>Explore issues around networks and partnerships.</p> <p>Ways to encourage consideration of multiplier effect: is it a matter of approach or just data collection?</p>
Connecting the European / transnational and local levels	<p>Need to translate European issues/ problems and EU policies into tangible, meaningful subjects and local activities. Value of national level NGOs, not just EU-level, Brussels-based organisations</p> <p>Interest in developing partnerships with neighbourhood countries, i.e. Poland and Ukraine</p>	<p>How can projects be "Europeanised" or made relevant to other contexts? Who is best placed to do this?</p> <p>Explore feasibility of a measure supporting activities with a neighbouring country (i.e. through annual focus on one country?)</p>
Encouraging greater dissemination or	Communication often project-based, seen as a task and complex, difficult to do. Limited value or reach of DVDs	Potential of a separate grant for dissemination (based on potential) on longer projects that include a dissemination

Criterion	Finding	Sub-questions
<p>communication of results</p>	<p>and new web sites.</p> <p>Important to prioritise dissemination tools that are practical, can be made available and used by other, external actors, after the project has ended.</p> <p>Value of training project staff and participants in dissemination techniques, use of social media etc.</p> <p>Lack of interest on part of media and journalists, activities with little communication potential.</p>	<p>period after activities have taken place (1.5 or 2 years)</p> <p>Explore potential role for national structures (or large NGOs?) in selecting projects for wider dissemination, leading communication efforts. Also linking to national government and overseas partners.</p> <p>Links to multiplier effect.</p> <p>How to provoke debates that continue to generate coverage later? Could activities be linked to high-profile events, sports, personalities, or is it a matter of selecting activities for dissemination?</p>

Descriptive reports of the three focus groups are provided as annexes, these are to be finalised in collaboration with staff from the relevant Europe for Citizens Points.

2.2 Next steps

Now the focus groups have been completed the next stages of the work will comprise:

1. Verifying and analysing the information gathered so far and developing appropriate **analytical and conceptual frameworks**;
2. **Identifying and reviewing evidence, including from the Interim Evaluation, on the nature and sale of the problem** (groups participating, evidence of impacts, proportion of new entrants, success rates, dissemination trends and characteristics etc.). Although some of the evidence to be reviewed has already been used in the evaluation, in this case the emphasis is on prospective analysis (what does the evidence indicate about how impact and sustainability might be improved and in which areas are improvements required).
3. **Conducting follow up interviews with a selection of up to five projects** to explore impact, sustainability and dissemination – seeking to establish what features a high-impact project might have. Several of the Interim Evaluation case studies include some interesting elements that could be followed up to see how widely a publication was taken up, how tools were localised or replicated for example.
4. **Analysis to identify potential changes to each stage of Programme processes** that would better support impact and sustainability.

The immediate next step will be to discuss and agree our approach to the remainder of the study, informed by the contents of this progress report. We will then proceed with the next stage, to finalise the reports from focus groups in collaboration with the Europe for Citizens Points, to undertake a detailed analysis of available information along the lines set out above and then to carry out additional follow-up interviews as required.

2.3 Timetable

All work is to be completed by 25th July 2011, and we propose to provide a draft of the final report by 15th July.

Annex One: Report from Vienna Focus Group

Report of Vienna Focus Group

Date	12th May 20100
Time	10.30 am – 3 pm-
Venue	Haus der Europäischen EU, Wipplingerstrasse 35, A-1010 Vienna
Thematic focus	Action 4 – Active European Remembrance

Participating Organisations

BMUKK (Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture)
Volkshochschule Hietzing
www.erinnern.at
Gedenkdienst
Gemeinde Ebensee
Jüdisches Museum Wien
OEAW – Austrian Academy of Sciences
Verein Freies Radio Wien
Wiener Krakauer Kulturgesellschaft
Wiener Wiesenthal-Institut

Agenda

Introduction

Success – what makes a successful or high-impact project in Austria under Europe for Citizens?

- Defining the parameters of success
- Agreeing a framework for a “good project”
- Sharing experiences from projects
- Summary

How could projects have even greater impact or reach?

- What needs to change for projects to have greater impact?
- Which improvements need to be made to the programme?
- What are the barriers to greater impact?
- What benefits could these changes have?

Summary and next steps

The following report organises the contents of the discussion into a series of broad topics or recommendations.

Success criteria - creating greater impact

Application Stage

Greater information exchange between applicants and funder. There was a lack of understanding about how the Commission and Executive Agency define a successful application, what types of project are likely to be supported, or which stakeholders and target groups should be prioritised. Although it is true that the PEC carry out information and training sessions, further exchange would help to see how the objectives of both sides match up, which target groups should be prioritised. This was especially important for delegates who had already had some contact with the programme.

Loyalty to original project idea. Development of a project that meets the funding criteria and is consistent with the original concept was felt to be an important measure of success. This links to subsequent point on 'project intelligence'.

Maintaining broad objectives. The future programme should maintain broad (framework) objectives, that give shape to activities, but give projects room for manoeuvre rather than detailed and highly specific requirements. One delegate stated that the programme is quite a top-down process, defining objectives, implementing activities and measuring impacts.

“Projektsantragsintelligenz” – or skill in completing project applications. This links to the first point about understanding of what the funders are trying to achieve and what kinds of activity can be supported. A major factor in successful applications is the skill in completing applications, interpreting the kinds of activity that will be supported, how much flexibility is permitted. Current aims are very broad, terms and concepts are open and wide-ranging, requiring judgement and skilled use of language. Similar skills are required for production of final reports.

Making Europe real. Some delegates asked the question, what is it that we can develop that fits into the programme, how can we 'Europeanise' our work or make it relevant to neighbouring countries or other member states? A key question for some was how projects can connect local activities and experiences to European issues and problems, with placing activities in their wider context felt to be of great significance.

Content. There was a wide-ranging discussion of remembrance, the focus on Nazism and Stalinism and its relevance for the EU. Although views varied, remembrance was felt to be extremely important for Europe and remembrance of the Nazi period was crucial for Austria - especially considering the shortage of alternative sources of funding and the fact that one important national funding stream will cease to be available in the next few years. Many felt that it was the approach or method that is more important than the topic, that activities should be based on self-criticism of one's own history rather than blaming other countries or political systems. Studying historical events as a way of opening up debates and understanding the present day can then form the basis of conversations with people in other member states. One delegate commented that the past can be a way to link to places (and present day situations in these places) that attract few international visitors, (example of Minsk in Belarus).

Themes. The Nazi period is the main way people learn from the past in Austria, though for other societies it can be legitimate to deal with different periods and phenomena, or hot/relevant topics for them, such as colonialism and crimes against humanity. The focus should be on events that have been critical to the development of Europe, using methods and approaches based on self-criticism (“negatives Gedächtnis”). Many delegates were not in favour of broadening the action to cover human rights in general, (or even the current focus on Stalinism) as this serves to dilute the European dimension of the remembrance action. Nevertheless there was an understanding that other periods of time in European history are of fundamental importance to Europeans. One delegate proposed to enlarge the action to the regimes that cooperated with the Nazis, others proposed to keep the action as it is as a clear political statement against Nazism. Some felt that the future programme should focus more on (political) education projects rather than memorials and archives, though others commented that the programme allows this.

Operational or practical issues

Project plans. The development of a clear thematic and project idea - success is defined as maintaining (enough) consistency with the original idea through the life of the project, with a common thread clearly visible. The existence of project plans was also felt to be a key determinant of successful implementation.

Cooperation and team working. Often a measure of impact is how the project team has worked together, what they have learned during the process and what they can take forward to future projects – as a team. Project teams usually know which projects have gone well and why.

Voluntary inputs. Many of the organisations active in remembrance, especially sites and museums are dependant on volunteers, and cannot be implemented without them. At the same time there has been increasing professionalization of the sector over the past 10-15 years and the programme can have a role in promoting job security, skills and career development. Delegates criticized the fact that voluntary work is not accepted as a contribution in kind.

Finances. This links to issues around payments and co-financing, as volunteer and in-kind contributions are not currently recognised as a financial contribution (i.e. not eligible as co-financing). Many felt that achieving the required amount of co-financing was extremely problematic and the future programme should look at revising the 60/40 split. This requirement could be varied according to the size of the organisation, while others commented on the potential value of structural/organisational funding (rather than project-based?) for organisations in this field

Project intelligence. Managers of successful projects need to be able to reconcile the different interests and objectives of stakeholders and (sometimes multiple) funders, while keeping faith with the original concept. Some stated that projects sometimes have to try to do too much, to keep different people happy, with the effect that you come away from the original concept through the process of attracting sufficient levels of funding.

External factors

Evaluation. Projects are deemed to be successful when the funder pays of the balance, or they are defined as such by external evaluators.

Target groups. There were some disagreements over target groups, while some stated that the project should be aimed at someone specific, there was reluctance to be drawn on key groups. Specific groups mentioned include schoolchildren, people working in the topic, (partner) organisations, activists, volunteers, even “passers-by”. The target group and chosen theme should be strongly linked to each other, and specific, academic or scientific projects are most likely to have clear target groups. Although project promoters try to meet this requirement of the programme it is not always clear how they can be reached or how successfully this has been done.

Reach new participants/ beneficiaries. Others stated that it was important for the programme to extend the circle, or “reach outside”. Projects should allow opportunities for new, sometimes unexpected individuals or groups to be reached or stimulated during their course. Success could even be reaching two people you weren’t expecting, as the project led to something unexpected. It is important to focus on communication between people, telling stories (constructivist approach), breaking taboos, remembering something you had forgotten or that is uncomfortable.

Networks. Support for networking is important, but these should be strategic partnerships and cooperations, providing a framework for activities, support and motivation. Managing an international network was seen as difficult and complex so they need to be productive / beneficial rather than an administrative task or precondition for funding.

Impacts

Value of achievements. Projects should seek to produce or achieve something, not necessarily an output, but could be a change of opinion. It is important for there to be a clearer link between the aims of the programme and what projects aim to achieve.

Discussions and debates. In remembrance it is important to create a controversy or provoke a debate that can continue to have an impact after activities have finished.

Long-term impacts. Projects (especially in remembrance) should aim for long-term term impacts. Success and sustainability cannot be measured in the short term with data and facts and there is a contradiction with funders’ need for immediate measurability (esp. in case of education projects). Activities should be seen as part of a longer term process, providing support and impetus to education and personal development. Currently, the only way to measure this in the short term is by gathering feedback from participants.

Changing perceptions. Success is when people have developed the inclination, (life) skills and confidence to think through problems, get involved in debates and conflicts, wish to have an impact themselves. Values are developed over a long period of time and successful projects should give impetus to people thinking about things in a new way – this was also described as an intervention in (political) consciousness or public discourse.

Dissemination. Communication is important, but media are not very interested, “how can you expect people to be interested in our topic”. There was some discussion as to whether projects should play a major role in dissemination as communication is seen as a means to an end, is an important factor in making a project successful, reaching enough people, but is not an objective in its own right. On balance, this is something

projects want to do, but it takes a lot of time and effort. Communication strategies should be informed by what projects wish to achieve, while it is very important to place activities in a wider context.

Delegates made a clear differentiation between project level and programme level dissemination, stating that it was up to the national level (ministries, PEC?) to increase the visibility of activities, provide resources and opportunities for projects to reach a wider audience as well as links to governance structures. It was also suggested that it would be useful to know about unsuccessful applications at a national level, to find out who is active and develop new ideas and future ventures.

Annex Two: Report from Warsaw Focus Group

Report of Warsaw Focus Group

Date	16th May 2011
Time	10:00 am – 2:15 pm
Venue	The Centre for European Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ul. Krucza 38/42, 00-512 Warszawa

Participating Organisations
Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej
Ecorys Polska
Europe for Citizens Point, Poland
Fundacja Ośrodka Karta
Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska
Instytut Spraw Publicznych
Polska Fundacja Roberta Schumana
Urząd Miasta Augustów
Urząd Miasta Gniezno
Urząd Miasta Płońsk
Urząd Miasta Sokółów Podlaski
Związek Miast Polskich

Agenda/structure of day

Introductions

What characteristics affect the success of the project? What makes it effective?

- The examples of three successful projects
- The experiences of other participants

Barriers

- What could be preventing projects or supported organisations from achieving more, becoming more sustainable or having longer-term impacts?
- Identifying ways in which the EC could avoid some of the common problems or obstacles that project promoters face

How could the programme (projects) achieve greater impact or reach?

Summary of findings and next steps

Notes of discussion

The liveliest discussion took place during the second part of the meeting, when participants discussed the barriers they faced in the Programme. The whole group agreed that the day rates for Poland are low and are only sufficient for covering the cost of project participants' transport and food, but wasn't unanimous in formulating a recommendation for the EC on raising it. The majority of participants agreed that Poland's neighbour countries, which are not members of EU, shouldn't be invited to the Programme, although it was mentioned that many Polish cities would recommend such a change. It was more difficult to obtain the participants' views on general characteristics of the Programme, such as its goals, themes, activities or target groups.

There was a consensus among all members of the group that the current framework of the Programme is satisfactory, because of its openness and lack of limitations on projects' themes, activities or target groups.

What characteristics affect the success of the project? What makes it effective? Three successful projects

Association of Polish Cities (Związek Miast Polskich)

Project: Promoting the idea of cooperation between partner cities among Polish local government units (2009)

Action 1. Measure 2.2

Number and type of participants reached – nationwide

All local government units in Poland received information about the project and surveys of city partnerships (more than 3,000 letters were sent). They also received the brochure printed as a result of the project.

Identification of needs/usefulness. The Association of Polish Cities has the aim of promoting the idea of partner cities in Poland. They organize thematic meetings for partners from two countries, e.g. Polish-German or Polish-Lithuanian. Using the survey conducted during the initial phase of the project the needs of Polish local government units and kinds of support they are looking for were identified, as well as where they seek partners. This enabled the Association to adjust to the current needs of the recipients, both in terms of project activities (conferences, publications) and in terms of the planned activities of the organisation. Good identification of the needs helped assure the usefulness of the project publication (a brochure containing the findings of the survey, examples of successful partnerships and practical instructions how to form a partnership). It is very popular, and is still being read by local government units.

Dissemination and communication of results. The project was promoted on the website of the Polish Press Agency and also in press, in the "City Government" (a supplement of the "Nationwide Newspaper of the Local Government and Administration"). A special website - www.twinning.pl - was designed as part of the project. It contains all the information about the project, and is still used as a medium for distributing the project brochure.

Environmental Partnership Foundation (Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska)

Project: Partnership Academy (2009 – 2010)

Action 2. Measure 2.3

Identification of needs/usefulness. "A project that is to be successful has to stem from earlier experiences or needs". Thanks to the Environmental Partnership Foundation, the National Network of Partnership Groups (NNPG) has been active in Poland since 2005. This is three-sectional partnerships between the local government units, NGOs and private companies, which all cooperate on local development and sustainable development in the area. The organization of training on three-sectoral partnership building has emerged as a necessity: a course that would show people how to develop such as partnership and how to cooperate effectively with local government and business. The Foundation and members of the Network have come up with the idea of a Partnership Academy – a course for those promoting local partnerships.

The meeting of the three sectors' organisations and further cooperation. The participants of the meeting were representatives of the three locally active sectors – the local government units, NGOs and private companies (who were least represented). The aim was to provide a ground for testing the cooperation between the three sectors, in order to acknowledge the differences in the attitude, language and aims of the partners.

Number and type of participants reached – nationwide. A database of all the local partnerships - about 330 partnerships all around Poland - has been created and all of them were invited to join the Academy meeting. Amongst those invited were the members of the NNPG and Local Action Groups (chosen within the LEADER program).

Long-time partner from earlier projects. The strength of the project lay in partnering with the Partnering Initiative (PI) from the UK. The Foundation has been cooperating with the UK organization since a few years back, and so, knowing the expertise of the PI in creating local partnerships, aimed for a joint project. The PI contributed to the project with its expertise – it helped to create the program of the Academy and also helped with the publishing of three books by British experts in Polish.

What could have been done better? One-time only event. Due to funding restrictions only one Academy was held during the project, although there is a need for a series of such workshops. The partners attending the Academy were very much interested in the continuation of such activities.

Small number of representatives from the business sector. The partners from private companies were the least represented at the meeting, maybe due to the fact that they had little contact with private companies before. The partners were reached through the promotion of CSR in the media. This issue should be taken care of in the next edition.

The City Council of Gniezno (Urząd Miasta Gniezno)

Project on-going

Action 1. Measure 1.2

Wide range, various target groups

Within the project there were 3 thematic meetings scheduled, all with representatives of the five partner cities of Gniezno. The first one, a workshop-type meeting, was addressed to the representatives of the local governments units and was dedicated to investment and the acquisition of EU funds for investment.

The next meeting, dedicated to culture and tourism, was held as a conference and a fair for the inhabitants of Gniezno. The conference participants were: representatives of travel agencies, tourist information centres, people engaged in cultural activities in the city and representatives of the tourism education programmes and studies. During the fair the partner cities of Gniezno presented their touristic offer, regional dishes were served and there were presentations of agri-tourism and sailing schools in the region. The last meeting will be dedicated to the exchange of experiences in the area of education; it will gather the school directors, teachers and students from partner cities.

Incorporating the citizens of Gniezno into the project. Participants of the group interview agreed that an important aspect of the project was the opening of the event to all citizens of Gniezno. It was crucial that it was not an elite event, but that the programme prepared by the partner cities reached a wide range of citizens. Reaching out to the citizens is of high importance, so as not to create the impression that “it is only for a group of officials, they will talk and talk, and the inhabitants of the city will not benefit from that, and all of this for the city’s money”. A successful project should be addressed to as wide an audience as possible, in order to reach all the citizens (which is one of the main aims of the Programme).

The experiences of other participants, and reaching less active groups. It is especially important to engage those who would not normally take part in the project. If attention is not paid to this then we can end up with the same participants over and over again – those who have taken part in such projects, who know the themes of the projects etc. This would cause the gap between those engaged and those less active in the community to widen.

A big challenge is how to introduce the topic in an interesting way, so as to engage various social groups and those who are not normally interested in “European” projects. The aim is then mostly to try to “tame” the topic and make it a cause which they can identify with.

In our projects we act in cooperation with informal networks of partners, associated in a network of European clubs – these are individuals, organizations, and schools from across Poland. We try to engage these local partners in our activities and projects, and we encourage them to recruit other participants locally. In our projects we try to put an emphasis on what is happening locally (NGO from Warsaw, Measure 2.3).

Dissemination and communication of results – open access educational materials on the internet. Within the project, DVD educational packages were prepared (1,000 pieces). These packages have been distributed very quickly. We later came up with the idea of placing the materials on our server, on an open access basis, so that it is possible to download them for free. In this way the project’s reach was much bigger (and is still growing), although the project ended two years ago (Action 4).

Identification of needs. The best identification of needs is done by those organisations that have been working in that area for a long time and have their objectives in line with the project.

Unconventional activities - various methods to reach the target groups. An important characteristic of the project is its originality and unconventional ideas for action. This is most important when the competition at the time of proposal submission starts and it becomes more difficult to obtain funds for projects.

Barriers. What could be preventing projects or supported organisations from achieving more, becoming more sustainable or having longer-term impacts? Identifying ways in which the EC could avoid some of the common problems or obstacles that project promoters face.

The size of the daily rate for participants

Action 1, Measure 1.1 and Action 2, Measure 2.3

Most of the participants agreed that in Measure 1.1 the day rate for participants is low – it only covers the cost of the participant's transport and food, and is not enough to cover the cost of the project's activities or the cost of project coordination.

It was mentioned that the lack of financial resources for covering the cost of coordination and administration of the project is an especial problem for NGOs – most frequently they are financed entirely by external sponsors, who are reluctant to finance such kinds of costs.

In this context a proposal was put forward to raise the day rate by around 5%. During the discussion a reservation was formulated, that one should be aware that the demand of raising the day rate may lead to a decrease in the number of projects financed. If the budget for the Measure isn't increased then allocating more money to the average project would mean financing fewer projects.

Action 2, Measure 2.3

A representative of an NGO from Warsaw mentioned that under the Measure there is no budget for educational activities, so, for example, there is no possibility of internet coaching for participants in projects they undertake in their local community after coming back from the event. Evidence gathered by the organisation in other educational projects shows that such support is of key importance in helping youngsters to provide information on projects.

It seems that projects that incorporate educational activities would have to be budget financed, but under Action 2, Measure 2.3 budget financing is currently reserved for "Projects of production and realisation" only.

Payment procedure, pre-financing rate. Current payment procedure – pre-financing rate at 50% of the total grant and the other part transferred as a final payment after acceptance of the final report – is a very serious barrier for many Polish NGOs. In practice it means that the beneficiary, apart from providing their own contribution to the project, additionally has to provide a sum of money equal to 50% of the grant for project duration and for a few months after that period. Many Polish NGOs don't have such resources at their disposal. In other words: current payment procedures exclude the majority of small and medium-sized Polish NGOs.

The necessity of introducing changes in this field has been already reported to the EC, but no action has been taken so far. The EC argues that transferring a bigger amount of money to a beneficiary in the beginning of a project is pointless, because beneficiaries often have significant savings and part of the grant is transferred back

to the EC. However, present procedures exclude many NGOs, as mentioned, and furthermore force beneficiaries to restrict realisation of their projects to the necessary minimum. When you don't have the financial resources to cover current spending, you are made to cut costs as much as possible.

Participants agreed that the grant should be transferred in several tranches during the project, and that those transfers should be made irrespective of acceptance of expenditures made so far (due to the burdensome and long-lasting procedure of acceptance of partial financing reports). It was proposed instead that tranches could be transferred on the basis of statements made to the Agency by beneficiaries, saying that: "We have already spent 80% of the last tranche and are therefore asking for the next transfer". Tranches would be transferred according to a schedule specified in the Grant Agreement or the Grant Decision. Obviously the final payment would be made after acceptance of the Final Report.

Waiting for financial resources. It is recommended that the funds (tranches) should be transferred more quickly. Some of the participants said they received money at the end of the third month of project implementation, while others reported that they waited for the final payment for as long as six months. This long time of waiting for the money is very problematic, especially for small NGOs and small townships.

The beneficiary's own financial contribution. For these projects which require the beneficiary's own financial contribution, it would be beneficial if this contribution could be given by the beneficiary in kind (e.g. volunteer work or a space for the event).

Lack of opportunities to organise meetings with partner cities from outside the EU. According to many of the participants of the meeting, an important barrier in implementing the Programme (especially in Action 1, Measure 1.1) is the lack of potential for financing joint partnerships with non-EU countries bordering with Poland. For many Polish cities a popular country to establish partner cities' relations is Ukraine.

However, it was mentioned that if Poles were to demand inclusion of Ukraine in the Programme then other EU countries might similarly demand inclusion of their neighbour countries, such as Egypt, Morocco and Algeria. In the end the Programme would include all countries which take part in the EU Politics of Neighbourhood - such a solution would significantly change the character of the programme, and it would also substantially cut the funds for the EU integration. The participants agreed that the main objective of the Programme is the integration of EU citizens and that partnerships with non-EU countries, although very important, should not be supported within the Programme.

One of the participants suggested that each year a different non-EU country could be covered by the Programme. This would not be as expensive as the inclusion of all of these countries into the Programme for good.

Language barrier. The participants mentioned that for some, especially in smaller cities in Poland, language is a barrier. They pointed out the fact that there is no Polish version of the grant application form, the decision of funding or the final report.

Information about the age and sex of the project participants (in the application). What is also problematic is the requirement to give very detailed information on the project participants or the audience of a publication (e.g. sex and age). This is often impossible before the project, and this kind of information should only be demanded

in the final report. Even then it will be difficult to provide such detailed information on the participants, if we invite the whole community for a fair or if we distribute our publication online. It is recommended to either remove such questions from the application form or add an explanation that these pieces of information are gathered for statistical purposes only (they are not an object of assessment).

Contact with the Agency. One of the participants complained about having problems contacting the Agency when he was running a project. He mentioned: getting e-mails from a general account with no personal details of the consultant, waiting for a long time for an answer etc. Other participants did not have such bad experiences; one even had an opposite – very positive – experience in contacting the Agency. It is recommended to eliminate anonymous responses to requests, and also to take care to answer all e-mails as promptly as possible.

How could the programme (projects) achieve greater impact or reach?. What should projects seek to achieve?

The main aim of the Programme is to promote wide range of European values, such as: cooperation, intercultural dialogue, democracy, active citizenship, responsibility for one's community, knowledge of one's political and social capacity, faith in one's abilities and engagement with one's community.

The Programme should promote those values among citizens of EU by creating the opportunity to seek and discover a variety of values, seek common ideas and differences and to exchange experiences with those. The Programme should engage various entities from different levels of civil society. Participants unanimously assessed that the Programme successfully implements the ideas mentioned above.

Which subjects and themes should be covered?

It was difficult for participants to point out themes that are not covered by the Programme. Everybody agreed that the Programme allows realisation of projects in various fields and that is a big strength of it. They are satisfied with the scope of activities one can undertake within the framework of the Programme.

However, two remarks were made. One person noted that there is unnecessary limitation in Action 4, which concentrates on projects that commemorate victims of Stalinism and Nazism. In this person's opinion these two phenomena are, of course, of great significance in the history of Europe in the twentieth century, but there are many other great historical experiences of European nations that are important in the context of the formation of European Community. It would be useful to broaden the scope of the Action.

Another participant mentioned that in the current framework of the Programme it is difficult to receive a grant for a research project. Those kinds of activity seem to fit well in the field of Action 2, Measure 2.3, but, in the opinion of that person, to obtain financing it is a necessity to gain research results via other important activities that are planned in the project. Greater appreciation of research projects in the Programme is needed.

What long-term impacts should projects aim for?

The most obvious, but also very important, effect that projects financed in the Programme should have is continuation of the cooperation initiated during the project.

One of participants suggested that one could consider promoting (through Award criteria) projects that are continuations or extensions of previously implemented projects. Others, however, pointed out that such a measure would decrease chances of new projects and applicants.

Participants' comments on the statement: "The projects under Action 1, Measure 1.1 bring people together for a short period of time, but it is not really clear what they achieve or what impact it has afterwards"

Participants agreed that classical town twinning citizens' meetings are very important activities in the Programme and they must be continued. It was argued that those meetings are the most simple and effective way of mutually acquainting European citizens, breaking stereotypes and establishing deeper relationships. It also often happens that relationships established during these meetings are later used for partnership projects. This kind of activity is especially important for small towns, where there is no social potential for a big event.

What types of organisation should be involved?

Again participants stressed that the most important feature of the Programme is its openness, and that no particular type of organisations should be privileged.

One of participants referred to a proposed modification in the framework of the Programme that he heard was being considered for the next edition of the Programme. According to this change structural support offered under Action 2, Measures 2.1 and 2.2 would be available exclusively for European umbrella organisations and European networks. In that person's opinion such a solution would exclude all Polish NGOs (as well as those with a European range of activity) from applying, as all these networks are localized in Belgium, France and a few other Western-European countries. It would be a great loss for the third sector in Poland, which doesn't have possibility of obtaining institutional support from domestic public institutions.

Should projects that bring together different types of organisation be promoted?

No particular type of partnership should be promoted, although establishing partnerships should definitely be permitted. The type of partnerships would depend on the specific project.

Who should it be aimed at (which citizens, multipliers and intermediaries)?

Target groups are not essential. The most important element is the problem itself - the problem determines the choice of target groups. The Programme provides a wide range of possibilities in this area, which is very positive. EU citizens are the target beneficiaries.

What types of activities, events and outputs should be supported?

The budget for communication can be determined at €4,500, but it shouldn't be predefined what kind of tools can be used (e.g. DVD seems to be an inadequate tool - its content can be published on the website instead). Applicants should have the potential to choose more innovative forms of communication (e.g. internet communication tools or use of a facebook profile for 6 months). Creating a website within the project shouldn't be a necessary activity - in most cases developing an existing website already run by the organisation is a more effective solution. An alternative idea is the liquidation of a separate grant for communication tools and - at the same time - increasing the lump sum per beneficiary.

How long should projects be?

The longer the better. Increasing the maximum duration of the projects within Action 2.3 to one and a half years would bring positive results. The same can be said for increasing the maximum amount of money that can be applied for. The longer the project, the better the organisational stability of the applicant and the better the results. It is worth increasing the maximum duration of the project to 2 years: the first year devoted to project implementation and the next one to disseminating results.

How should projects be measured?

It should be considered that projects not have to stick to the rule "everything must be ok" when measuring their results and conducting evaluation. Such a perspective eliminates innovative projects: as they are new and not tested they are more risky than others. A positive and flexible solution would be getting rid of the requirement that every meeting of cities should end with a partnership agreement (in Action 1.1).

The submission procedure and financial conditions in the Programme. Participants find it very convenient that the deadlines for submission of applications, that were determined at the beginning, are constant throughout the whole period of the implementation of the Programme. It helps them plan the application process better and therefore prepare better projects.

The application forms are clear and easy to fill in. Financial administration of a grant is easy, especially when the grant is calculated on the basis of flat-rate financing. It is also important that beneficiaries aren't obliged to submit copies of proofs of expenditures together with the final report.

The Agency is flexible and goal orientated. When you ask for permission to make a change in your project they will evaluate whether it helps to achieve the project's goals more effectively or not. If the change is effective it won't be a problem to execute the project in a slightly different way than was planned in the application.

How should results of the Programme be communicated?

- The flexible, "easy-going/user-friendly" nature of the Programme should be promoted
- The Programme should reach new groups of beneficiaries, and Contact Points play a crucial role in this process.
- Communication chaos concerning the logotype has taken place for a couple of months – it is not clear which logo is valid and can be used. What is more, not everyone is satisfied with the new logo.

Annex Three: Report from Paris Focus Group

Report of Paris Focus Group

Date	1 st June 2011
Time	11:00 am – 3:00 pm
Venue	Ligue de l'Enseignement, rue Récamier, 75007 Paris

Participating Organisations
Alliance de Villes européennes de culture (AVEC)
Association Jean Monnet
Association Mode H Europe
Association Nationale des visiteurs de prison
Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)
Association pour le développement des initiatives citoyennes (ADICE)
Association Sport et citoyenneté
CIDEM – Point national d'information l'Europe pour les Citoyens
Confrontations Europe
Crysalis
Ecorys
European Forum for Urban Security
Franchement Europe
GAL Beauce et Gâtinais
Graine d'Europe
Idées Nouvelles Europe & Fédération européenne des écoles
Institut français de relations internationales
Maison de l'Europe de Paris
Maison de l'Europe des Yvelines
Notre Europe
Nouvelle Europe
Plate-forme Migrants et citoyenneté

Agenda/structure of day

Introductions

What makes a high impact project under Europe for Citizens in France?

- Discussion of good practice examples

- How do delegates define success?
- What are the main factors behind this success?
- How does this compare with the factors listed under Q1 on discussion paper
- What would the perfect project under Europe for Citizens look like?

Break

What types of activities should be supported/ prioritised in future?

- Can we agree a framework for more effective projects (Q5 on discussion paper)
- What could be preventing projects or supported organisations from achieving more / more sustainable / longer-term impacts?
- How could we avoid some of the common problems or obstacles that project promoters face?
- What changes need to be made?
- What benefits would these changes have for projects and the programme?

Summary of findings and next steps

Summary of the discussion

Long term changes and sustainability: Most participants felt the need to recall the long-term nature of the processes that the programme wishes to have an influence on, and the sustainability of those changes. It is about changing people's perceptions of Europe (one-shots don't work). Therefore, one has to distinguish between the immediate impacts of projects and their long-term sustainability. Whenever capacity-building is involved, it is also important to think about the impact on non-participants. However, given projects can only last for a year (now 18 months), external evaluators tend to focus on immediate impacts, because they are the only indicator available at the time of closing the project.

Success: First and foremost, a project is successful if it achieves its own objectives, on the basis of which it was selected in the first place. Other measures of success include:

- Degree of involvement and diversity of partnerships (decision-makers, networks for dissemination, organisations from other sectors, politicians, media...)
- Sustainability of structures, staff, initiatives
- Qualitative measures such as "enthusiasm" of participants, positive feedback
- Quality of any concrete products/outputs (guides, DVDs...)
- Degree of dissemination of products (numbers disseminated, to who...)
- Media coverage (local/regional/national/EU press, websites...)

Timing: More generally, the short amount of time available does not leave enough space for experimentation (it would be particularly interesting to test any 'products' created) and for dissemination (hence lowering visibility). Follow-up projects, which build on past successful projects, can be a way to counterbalance this shortcoming.

Operation costs: There was a very heated debate on the need for operating grants: while some think it is very hypocritical to fund only projects without thinking about the structures which implement these projects, others insist that there are examples of organisations which survive solely on project funding. Other suggested the ESF could help to cover operating costs.

Evaluation: In any case, it is normal that recipients of public subsidies are evaluated on the basis of their outputs (even in the case of an operating grant). However, evaluation suffers from bad press in France and some other countries, being seen more as control than as a constructive step in a project's life. Some interesting ideas emerged on how to adapt evaluation requirements to the small size of the projects / organisations / budgets. Evaluation costs must remain reasonable and in proportion to the project budgets. For example, one participating organisation had established a partnership with a university to send three master's students to evaluate them (stage + thesis), emphasising that external evaluators can bring fresh and interesting perspectives (often). Another cost-effective solution suggested was the reliable online evaluation tools available at 2e2f.fr, Agence Europe Education Formation France,. Some participants also mentioned the post-activity follow-up meetings, which are to them just as important as preparatory meetings, but are too often overlooked.

Quantity vs. quality: Evaluations of impact should be predominantly qualitative, even though numbers are part of the story. Is it better to do in-depth work with a 30-student classroom or to hold a major event with 3,000 people? Both are probably needed.... On this subject, one participant told the story of a project aimed at boosting participation at European elections in a small village, where the highest regional turnout was recorded at the end of the project! Again, working on Citizenship is about changing perceptions and feelings, so measures of success must be predominantly qualitative and look at long-term impacts.

Measuring quantitative impacts: It is not always possible to identify / record the participation of people who are not formal beneficiaries for example visitors to cultural sites or exhibitions. There are also problems with national legislation on privacy etc. and some reluctance of participants to give personal data.

Geographical imbalances: one participant mentioned the imbalance between Western and Eastern Europe, citing the example of the Eastern members of her network not having the funds to come to a symposium.

Dissemination: it can be more effective and cost-effective to rely on existing networks to disseminate project outputs. Whenever possible, dissemination should be embedded in the projects, i.e. participants should be "taught" how to become ambassadors of projects. Projects that create outputs which can be used by external actors (non-participants) should be given priority. The national information points could be given a greater role in disseminating the projects' outputs (for example through an online catalogue of products etc.)

Media: several participants put forward the idea that publicity for European citizenship could be achieved by using more popular events (such as sports events) and well-known personalities, so as to go beyond the small circle of the converted and to attract media interest. Innovative projects which reach new targets (beyond the already converted and experts), particularly underprivileged segments of the population, should be supported.

Political tourism: Links could also be drawn with tourism. The "Jean Monnet House" is a successful example of how to use an historical site to raise public awareness with simple words. There are missed opportunities with the thousands of people who visit the European institutions (e.g. European Parliament, European Commission)

every year and who are not properly introduced to the European concepts. Currently, the European Commission does not seem to buy into the concept of political tourism of this type.

Research projects: this kind of project is probably overlooked in the current programme.

Civil society: one of the guiding principles of the programme, which should remain important, is to promote the role of civil society organisations in involving citizens in public debates. "The programme should lead the reflection on the development of civil society organisations". It should also continue to promote the bottom-up approach, reflecting the diversity of the groups which grassroots civil society organisations represent.

Decision makers: awareness among decision makers is very heterogeneous, particularly at local level. This is an area where the citizenship agenda should be pushed, due to potentially high multiplier effects.

Massification of information: information about European citizenship and linked topics should be more widely available to NGOs and to the public. The role of national information points ought to be reinforced.

Exchange of experience: exchange of experience between project leaders could reap great benefits; it doesn't have to be organised at the European level, national or regional informal platforms could deliver a lot for a low cost (note that many participants wish to remain in contact, and maybe use this group of stakeholders to build a national platform for exchange).

Potential themes: potential themes of interest which were mentioned during the discussion: non-discrimination, gender inequalities and violence, health, European treaties. However, participants insisted that the programme should not be over-prescriptive in terms of the topics treated, but rather remain open to the bottom-up nature of the projects led by the grassroots organisations.

Cross-border initiatives: Cross-border projects are an efficient way to promote transnational co-operation (mix of local and international).

Volunteers: volunteers play a key role in the civil society / citizenship sector. However, volunteers' time is not accounted for in the current financial structure of the programme, which does not reflect the true nature of the sector. Their time could for count towards the beneficiary organisation's financial contribution to the budgets.

An encompassing Citizenship programme: Various "citizenship" strands co-exist in the Commission's programme, across several DGs. Would it be interesting to better co-ordinate these strands? Should the Europe for Citizens programme take them over