

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0016/09
pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure
by Andrzej Wielowieyski, on behalf of the ALDE Group
to the Commission

Subject: General consultations of EU citizens

The EU is increasing its powers and activities through a dynamic process to which the Treaty of Lisbon will give additional impetus. By contrast, surveys and scientific studies constantly demonstrate a lack of direct contact with citizens, who perceive the policies and activities of the EU as remote and unintelligible. The EU receives only marginal attention from the media and national political parties. As a result, the EU faces a strong decline in popular legitimacy, of which the series of setbacks in terms of popular vote are a strong warning signal. This risks posing a major threat to European democracy and the political future of the EU.

The EU is developing an important information activity and dialogue with the citizens. '*Communicate Europe in Partnership*' certainly represents an important step forward. Unfortunately this dialogue still has a limited impact, whether direct or indirect, on some 50 000 citizens. We are therefore very far away from creating a space for public debate and genuine European dialogue capable of stimulating the interest of EU citizens.

An efficient means to create such a European public space could be the organisation of general consultations of European citizens. A strong call for such action was made by former Parliament President Pat Cox at the close of the last Congress of the European Movement in The Hague. Mr Cox insisted on the need to break out of the vicious circle of a dialogue that reaches only the elites.

1. Is the Commission ready to prepare a strategy to develop a general dialogue with citizens, with the explicit aim of reaching millions of citizens?
2. What measures will the Commission take in order to effectively engage the Member States in such projects?
3. Can the Commission foresee a roadmap for developing the general consultation of citizens, providing for intermediate steps that would fully exploit the means provided by e-voting?

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Deadline for reply: 09.02.2009