

# European Citizens' Consultations

## Overview of the recommendations for the Economic and Social Future of Europe developed at the national consultations taking place in all EU Member States in March 2009

### Economy

The EU should expand opportunities for the promotion of entrepreneurship, including more flexible tax conditions for self-employed people thus helping curb tax evasion, and strengthen seed capital for self-employed people.

The EU should regulate financial markets (actors and products), oversee financial flows of commercial banks operating in the EU and ensure the stability of these flows . It should control this regulation via a European central financial supervisory body or give more power for this to the European Central Bank. It should introduce common terms and conditions in order to ensure the security of private savings and the operational capacity of commercial banks.

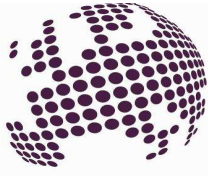
The EU should support a unified and increased taxation on income from capital transactions (Tobin tax) and from productivity gains (“technology added value”).

The European Union should require that the provision of European aid to companies is determined by the correlation between place of taxation and place of production. It should work towards ensuring fiscal transparency, avoiding the transfer of income and contribute to the elimination of tax havens.

The EU should create incentives to prevent production entities from moving to countries with lower wages. The EU should sanction all companies that have benefited from EU financing and subsidies and which relocate outside the European Union. It should do this by demanding the reimbursement of public subsidies given to these companies and introducing taxes that would finance social plans.

The EU should strengthen corporate crime laws, improving external liability protections and integrating a binding ethical code of conduct for corporate managers.

The EU should work to establish a favourable business environment and to reduce the bureaucratic burden for businesses, specially SMEs. Measures could include targeted public procurement, “one-stop shops“, increased e-government, technical assistance, free consultation services, reduced taxes (exempt first year of activity), access to micro credits, promotion of regional products etc.



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So as to stimulate economic recovery, the EU should invest in growth sectors, but should avoid the dependence of private companies on public subsidies.

The EU should create a common EU information database on supply and demand in third countries.

The EU should support member states preparing to enter the Eurozone (at least a year and a half before the planned accession) in information campaigns presenting: the consequences of introducing Euro, the experience of other countries, information about the precise course of events during the introduction of Euro.

The EU should loosen the criteria for the development of the Euro zone by determining more objective criteria. Particularly in terms of revising the price stability criteria, calculating it not from the EU countries, but from the Eurozone member countries average inflation rate.

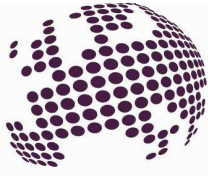
The EU should allocate more funds for regions with weaker infrastructure to enable the construction of a network of motorways, railroads and waterways that would satisfy current and future economic needs. It should investigate the causes of the disadvantaged position of some regions and should identify their particular development potential to enable investments and new employment.

The EU shall negotiate ecological and social minimum standards in bi- and multilateral trade agreements. This assists the competitiveness of the European economy and supports the social and ecological development in trading partner countries. Corresponding quality branding shall be introduced and enlarged, respectively (e.g. "Fair Trade").

The EU should increase schemes for member states to invest in research and development (R&D), ensuring that a certain percentage of GDP is spent on R&D. In addition it should coordinate its research that done by private companies. National coordinating bodies should involve all stakeholders (state, church, NGOs, etc). At the same time, the EU should allocate funds for innovation and research in a more efficient manner. The EU should develop a joint research- and innovation programme with defined focus areas. The division of labour between the EU and the member states should be made clear.

The EU should help increase the chances of getting credit for buying housing with a lower interest rates and a longer repayment period, with the aim of solving the housing problem and providing most apartments for not-for-profit rent for young people and the socially threatened.

The EU should to ensure every citizen of the EU has an access to inexpensive, fast Internet by co-financing the development of internet infrastructure. A competitive market should be established and as well as maximum price for internet services.



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The EU should strive to maintain national traditions. Newly proposed but also existing EU regulations should respect and protect traditions, e.g. EU hygiene standards that impose restrictions on the production of traditional meals. The EU should finance market studies and economic prognosis reports that would help encourage and support the production and export of traditional products. The EU should protect local products by providing funds to support direct marketing.

## **Employment**

The EU should open up the labour market for all European citizens to foster the free movement of labour across the EU. It should promote the integration of workers from other European countries into the labour market of the country in which they live by means of educational programmes and establish common standards for professional qualification.

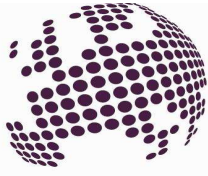
The EU should disseminate information on employment opportunities in other Member States and positively motivate unemployed people of all ages to seek employment. The EU should look at identifying best practice across Europe in order to minimise unemployment during the downturn (e.g. job sharing schemes, reduced working hours, early retirement etc.). It should conduct employment surveys, provide information about the state of and experiences with the employment market in different countries, facilitate cooperation between job centres.

The EU should create the same working conditions and rules for all EU citizens based on a harmonised Labour Code, harmonising working conditions for employees, right and obligations for employers. This code should include the right to decent salaries and working hours, and it should include the principle of equal pay for equal work between men and women as well as workers from other EU Member States.

The EU Member States should introduce in a coordinated way a minimum wage in each country, adjusted to national productivity levels and in line with the cost of living.

The EU should impose a European social dialogue involving economic social actors to define agreements between employers and employees at sectoral level e.g. on working hours, pay and conditions etc.

The EU should undertake efforts to attract qualified workers from third countries (brain gain), helping it secure its competitive position and economic growth. This should be done through a common labour migration policy, including an expanded BlueCard system which applies throughout the EU and which has the possibility of prolongation after two years.



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## Social Policy

The European Commission must propose legislation that would combat social inequalities, and create conditions for a convergence of social insurance and welfare systems in all member states. This would cover salaries and pensions, and would establish “floors” and “ceilings” for social benefits. The EU should create a mechanism to monitor member states’ social policies and, if needed, should issue binding recommendations for member states to ensure that the EU moves closer to a common EU social system.

The EU should ensure compliance with existing anti-discrimination regulations, in particular those which deal with gender equality, and which focus on the elderly and people with special needs, thus ensuring their active and continued role in the labour market and in society.

The EU should increase social protection for vulnerable members of society in all phases of life, such as elderly people, the disabled or poorer members of society, homeless and unemployed, as well as carers. It should rate countries’ spending of GDP and impose enforceable targets for member states in the fight against poverty. These measures should be given particular attention in times of economic recession.

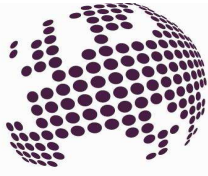
EU institutions should adopt legislation for the introduction of compulsory progressive personal income taxation in all EU member states in order to decrease social inequalities.

The EU should regulate and safeguard state pensions to secure that there is no discrimination between younger and older generations. It should promote private pension schemes, safeguard present ones and provide guarantees for pension funds.

In order to rejuvenate its population, the EU should encourage Member States to develop policies to support families, for instance providing support for stay-at-home parents, including financial support, child benefits or fiscal incentives for larger families. Special attention should be afforded to single-parent families and large families.

The EU has to work on a better balance between work and family for all. It should enable parents and other citizens with nursing tasks, enabling them to fully participate in working life, by investing in day-, late-afternoon and night-kindergartens, parental leave and retraining. The EU should formulate minimum standards on these issues.

The EU should, in order to encourage volunteering in member states, run information campaigns, facilitate exchanges and finance volunteering campaigns. Special attention should be paid to young people for example through a dedicated European Young People’s Activity Day. Unemployed people should also be encouraged to volunteer.



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The EU should work to balance the standard of living and increase understanding between peoples in member states before considering further enlargement. In the meantime it should guarantee a sustainable framework of institutional relations with candidate countries, promoting their progressive integration and gradual adoption of the European social and economic model and their compliance with the system of justice and public administration.

The EU should ensure that all Member State have equal and truly borderless status despite their peripheral geographical location. It should do this by ensuring that all travel taxes are removed/revised, by regulating travel to isolated member states to avoid over-dependence on particular transport providers and by providing assistance to reduce the burden for passengers and traders which arise from additional transport and travel costs.

## Health

The EU should intensify its efforts towards establishing of a common health care system, based on know-how from the countries with the most effective systems. Together with Member States it should implement an equal basic standard of healthcare for each EU-citizen. There should be centralised oversight of provisions and standards. An independent mechanism for EU wide recognition of qualifications for medical and health care professionals should be developed and implemented.

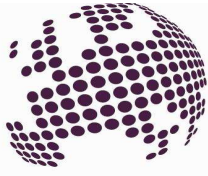
The EU should recognise patient mobility as a core component of the freedom to avail services EU wide. Therefore it should develop legal certainty regarding the mobility of patients especially in the case where services are not provided in a member state or where there are long waiting lists. The European Commission should establish a common database, where patients could obtain information regarding medical treatment in other Member States.

For the purposes of disease prevention and the reduction of health risks, the EU should encourage Member States to place greater emphasis on health promotion. Funds should be earmarked for compulsory examination of the whole population, in accordance with the principle "prevention is less expensive than treatment". The EU should develop global disease prevention campaigns, particularly for HIV, diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases.

The EU should provide guarantees that health services will be offered on a competitive basis, including that the national health markets will be liberalized.

The EU should establish a regulatory framework to set health insurance premium fees at a minimum.

The EU should encourage links between alternative and mainstream medicine. It should regulate research, transfer of good practices, and education in alternative medicine. Treatments in alternative medicines should also be fully reimbursed by health insurance providers.



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All 27 Member States should become members of the European Organs Bank.

## Education

The EU should harmonise European educational and vocational systems by introducing common criteria and standards for the different educational levels which are recognised in all Member States. This should include a facilitation pupil and student mobility within Europe, uniform admissions procedures, examinations and evaluations.

The EU should invest more in the quality of all levels of education. Minimum norms are needed for attractive, affordable, interesting education of a high quality, with a focus on diversity and innovation in education. This could include countering illiteracy (by at least 20% by 2020), the early learning of a European language, help for school drop-outs, improvement of the technical equipment in schools and the exchange of best practice among EU Member States.

The EU should make education for everyone below the age of 21 free of charge.

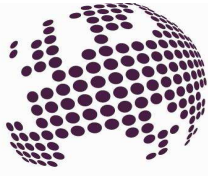
Religion should be taught outside state or publicly funded schools.

The EU should introduce school courses which foster European identity and better understanding of the EU, Member States and their institutions. Measures should include twinning of schools, a fund to finance exchange programmes, teaching on EU history and culture as well as citizenship and multicultural awareness.

The EU should encourage measures that enhance children's access to education, independent of their economic and social status, with priority in these measures given to children from poor families and rural areas.

The EU should support life-long learning, funded through the allocation of a set percentage of GDP. This covers personal development in the broadest sense. We see this as a reciprocal commitment (duty and right): whoever uses the social system, is obliged to make efforts to develop themselves. This could include concrete initiatives such as a minimum package of measures per person or issuing educational vouchers.

The EU should stimulate job mobility and training in line with the needs of the labour market. This could include support for member states to develop centres for job mobility, efficient professional orientation and offering re- and post-training to professions whose skills are in demand. This could be facilitated by an independent EU institution that would coordinate the exchange of experiences, providing high-profile advice and subsidies.



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## Democracy

The EU should increase the transparency and accountability of politicians and civil servants. This could be done through the development of a common code of conduct for public servants, requiring the disclosure of personal assets and the criminal record of those who work in European and national institutions, reducing the legal immunity of policy makers and introducing legislation on lobbying at national and European level. A Commissioner for Ethics or a European Integrity Ombudsman could be responsible for these actions.

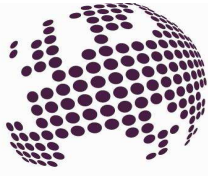
The EU administration should be made more efficient and less bureaucratic for instance by increasing teleworking within EU institutions and using new technology for preparative work and for meetings. It should decide on a single location for the European Parliament with fewer Members of Parliament, an extended period of rotation of the EU Council Presidency and measures such as the reduction of travel costs by 50% or a reduction of Parliamentarians' per diem if their presence in the Parliament is below 75%.

The EU should reduce the number of regulations and simplify all documents, for example by rewriting the Lisbon Treaty as a single, self-contained and stand-alone summary document.

The EU should work to make its political decisions more transparent and understandable to its citizens. It should strengthen and widen the principle of public access to official records. It should improve the information flow between citizens and the EU administration (media, debates), initiate a comprehensive multimedia campaign to publicise 'Europe Direct' as an easy-access information portal about the EU. Websites, publications, booklets etc should deliver information on the EU. An interactive webpage where a panel of journalists selects and communicate subjects appealing broadly to people should be introduced.

The EU should provide for more efficient information dissemination to citizens on the use of the EU funds and about EU assistance. This could include an external, multinational auditing agency intended to provide for a timely systematic monitoring of the utilisation of EU funds utilisation and its sustainable impact on socio-economic development down to the regional level. The results should be available to the control bodies and to the citizens in a well-structured electronic form. Late payment of funds should be avoided.

A clear division is needed between EU and national level decision making for instance in education, social policy and health care, judicial system and migration. Decisions regarding major trends at the macro-level (e.g. environment) should be taken at the EU level, as well as the maintenance of contacts with international organisations and the rest of the world. Decisions should be taken by 2/3 majority. The EU should revise treaties to this end and decide by 2020 whether it will be a federal state or a union of independent nation states.



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The EU should foster a bottom-up approach, open debate and citizen participation to bridge the democratic deficit and to make reality based decisions e.g. through online e-petitioning, public voting on proposals to give MEPs direction, referenda, public meetings, large scale consultation events such as European Citizens Consultations, increased local engagement by EU politicians etc.

The role of the European Parliament should be strengthened and it should be given the right to propose laws.

The member states' EU Commissioner should be appointed by the national Parliament or the population, and the President of the Commission should be elected directly by the people of Europe.

The EU should establish a European Crisis Prevention Centre/Network for coordinating information and actions on global financial and social (excluding military) crises. This would create quantitative and qualitative indicators for decision making.

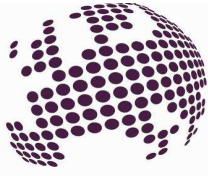
The EU should mandate to member states the introduction of an obligatory European identity card. It would include a photo, personal data and country of citizenship, and would include in electronic format medical data (optional) and fingerprints. The aim would be to thus provide greater security, certainty of identity and a tangible sign of belonging to the European community.

## **Migration and integration**

The EU should formulate a uniform integration policy for migrants so as to foster knowledge, understanding and tolerance on all sides. Of particular importance are obligatory, free of charge language classes, foreign language promotion in government offices and social services, the availability of community meeting places and the teaching of regional and cultural geography. At the same time the cultural identity of immigrants has to be maintained.

The EU should implement a common refugee policy, and harmonise the criteria for affording the status as a refugee. The "first asylum country" rule should be abolished.

In order to deal more effectively with illegal immigration, the EU should take on overall strategic and financial responsibility for the strengthening of external border controls, including the faster processing of cases and standardisation of treatment of people in transit. The EU should take measures to avoid countries on its external borders becoming over-burdened by an influx of migrants. The EU member states must ensure that illegal immigrants are not offered jobs in the grey economy.



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The EU should support the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean to support the development of these countries and control immigration.

The EU should analyse the causes of migration through a stringently supervised and coordinated development policy (including knowledge-transfer in line with the principle of helping people to help themselves). Therefore it should invest in improving the fundamental livelihoods of those across the world. The member states should jointly strive to correct the sometimes “too rosy” image of the opportunities within EU in external countries.

The EU should address economic and social problems which arise from the brain drain between EU Member States. This problem should be addressed through the use of concrete financial and regulatory mechanisms and other tools which encourage qualified staff to remain in the EU.

## **Energy and the environment**

The EU should aim to reduce global warming and phase-out fossil fuels by promoting renewable energy from water, solar, wind, hydrogen, waste and residues from industry. Member States should cooperate and develop energy sources on the basis of both national and regional conditions. This includes de-centralised energy production, energy self-sufficient regions and communities and by using economic instruments and incentives for internationally coordinated research.

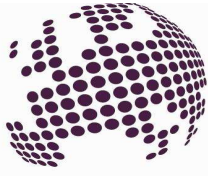
The EU should establish stimulating instruments – such as tax policies and financial instruments – to support investment in energy efficiency projects and energy saving measures. Research into energy efficiency and technologies should be subsidised more. The EU should strengthen joint research, information, assistance and sanctions, especially in transport, housing and agriculture.

The EU should ensure energy security for all member states by establishing a transeuropean energy network, and diversifying energy sources and channels of supply.

The EU bodies should promote existing nuclear energy, focussing on strengthening operational safety and, at the same time, actively promoting the development of new and alternative nuclear technologies, for example „hot nuclear fusion“, „cold nuclear fusion“, etc.

The EU should create laws to improve market access for alternative energy suppliers, e.g. by liberalizing transmission rights and shortening minimum terms for contracts. Local, decentralised energy producers must be given real access to the electrical grid.

The EU should create an environmental policy that reduces CO2 emissions. In order to do so, it should for example promote the creation and protection of forests, closely monitor CO2



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emissions, reduce taxes for businesses that do not exceed CO2 limits.

The EU should consider the economic, ecological and social consequences of all its decisions (regulations, guidelines, recommendations, budget) – a sustainability check. It should disseminate best practices supporting sustainable development. The EU should accelerate the viable sustainable production of goods and services, including through its own procurement practices.

The EU must increase the fines imposed on member states that do not fully comply with directives on the protection of the environment.

The EU should aim to establish environmentally friendly transport infrastructure and avoid long-distance goods transport by road by improving the infrastructure of railways and waterways. All transport policy decisions should be made on the basis of an environmental impact assessment at all stages, e.g. TEWI (total equivalent warming impact). Tolls and user charges in transport have to include environmental criteria such as noise emissions and air pollution.

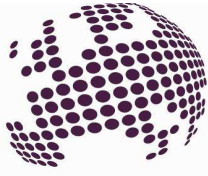
The EU should, in cooperation with local authorities and industry, encourage public transport and by subsidizing, raising awareness, exchanging best practices, and enabling the inhabitants of more remote places inclusion into innovative public transport networks.

EU should encourage responsible behaviour towards waste in collaboration with regional and local authorities. This could be done by a uniform recycling system, charges for non-refundable packaging, information campaigns, use of waste for energy production, incentive policies including financial measures.

The EU should support environmentally responsible companies, and reform polluting industries by investing in new and clean production processes and technologies especially developing recycling programmes for each industry. The European Union should create a label of good environmental practices for businesses. Sanctions should be imposed on those who violate environmental rules.

The EU should suggest to the member states the inclusion of environmental protection into the school curriculum. It should run comprehensive EU-wide information and education programmes, in particular on waste disposal and recycling, climate change and energy use. It should increase funds committed to the development of environmental awareness.

The EU should provide expertise and funds for those institutions in member states that administer areas for nature conservation and protection of plants and animal heritage sites.



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## **Security**

The EU should facilitate an accelerated flow of secure information required in the prevention and detection of crime across member states (e.g. drug trafficking and human trafficking and paedophilia). Activities should include increased funding for, and better utilisation of, new integrated technology, closer cooperation between national police officers.

The European Union should develop a harmonised European penal law, including the same punishment for the same crime throughout the Union and uniform protection of victims. The codes will be adopted step by step and unanimously to remove conflicting standards.

The European Commission should establish a European police force in order to tackle cross-border crime which should be positioned above the national police forces (i.e. the FBI-model).

The EU should make Europe a safer place by defending the borders of its member states as its own borders and by adapting a defence policy based on European interests. The member states should comply with this policy and should not serve the interests of other international organizations

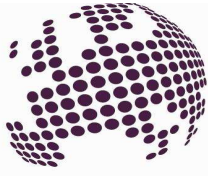
## **Consumer protection**

The EU should strengthen consumer protection policies, including for e-commerce. It should do this through measures such as systematic controls of such things as food and pharmaceuticals and imports from outside the EU. There should be stringent labelling which facilitate comparisons between products and commodities. The process of complaints and suggestions should be accelerated. A central control agency which can issue sanctions should also be established.

The EU should support the levelling of the prices of goods and services in the market and take useful measures to allow every citizen to access basic products. It should also regulate price increases. Rules that lead to more beneficial consumer prices are needed for some products e.g. mobile phones.

## **Agriculture**

The European Union should reorganise agricultural subsidy policy and significantly reduce the total percentage of subsidies for agriculture. It should monitor the effective use of subsidies and support the production of goods that are in demand. Those producers phasing out agricultural activity due to reduced subsidies deserve temporary support, intended to aid the continuous development of rural areas.



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The EU should ensure that the same farm subsidies apply in all member states. Information and consultancy should be made accessible to farmers and these should also be involved in the programming and monitoring of funds which are intended for them.

The EU should ensure that agriculture does not have adverse effects on health and environment and promote food self-sufficiency. This would include the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming, local food production, reduced fertiliser and pesticide use. GMOs should be banned except for medicinal purposes.