

European Commission press release on the launch of Plan D (13 October 2005)

Caption: Following the French and Dutch ‘no’ votes on the European Constitution, the Heads of State or Government call for a ‘period of reflection’ to enable a broad debate to take place in each Member State. On 13 October 2005, the European Commission launches its ‘Plan D’ (Democracy, Dialogue and Debate), demonstrating the key role it intends to play in these debates. The aim of Plan D is to establish a common framework for the 25 national debates by proposing various models and structures to the Member State governments and suggesting common procedures and major topics for discussion.

Source: RAPID - Press releases database. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: European Commission, [01.09.2013]. IP/05/1272.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/european_commission_press_release_on_the_launch_of_plan_d_13_october_2005-en-51bb0a0a-4b69-4298-a120-8f69ab058a49.html

Publication date: 19/12/2013

IP/05/1272

Brussels, 13 October 2005

European Commission launches PLAN D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate

The European Commission has today launched its Plan D (Democracy, Dialogue, Debate) laying the foundations for the profound debate about Europe's future which is to take place in the months to come. Faced with French and Dutch no votes on the European Constitution, Heads of Government called for a "period of reflection" to enable a broad debate to take place in each Member State. Ultimately, Governments must steer these national debates forward, but the Commission has a key role in facilitating the process. The Commission's "Plan D" - Democracy, Dialogue and Debate - puts in place a framework, through national governments, for a 25 country debate on Europe's future. The clear objective is to build a new political consensus about the right policies to equip Europe to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Launching the plan today, Vice-President Margot Wallström, responsible for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, said: "*Plan D is about debate, dialogue and listening. It is a means of harnessing political ideas to generate change. Faced with the challenges of globalisation, people are asking tough questions about job security and pensions, about migration and living standards. Europe must renew so it is part of the solution to those challenges. Plan D aims to inject more democracy into the Union, to stimulate a wide public debate and build a new consensus on the future direction of the European Union. Now Member States must bring this process alive. My appeal today is for national governments to seize this opportunity, to kick start the debates and to act as a motor for European change.*"

Key elements of Plan D include:

Stimulating Debate

All Member States have committed to undertake broad ranging national debates on the Future of Europe. These national debates go to the heart of Plan D – here the Commission's clear role is to assist rather than replace Member States. Plan D does, however, seek to provide a common framework for the 25 country debates: providing potential models and structures for national governments (eg, National Forum Ireland), and suggesting certain common processes and key themes.

The Feedback Process

The Commission will structure the feedback process. A first feedback of the national debates should take place in April 2006. A European Conference on the future of Europe will be organised on 9 May 2006, drawing together the main conclusions from the debates. The Commission will prepare a synthesis report of the national debates in time for the June 2006 European Council under the Austrian Presidency. Ultimately, this process should result in a concrete road map for the future of Europe.

Key initiatives to strengthen dialogue

The Commission is proposing 13 specific initiatives at the European level to stimulate a wider public debate, to promote citizens' participation and to generate a real dialogue on European policies. The Commission will seek to work in joint cooperation with the European Parliament and the EU bodies. These actions will include an intensive series of visits by Commissioners to Member States, support for European citizens' projects, a drive for more openness of Council proceedings, a stronger presence of Commissioners in national Parliaments, the creation of a network of "European Goodwill Ambassadors" to raise the profile of the European debate, and renewed support for projects to increase voter participation. These initiatives will run throughout the lifetime of the Barroso Commission, and beyond.