



# **1 Resumé of activities during the Danish period of reflection**

## **Prepared by the Folketing's EU Information Centre**

After the heads of state and government of the EU Member States decided to introduce a period of reflection in June 2005, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen convened meetings with the Folketing's parties and a number of EU movements and organisations in August 2005. With the point of departure in these meetings, it was decided that activities during the Danish period of reflection should be anchored in the Folketing's European Affairs Committee. The creation of a parallel line for the popular movements and organisations was recommended at the same time.

The framework for the Danish debate on the period of reflection in the form of a Citizens' Agenda arose on the basis of this. The Citizens' Agenda takes its point of departure in three main players: The Folketing (the Folketing's European Affairs Committee), eight movements and organisations, (the Planning Group) and the Board for European Debate in Denmark, that distributes some of the funds granted.

The Folketing's European Affairs Committee and the Planning Group drew up five questions that are regarded as central to the Danish debate on the period of reflection:

1. Which of the cross-border problems that Europe is faced with should be given special emphasis in order to solve them – and which role should the EU play in this connection?
2. Which problems connected with EU cooperation are greatest, and how can they be solved?
3. How can the debate on the future of Europe and possibly a new treaty be organised to ensure breadth, depth, and legitimacy?
4. How can we strengthen citizens' participation in the EU?
5. Where are the borders of Europe?

The eight movements and organisations in the Planning Group are: Danish Adult Education Association, Democracy in Europe, Trade Unions Against the Union, The Peoples Movement Against the EU, The Danish Folk High Schools, The JuneMovement, New Europe and Challenge Europe.

The Citizen's Agenda has had a financial framework of just under 2.3 million euro. The money was divided into three pools: One pool of about 0.9 million euro administered by the Folketing, one pool of 0.5 million euro, earmarked for activities arranged jointly by the movements in Citizens' Agenda, and one pool of about 0, 9 million euro, distributed on application by the Board for European Debate in Denmark for decentrally organised local or national measures.

## **The Folketing's activities**

### **Hearing on Europe 2006**

The Folketing held a Hearing on Europe 2006 from 29 – 30 April at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense in collaboration with TV2.

The purpose of the hearing was to offer the Danish public the opportunity to take part in the debate on the future of Europe. Just under 420 Danes debated with each other and with politicians and experts during the weekend. The participants had been invited to take part on the basis of a representative questionnaire among 2,500 Danes.

The Hearing on Europe was organised as an interplay between group discussions and debates where citizens had the opportunity to put questions to the politicians and experts. Both the group discussions and the panel debates were chaired by neutral, experienced chairpersons to ensure that everybody had a chance to voice their opinions.

The participants filled in three questionnaires during the weekend, which created the basis for the results in a special report on the Hearing on Europe 2006.

### **Hearing on the European Court of Justice**

On 15 March 2006, the Folketing's European Affairs Committee held a hearing on the role of the European Court of Justice – to clarify, among other things, which role the Court's activist interpretation of European law plays in integration among EU Member States. Several of the speakers at the hearing stressed that the European Court of Justice's view of itself as the guardian of the treaty prompted it to strive to ensure that legislative developments in Europe fulfil the political objectives of the treaty. In continuation of this, there was a discussion regarding whether and, if the

occasion should arise, how it might be possible to intervene in decisions made by the Court that Member States found too far-reaching.

The possibility that the Council could be given a formal opportunity to present political criticism of the Court's decisions was discussed, but opinion was divided on this issue. In addition, there was a discussion of the inability of judges to deliver dissenting judgements, as well as a discussion of the reason why the Court had not wished to become involved in the issue of compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.

### **Hearing on comitology**

On 22 March 2006, the Folketing's European Affairs Committee held a hearing on comitology. The purpose of the hearing was to clarify how committee procedures function today and how it would be possible to ensure parliamentary control of these in the best possible way.

In particular, the hearing concerned the current proposal for a revision of committee procedures. Among other things, the aim of the proposal was to provide the European Parliament with the opportunity to block the adoption of a Commission act on an equal footing with the Council in those areas where the two institutions share legislative competence. There was a discussion in this connection regarding whether the Council should be able to defeat committee issues by a simple or qualified majority, and how it is possible to differentiate between committee decisions of a purely administrative character and committee decisions with a political content. Additionally, the issue of deadlines and openness in committee procedures was discussed.

The Folketing's European Affairs Committee sent a letter to COSAC with the aim of creating a debate on comitology in the national parliaments.

### **EU Youth Parliament**

The Folketing arranged an EU Youth Parliament in order to provide young people with a special opportunity to present their ideas on the future of Europe. The EU Youth Parliament is organised as a competition in which participants put together a motion for a resolution with the point of departure in three of the five questions on the period of reflection. The arrangement will be concluded with an EU Youth Parliament proper at Christiansborg on 27 September 2006.

### **Web site – [www.borgernesdagsorden.dk](http://www.borgernesdagsorden.dk)**

The web site – [www.borgernesdagsorden.dk](http://www.borgernesdagsorden.dk) went on the air on 17 January 2006. The purpose of the web site was to create a gathering place for the Citizens' Agenda. Among other things, the site contains a list of debate arrangements in Denmark, provides an opportunity to follow and take part in the debate, and includes various background documents and information on the EU.

### **Activities arranged by the movements and organisations in Citizens' Agenda**

Representatives of the eight movements or organisations in the Citizens' Agenda who are members of the Planning Group (PLG) arranged a series of activities during the Danish period of reflection.

#### **Letter to organisations**

PLG a letter to 2,177 selected organisations in January 2006 in which the organisations were asked to point out one thing that it was important for all other players not to overlook in the debate.

#### **Prologue activities**

PLG decided that Citizens' Agenda should be brought into greater prominence with three initial arrangements before the debate proper began. These activities were called the prologue.

On 9 February 2006, prologue activities were held at Copenhagen Central Station and Århus Station, and there were prologue activities in the pedestrian precinct in Odense on 27 February. Activists distributed material on the Citizens' Agenda in connection with the prologue activities. A video camera was also set up in Copenhagen to record people's attitudes to the EU.

#### **Cooperation with Newspaper - Politiken**

In connection with the prologue activities, PLG had a special newspaper printed for distribution in cooperation with the newspaper Politiken. Politiken had editorial responsibility and provided journalists who were given a certain amount of advice by PLG. The newspaper was published as a supplement to Politiken on 9 February 2006, and an extra edition of about 50,000 copies was produced which have been distributed throughout the period of reflection.

#### **The media**

PLG set up a media group whose purpose was to contact the media and include them in PLG's activities. But the group noticed from the beginning that there was a certain inertia in the media in general when it came to following up on cooperation or following up on PLG's activities. Among other things, PLG felt that the debate on the Muhammad cartoons had created marked competition with an extended EU debate.

### **Lighthouse meetings**

The purpose of what were called the lighthouse meetings was to ensure that the Citizens' Agenda was brought into prominence and made relevant locally and regionally. In addition, people's attitudes were recorded so that they could be passed on at the final arrangement at Holmen, and to the Folketing and the Prime Minister.

A total of 17 meetings with an adequate geographical distribution was planned, of which one had to be cancelled. Most meetings were held during the week from 11 to 18 March. Each meeting had to have a local association or institute of education as an anchor and the people from these cooperated on planning activities with external partners. The lighthouse meetings were to a great extent conducted as panel debates.

Overall, the number of participants at the lighthouse meetings was between 1,300 and 1,400 people – in addition to the people who took part in the preparatory activities, etc.

### **Web corner – "Ideas on Europe"**

"Ideas on Europe" is PLG's weblog on the web site [www.borgernesdagsorden.dk](http://www.borgernesdagsorden.dk). The site was intended as a place where people can air slightly longer and more personal views on the EU.

### **Cooperation with Communication Bureau**

After the lighthouse meetings had been held, PLG decided to carry out three main activities, intended for the final arrangement at Holmen on 6 May, together with the communication bureau, Rostra:

1. A one-week tour around Denmark during the week preceding the Folketing's Hearing on Europe so that people could vote on ten issues that had arisen during the previous weeks'

debate. Voting was carried out by putting balls into plexiglass tubes. About 900 people gave their votes on priorities during the tour.

2. A meeting with a number of organisations on 2 May to discuss what could be done to encourage more organisations to become actively involved in the debate on the future of the EU and to create more participation on the part of citizens. One of the conclusions from the meeting was that organisations would like to debate the EU and had already done so, but with the point of departure in specific issues that affected the fields of interest of the involved organisations.
3. The production of a film to gather the threads of the debates at the lighthouse meetings and the tour during week 17. The film can be seen on the web site.

### **Final arrangements at Holmen on 6 May**

By way of concluding the activities that PLG had been responsible for, there was a final arrangement at Holmen on 6 May 2006. The programme comprised various debate panels – one for each of the five questions. The climax of the meeting was the Prime Minister's visit.

### **Activities supported by the Board for European Debate in Denmark**

The board administered and distributed a pool of about 0,9 million euro in connection with the Danish period of reflection. The money in the pool was distributed to decentrally organised local or national measures on the basis of applications.

Money from the pool was distributed in two rounds on 16 December 2005 and 6 February 2006 respectively. A total of 93 activities received support from the Board from the pool earmarked for the period of reflection.