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NOTE

from : the UK Presidency and the forthcoming Austrian Presidency

Subject : Interim report on the national debates during the reflection period on the future of Europe

Further to the Declaration by Heads of State or Government at the meeting of the European Council in June 2005 on the ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, delegations will find attached contributions from the Member States on the above-mentioned issue. This interim report will contribute to the overall assessment of national debates in the first half of 2006 under the Austrian Presidency as agreed by the June 2005 European Council.

BELGIUM**CONTRIBUTION BY THE BELGIAN DELEGATION**

1. Since the European Council meeting in June 2005 Belgium has continued the process of ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. In Belgium the Constitutional Treaty has to receive the approval not only of the Federal Parliament but also of the parliamentary assemblies of the Regions and the Communities. This factor has in practice ensured the decentralisation of the debate on the future of Europe. At present the assent procedure is underway in the Flemish Parliament.
2. The Federal Parliament has in addition begun a debate on the future of the European Union. The initiative was taken by the Advisory Committee on European Questions. That committee, the meetings of which are open to the public, consists of members of the Chamber of Representatives and of the Senate and the Belgian members of the European Parliament. A first debate, in which the Prime Minister took part, was held on 19 October 2005 on the subject of "The future of the European Union: What sort of Europe do we need?". That debate will be followed by other initiatives during the first half of 2006.
3. In order to enable citizens to express more directly their feelings and expectations regarding the construction of Europe, Belgium will organise decentralised debates. Debates will be held in the Communities, the Regions and, in particular, in the ten provinces of Belgium in close collaboration with the Belgian news network *Europe Direct*. They will make possible a dialogue between political leaders and the public at provincial level. Preparation for those debates will have to be made by the dissemination of information on European Union action in areas that are of direct concern to the public.
4. One of the essential aims of the time for reflection is to ensure public confidence in the project of European integration. That objective requires, *inter alia*, better communication on what the European Union is and what added value it brings. Different means of information have been and will be used for that purpose, in particular the internet, where the website <http://www.diplomatie.be/fr/policy/Europa/constitution/default.asp> features events and seminars and disseminates documentation.

5. Within this framework the Belgian government will continue to give special attention to the needs of particular sections of the public, such as the younger generation (school children and students), for whom the provision of teaching aids and specific awareness campaigns will be continued in collaboration with the Commission Representation in Belgium and the European Parliament's Information Office for Belgium. In parallel with the actions they organise directly, the public authorities will support multiple initiatives taken by pressure groups and civil society organisations.
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CONTRIBUTION BY THE CZECH DELEGATION

Very shortly after the European Council in June 2005, the government of the Czech Republic approved the ‘Communication Strategy for Informing the Public about European Affairs’, a task to be carried out by the Department of Information on European Affairs in the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (OGCR). The main objectives of this strategy are to provide information to the public for the national debate in the period of “reflection, explanation and discussion”, and to organise and stimulate national discourse.

Since then the OGCR has implemented a systematic process of informing its citizens about EU matters in order to enhance awareness about EU functions and developments, a process aimed at communicating the government’s priorities in relation to the EU. The Communication Strategy Initiative has been in operation for four months and the initial positive results are already being noticed, particularly with regard to a growing awareness of the availability of information on the EU that can be obtained through different EU activities run by the government.

I. Priorities for the year 2005

In light of the current need to raise general public awareness of the EU, 4 priorities were selected for 2005:

1. **Future of Europe** (Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Services Directive, Lisbon Strategy etc.)
2. **Czech EU membership** (economy, legal environment, quality of life)
3. **European programmes and funds – signpost for European money** (financial funds available to the Czech entities in the EU)
4. **The “EU into Schools” project** (to increase EU knowledge within the teacher-student-parent target group)

II. Information System

The communication instruments of the newly created integrated information system are as follows:

1. Eurocenters

The first Eurocenter was officially opened in Prague 18 November, 2005 by the Czech PM Jiri Paroubek, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, Vice-President Margot Wallström, Commissioner Vladimír Špidla and H.E. Linda Duffield, British Ambassador. The Commissioners officially presented Plan D for "democracy, dialogue and debate" and acknowledged the efforts and progress of the Czech Republic government with regard to the principles of the plan.

2. Eurofon

The toll-free line responds, primarily, to inquiries concerning specific Czech issues in the EU.

3. Euroskop.cz

The internet website covers two main areas: EU news and news from the Czech Republic related to EU issues. The website currently features sections such as Topics, the European Union, the Czech Republic in the EU, EU and Myself, Documents, etc.

4. Eurokuryr (Euro-messenger)

The 'Eurokuryr' newsletter is published quarterly, and offers information concerning the role of the relevant Czech public administration bodies in relation to EU issues. Emphasis is put on the position of the Czech state administration and its impact on other actors in the public administration (such as regions, other ministries, etc.).

5. The grant system

Through the grant scheme, the public (and civil society in particular) has been involved to a notable extent in the dissemination of information on the EU, as well as the launching of the national debate on the future of Europe. Dozens of lectures, conferences, discussions, anthologies and other projects were funded by government grants.

III. PUBLIC DEBATES

At the end of November 2005, OGCR organized a public debate for approximately 600 people with the Czech political leaders and opinion makers, such as the Czech PM Jiri Paroubek, and the former Czech President Vaclav Havel, whose collection of essays and speeches on Europe bearing the title “Europe as a task” was presented on this occasion. The collection was published as the first book of the new series called “Thinking about Europe” launched by the OGCR Communication Strategy Initiative.

IV. FUTURE PROJECTS FOR THE YEAR 2006

Apart from the other activities aimed at informing and stimulating debate, a co-ordinated network of 13 Eurocentres in each regional capital is to be set up in early 2006. The Eurocentres will disseminate information about the EU and about the work of the Czech government in relation to the European agenda, and will also act as mediators in communication between the Czech government and its citizens in those regions.

DENMARK

CONTRIBUTION BY THE DANISH DELEGATION

Organisation, themes and financing

With reference to the European Council decision in June 2005 to institute a reflection period throughout the EU, the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, convened meetings with the parties represented in the Danish Parliament and with a number of the major NGO's engaged in the Danish EU debate in August 2005. On the basis of these meetings, the parties of the Danish parliament concluded that the Parliament's European Affairs Committee should coordinate Danish activities in the reflection period.

Danish activities in the reflection period build on a tradition of EU debate developed through six EU referenda since 1972. Under the heading 'Citizens' Agenda', the Parliament's European Affairs Committee and a number of NGO's convened a so-called 'Planning Group', which agreed on a thematic, financial, and organisational framework for the debate.

The following five general questions reflect the thematic aspects of the framework:

- 1) Which of the cross-border problems that Europe is faced with should be given special emphasis, and which role should the EU play in this respect?
- 2) What are the most important problems related to EU cooperation and how can they be solved?
- 3) How should the debate on the future of Europe and a possible new treaty be organised to ensure width, depth, and legitimacy?
- 4) How can we strengthen citizens' participation in the EU?
- 5) Where are the geographical boundaries of the EU?

The financial and organisational aspects of the agreement comprise a financial framework of DKK 17.5 million, which will be distributed via three pools:

- Initial and concluding arrangements as well as larger (nation-wide) arrangements under the auspices of the Parliament and the Parliament's European Committee
- Activities under the auspices of the NGO's that are members of the Planning Group
- Local or national measures organised on a decentralised basis by individuals, civil society etc.

Plans and initiatives

A number of plans and initiatives are currently being developed. So far the Parliament has decided to conduct a nationally televised hearing with 400 participants on 29-30 April 2006, run a youth Parliament session probably in April 2006 and launch a website on 'Citizens' Agenda' in December 2005 or January 2006 to inform and coordinate activities in the reflection period.

The NGO's will launch the 'Citizens' Agenda' on 12 or 13 January 2006 with a happening and distribution of information material at main railway stations and carry out debates mainly at local level as well as a concluding event to follow-up on the hearing conducted by the Parliament.

Conclusions on the Danish debate

The Parliament will conclude on the Danish reflection period activities in Spring 2006 and submit a report to the Prime Minister in due time before the June 2006 Summit.

GERMANY

CONTRIBUTION BY THE GERMAN DELEGATION

The future of the Constitutional Treaty was discussed in the parties' **election programmes** and has been included in the **coalition agreement**: the coalition is in favour of continuing work on the ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty beyond the first six months of 2006 and making a success of that Treaty. Chancellor Merkel also made a statement to this effect in her inaugural speech to the German Bundestag on 30 November 2005.

The Federal Government is doing all it can to bring about greater democratisation of the European Union, to safeguard the European institutions' ability to act in an enlarged EU and to promote the further development of Europe's diverse social model. It is taking great pains to make intensive use of the reflection period agreed on by the European Council in June, in order to enter into a comprehensive debate with citizens, social partners, churches and social groups.

In the context of the period of reflection on the future of the EU announced by the European Council in June, the Foreign Ministry has held discussions with German expert groups. The main focus was an analysis of the situation in the EU, following the negative outcome of the referenda in France and the Netherlands.

Leading German politicians have repeatedly spoken out in signed articles, foremost among them President Köhler, along with his counterparts from Finland, Italy, Latvia, Austria, Poland and Portugal, in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung on 15 July 2005 and Chancellor Schröder in "Die Zeit" on 10 October 2005.

The reflection process in Germany is also being pushed ahead by civil society. One especially active participant is the **Network European Movement Germany**, a non-partisan organised civil society grouping in the field of European policy in Germany. Together with around 120 member organisations, it engages in communicating Europe and in European policy planning, in dialogue with all EU forces at national and European level.

The party political foundations and the churches are also taking part in the debate, with a very wide range of events. There is a lively academic discussion going on in the **universities**.

ESTONIA

CONTRIBUTION BY THE ESTONIAN DELEGATION

In Estonia the EU Information Unit of the Government Communication Office by the State Chancellery is coordinating dissemination of the EU related information to the general public.

Unit's last activities and future plans include:

- Joint visits with Representation of European Commission in Estonia and European Parliament Information Bureau to the regions to promote debate over the future of Europe. Since December 2005 the representatives of the Estonian government (EU Information Unit) and the EU institutions will visit all 15 counties to see how the regional information centers (incl Europe Direct Information Relays) actually work, learn more about what kind of information the local people need, what are the main concerns related to EU regionally and what kind of help the government and EU institutions can provide. All in all the visits, that include meetings with governors, EU information officials and key regional journalists should make cooperation between all stakeholders more effective, make the central institutions more visible in the regions and pave a road for the bigger public events in the regions.
- Planning of series of public discussions on future of Europe and other EU related matters in the regions with the leaders of Estonian villages. Based on the pre-election experiences, the team of public figures will meet the local leaders, making presentations, answering questions and promoting discussions. The action is planned jointly with an NGO umbrella organization the Open Estonia Foundation and network of local development NGOs Kodukant. The project will be launched in February 2006.
- Preparations to make a call for proposals for NGOs to select best projects regarding EU related communication actions in 2006. The projects are funded jointly with the Open Estonia Foundation. Activities include debates, information days, seminars, conferences and campaigns, initiated and implemented by NGOs. For 2006 the priority topics will be: The future of Europe, the role of EU in the world, involvement of NGOs in EU related decision making procedure.
- Regional information network and NGOs were encouraged to go ahead with already planned debates and information activities related to Constitutional Treaty, refocusing them on the future of Europe and expectations of people.

- Regular meetings with the regional EU information officials to discuss the best practices, coordinate the messages and exchange information about activities. After the last EU Summit the local officials modified the priority topic of the Constitutional Treaty, focusing in their actions on more general issues of the European Union.
- In November the annual Information Forum under the heading “How to Bridge the Gap” took place. The event was organized jointly by State Chancellery, EC Representation and EP Information Bureau in Estonia. The NGOs, members of different EU information networks, media representatives, ministerial communication officers, ambassadors were among audience to listen to presentations, ask questions and debate on different EU matters.
- Re-launching of the internet forum on the EU affairs. In the beginning of 2004 a special website on the Constitutional Treaty was created as a subsection of the website of Estonian biggest daily Postimees. The site provided readers with the treaty and all other relevant materials, including fresh newsarticles and commentaries, while offering them an opportunity to express their opinions through commentaries. The project lasted since May when the ratification of the treaty was expected. Given the current situation there is a good reason to reopen the website with the new focus and new materials. The possibility to give comments will be the essential feature of the site.
- In the fall 2005 the citizens were invited to express their opinion on the Estonian Action Plan for Growth and Jobs 2005-2007 (for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy) on the government webportal called TOM). TOM (which stands for Today I Decide) is the special website to hear people’s voice and proposals on different public matters. According to the main principle of the site all comments, questions and proposals are provided with feedback.
- Preparing a series of TV programs in cooperation with national public television. The main goal of the project is to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens. The programs should be educative, attractive and also entertaining in order to catch the attention of even those who are not usually interested in EU topics.
- Continuation of the weekly radio program at the local radio stations. The one-hour program called “A Window to Europe” is dedicated to the developments in the EU and member states and has a regular input from the EU Information Unit.

GREECE

CONTRIBUTION BY THE GREEK DELEGATION

There has been an extensive debate in Greece during and after the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, concerning the Treaty and the Future of Europe. Our public campaign, under the title “Europe for me” included: **a.** the creation of a modern and detailed website (www.europe4me.gr), **b.** t.v spots broadcasted on national television, **c.** publication of the Constitutional Treaty’s text in a user-friendly newspaper format (300.000 copies) together with other informative material (400.000 copies), which were distributed by 978 information centers all over Greece, **d.** panel discussions all over the country in collaboration with local NGO’s (Institutes, Universities, local authorities etc) and **e.** a “Eurobus”, that drove through all major cities of Greece, distributing brochures, explaining the main points of the Constitutional Treaty and participating in informative presentations and discussions about the Future of Europe.

The Constitutional Treaty was ratified by the overwhelming majority of the members of the Greek Parliament on April 19th 2005. In a total of 285 members of Parliament present that day, 268 voted for and only 17 against. The broad parliamentary support (almost 94% of the present and 90% of the total MPs) clearly reflects the existing, major acceptance of the Treaty by the Greek people (recent Eubarometer surveys also show that a high percentage of Greek public opinion supports the European Ideal).

Even with the Constitutional Treaty ratified, the Greek Government recognizes the importance of actively engaging actively in a broader “communicating process”, that would further strengthen people’s commitment to European integration, peace and prosperity. The “period of reflection” should not be a period of silence and apathy. Therefore, we welcome Commissioner Wallstrom’ s Plan D’ and are examining initiatives along the lines of its suggestions, dully adapted to the Greek context.

In 2006, Greece celebrates 25 years as a member of the European Union. Our set of initiatives will, therefore, mainly focus on the Anniversary of the Greek membership, including an assessment of Europe’s contribution to the development and prosperity of Greece, as well as Greece’s contribution to the European Ideal. To that end, we are planning various activities, aimed at engaging the public. On this aspect, we will be cooperating closely with the Representation of the E.C and the Office of the European Parliament in Athens.

CONTRIBUTION BY THE SPANISH DELEGATION

After the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in Spain, it was noticed that certain sectors of the population showed a lack of interest regarding European affairs, especially young people living outside major cities. In view of this fact, the Spanish Administration reaffirmed its conviction that the task of communicating on European affairs did not end with that referendum, but rather should be maintained as a priority.

Citizens' areas of concern were not centred so much on the advantages or disadvantages of the Constitutional Treaty, but rather on very specific aspects that worried them: employment in Spain, education, immigration, security, the economic effects of the fifth enlargement, and so on. At the time, a renewed communication effort on European affairs was considered, centred on promoting more debate on the part of the citizens regarding these issues, providing them with more information.

As a result, the Spanish Administration decided to launch a campaign called "Talking about Europe" last november, 23th. The campaign's objective is to promote an open dialogue on European issues, presenting achievements in this area, and opening up a debate on perspectives for the future. Moreover, the campaign coincides with the 20th Anniversary of the Signature of the Accession Treaty of Spain to the then European Communities and its entry into force, which provides an opportunity to look at what EU membership has meant for us in different areas.

The "Talking About Europe" campaign can rely on a great deal of institutional support, particularly on the part of the representatives of EU institutions, with which it is working jointly on this initiative. The campaign is being very well received both by the public sector and by various representatives of civil society and the private sector.

A few examples of the activities included in the campaign are: a travelling exhibition for young people touring a number of towns having preferably a population of 15,000-20,000 people; a call for proposals for Spanish universities, so that they can hold debates on initiatives involving European affairs; or a debate with Spanish European MEPs on Spain's 20 years in the EU. A web page (www.hablamosedeuropa.es) and a logo exist to unify the different activities.

Participation in the campaign is not limited, in any case, to promoting debate on European affairs in Spain; rather it falls within the so-called “reflection period” fixed by the last European Council, a reflection that Spain would like to conduct creatively and giving to its citizens a key role.

The Presidency and the Members States have been informed in GAERC (Brussels, 11/7/2005) on the key points of this campaign.

CONTRIBUTION BY THE FRENCH DELEGATION

Further to the referendum of 29 May 2005 and in accordance with the June Declaration by the Heads of State or Government, the French authorities have taken the first steps to ensure that Europe and European issues now figure more prominently and more regularly in national public and political debate.

➤ *Making government proceedings more efficient*

- The Prime Minister has decided to convene each month an Interministerial Committee on Europe, providing a genuine political means of coordinating and steering European issues. The Committee consists of the Ministre d'État, Minister for the Interior and Regional Planning, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance, the Minister for Employment, Social Cohesion and Housing, the Minister with responsibility for Relations with Parliament, the Minister with responsibility for European Affairs and other members of the government that have an interest in its agenda. This structure, the secretariat for which is provided by the General Secretariat for European Affairs (formerly the SGCI), is responsible for examining, on a political level, questions relating to France's participation in the Communities and the Union. Its aim is to ensure that the government acts in a more coordinated way with regard to European issues and is better prepared for future challenges. Four Interministerial Committees have been held to date (on 10 July, 20 September, 11 October and 23 November).

➤ *Enhancing the involvement of Parliament in European issues*

- Besides the traditional information and monitoring procedures, the French Parliament will henceforth be more closely involved in European issues:
 - a circular from the Prime Minister dated 22 November extended the scope of European acts on which the Assemblies will be able to adopt resolutions pursuant to Article 88-4 of the Constitution;
 - information on Council proceedings must be provided at more regular intervals: before and after each meeting in Brussels or Luxembourg, Ministers will be invited to outline the issues and results. Similarly, a debate without a vote is expected to be held before each European Council;
 - finally, national parliaments are being invited to take part in sessions to raise awareness of European issues with a view to developing their knowledge of and links with the European institutions. The first such session was held in Brussels on 28 and 29 November.

➤ *Involving French citizens more closely in the European decision-making processes*

√ *Increasing consultation of local authorities*

- The Prime Minister has asked members of the government to consult more regularly with associations of local representatives on matters of topical European interest and to encourage local assemblies to hold regular discussions on European issues which have tangible effects on local life.

√ *Increasing consultation of both sides of industry*

- Relations with both sides of industry or the representative institutions have been developed in line with the dialogue already in progress (in particular, the Social Dialogue Committee for European and International Issues). A series of meetings with both sides of industry was launched in October 2005. In future, a meeting on European issues will be held at the beginning of each six-month Presidency. Similarly, the role of the existing national consultative bodies is to be strengthened, as will that of the Economic and Social Council - an advisory constitutional assembly under the aegis of the public authorities which represents the main economic and social activities.

√ *Improving interaction and communication with civil society on European issues*

- actions aimed at the general public will be stepped up. Initially, the focus will be on information and dialogue via the Internet. A new interactive European website will be developed by Sources d'Europe, a body co-financed by the Minister with responsibility for European Affairs and the European Commission (www.info-europe.fr);
- basic knowledge of the European Union will be included in the "common knowledge base" which is currently being defined by the Ministry of Education, and which pupils will have to master at the end of year 4 (at around the age of 13). Knowledge of Europe will be assessed systematically during the fourth-year and baccalaureate examinations;
- a general introduction to the European Union, and in particular the European Security and Defence Policy, will be given on "defence preparation awareness days" [days during which young people are introduced to issues connected with national security] (this concerns all young people when they come of age);

- schools of journalism will be afforded greater assistance in stepping up training in European issues. The Minister with responsibility for European Affairs already provides financial support to enable trainee journalists to visit Brussels and Strasbourg;
 - Europe Day (9 May) will become a true festival of Europe and will benefit from additional funding to that end;
 - each year, the government grants subsidies to national associations with European vocations. The Minister with responsibility for European Affairs supported more than forty associations in this way in 2005. Those associations will be incorporated into the network of information outlets financed by the European Commission and the government-approved European guide outlets;
 - listening, explaining and providing information on European issues must also take place on the basis of direct dialogue with members of the government. To that end, the Minister with responsibility for European Affairs visits the regions regularly.
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IRELAND

CONTRIBUTION BY THE IRISH DELEGATION

Ireland, with its tradition of referendums on European Treaties, is well accustomed to public debate about Europe. The current national debate represents a continuation of a process that has been underway since 2001. Irish public opinion is quite positive on European issues, but the information deficit relating to EU affairs continues to pose significant challenges.

Following the Declaration by the European Council in June initiating a period of reflection, the Government has committed itself to active public engagement on European issues. It is concentrating on a number of key messages:

- the EU remains central to Ireland's well-being and to our place in the world;
- it makes or can make a real difference in terms of jobs and economic growth, the environment, cross-border crime, drugs and terrorism;
- the recent enlargement of the Union presents good opportunities for Ireland and Irish people;
- the Constitution remains the best available response to many of the challenges facing the EU, and
- the EU is the best means by which Ireland can meet the challenges of globalisation.

Over the past five months, the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have made a number of substantive public speeches on the theme of Ireland and the European Union drawing on these key messages, as well as highlighting the significant role which the Union plays in the maintenance of international peace and stability, and in development aid.

Both Houses of Parliament have held special European debates in recent months. Government Ministers have been actively identifying opportunities to address European issues on public occasions.

The National Forum On Europe, which was established after the defeat of the first Irish referendum on the Treaty of Nice in 2001, has been assigned a key role in leading the current national debate as part of the period of reflection. The Forum is made up of representatives of all the political parties represented in the Oireachtas (Parliament). The Forum also has a Special Observer Pillar composed of civil society, trade unions and NGOs. It meets in public session and has sought submissions from the public. It organises a youth Forum, regional meetings and schools competitions.

In the first half of 2005, the National Forum On Europe debated the European Constitution in detail. Since the commencement of the period of reflection, the Forum has broadened its focus to include agriculture, enlargement, the European social model, the impact of globalisation and the EU's role in development.

In October, the Government published a White Paper on the European Constitution as a contribution to enhancing public knowledge of the Constitution. The White Paper has been widely distributed. A dedicated website (nationaldebateoneurope.ie) has been established to include material relating to the period of reflection. This supplements the website of the National Forum On Europe (forumoneurope.ie) and the Government's dedicated website on the European Constitution (europeanconstitution.ie). In addition, the Communicating Europe Initiative is supporting projects that will serve to enhance public engagement with EU issues during the period of reflection. Government funding for the European Movement Ireland – a voluntary organisation promoting greater EU awareness – has been substantially increased.

The Irish Government welcomed the publication of "Plan D" by the EU Commission and believes that a more visible and active presence by the Commissioners in the Member States is an important and useful instrument in promoting positive debate on Europe. During the past months Ireland was happy to welcome President Barroso and Commissioners Wallström, Fischer-Boel, Borg, Hübner and McCreevy, and the important contributions they made to our national debate.

ITALY

CONTRIBUTION BY THE ITALIAN DELEGATION

Following the signature of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, a major political debate took place in Italy in the framework of the ratification procedure which was completed on time last April through an overwhelming majority vote both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. The competent Parliamentary Committees held hearings with representatives of civil society, as well as with economic and social actors. These hearings were open to the public and broadcast via specialised channels. Following the French and Dutch referenda, the Government encouraged further media discussions at both national and regional level with the objective of explaining the main innovations of Constitutional Treaty as well as the achievements and weaknesses of the European integration process. European matters feature prominently on the main TV talk show with political personalities. Outstanding institutional figures contributed to the debate, including the President of the Republic, Ciampi, who wrote an article with other European Heads of State, which was published by several newspapers across the Union on 15 July 2005.

The Observatory for European Citizenship, which was created in 2002 prior to the Convention on the future of Europe, had the task of gathering the opinions of many civic organizations and bodies on the situation within the European Union. Universities and Research Centers increased the number of Seminars and Round Tables on the Constitutional Treaty and the prospects of its entry into force. These initiatives received the support of central or local public Authorities almost systematically.

Other initiatives were jointly organized with the offices in Italy of Community institutions (Commission and European Parliament) in the framework of a strategic partnership and in compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Italian Government, the Commission and the European Parliament in May 2003, in order to coordinate and upgrade the information activities.

During 2005, information and communication activities were organised on the subject of the European Constitution and targeted at the public at large. The following initiatives deserve a special mention:

- a cycle of annual training seminars on the reforms introduced by the new Constitution, intended for school directors and teachers/trainers in upper secondary schools. This cycle, entitled Education in European Citizenship, was held in Perugia from 14 to 16 April 2005 and in Sorrento from 7 to 9 November 2005, with 600 participants from all over Italy. It was part of the agreement signed on 30 January 2004 between the Office of the Prime Minister - Department for European Affairs - and the Ministry of Education, the University and Research (MIUR);
- a prize-giving ceremony for the action "Europe on the Blackboard" was held in Rome at the Quirinal Palace (seat of the Italian Presidency of the Republic) on May 9, Europe Day,
- a programme called "Europe step-by-step" was designed for schoolchildren aged 7 and above with a book for primary schools and a CD-ROM for high schools,
- distribution of a CD-ROM containing information about the Community policies and the text of the European Constitution, at Communications Exhibitions, Book Fairs (Turin, 5 to 9 May 2003), a Public Administration Fair (Rome, 9 to 13 May 2005), a Conference/Exhibition at the National Assembly of Italian Municipalities (ANCI-Expò, Cagliari 19 to 22 October 2005) and COM-PA (Bologna, 3 to 5 November 2005),
- a full programme of activities providing young people with information (designed for schools in particular) called EuropInforma, promoted by CIDE (Centro Italiano Documentazione Europea) in conjunction with the Department for Community Policies of the Italian Presidency of the Council, the representative offices of the Commission in Italy and the European Parliament, together with the MIUR. This initiative dealt with a variety of issues such as the Constitution, the values of the integration process, the EU's structure and policies, the role of the European Union in the world in promoting peace, citizenship, opportunities for young people, the environment, development, immigration, enlargement and enhancing democracy. It was implemented through a wide range of information and educational tools (publications, videos, CD-ROMs, Internet, meetings etc). Events were organized between January 2005 and 9 May 2005 in every one of Italy's 103 provinces.

- drafting, publication and distribution of “Uniti nelle diversità, l’Europa che cambia. Parla l’Euro-generation” [United in difference, a changing Europe. The Euro-generation speaks], a selection of essays written by students from universities, in order to spread information and stimulate a positive discussion on the EU Constitution and policies.
 - Finally, a meeting of the European Youth Parliament bringing together hundreds of young Europeans from all the Member States took place from 14 to 18 November in Bari with support from central and local Authorities.
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CYPRUS

CONTRIBUTION BY THE DELEGATION OF CYPRUS

1. On 30 June 2005 the Cyprus Parliament ratified (60% majority) the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.
2. With regard to information on European issues, coordination within the central administration of the Republic of Cyprus has mainly been in the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) - EU Division.
3. The MFA – in cooperation with the Press and Information Office – produced an explanatory guide to the Treaty for a Constitution for Europe. The latter has been distributed to all parties concerned, as well as to the general public. Information on European issues has also been conveyed via the printed media, newspaper and magazine articles, relevant TV programmes and debates, the updating of the MFA web page, lectures at schools, public lectures by the MFA and the Government Spokesman, et cetera. Public schools have also organized several EU-related events and competitions.
4. Only recently, the “Europe Direct” service has been established at the branches of the Cyprus Commercial and Industrial Chamber, in each of the four larger cities of Cyprus (Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos and Larnaka), in order to provide information to the general public. “Europe Direct” is financed by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, with the support of the Delegation of the European Commission and the Office of the European Parliament in Nicosia.
5. Also, the European Institute of Cyprus (EIC) runs the “Line of Europe” – which is connected to the “Europe Direct” service – and provides information for citizens who are interested in community programs and initiatives, while at the same time the EIC is responsible for the operation of the European Documentation Centre.

6. In response to a call from the European Committee, dated October 2005, under the heading “Dialogue, Debate and Democracy”, the Republic of Cyprus decided to establish a Team for “Plan D” – based in the MFA – under the chairmanship of the MFA’s Permanent Secretary. The team will include representatives from the MFA and other Ministries and offices, a representative from the Permanent Delegation of the European Commission in Nicosia, and the Head of the Office of the European Parliament in Nicosia. Depending on the agenda, the meetings of the Team for “Plan D” will be attended by representatives of organized groups and civil society.

7. The Cypriot Team for “Plan D” is expected to launch a schedule of events at the beginning of 2006, whose focus will be on the Citizen. To achieve this, the contribution of members of the European Commission, members of the European Parliament, government officials and academics will be sought, so that various aspects of the EU's policies and objectives become more familiar to Cypriot citizens. The events are expected to be held at various settings and venues, and the campaign will focus on youth, women, the working population, people with disabilities and elderly people. It is also expected that seminars will be held to analyze specific Community policies and programs and the consequences of their application in Cyprus, with special emphasis on the campaign for the introduction of the EURO.

CONTRIBUTION BY THE LATVIAN DELEGATION

In June 2005, Latvia has ratified the EU Constitutional Treaty and thus expressed its views on the future of the EU. Nevertheless, during so-called reflection period in the EU Latvia is proceeding with active debate. Based on the first year's EU membership's experience, public discussions are focused mainly on Latvia's national values, interests and priorities in the future EU.

One of the activities is a public debate organised by the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to result in the Strategy Paper "Latvia in the European Union".

During 2004 – 2006 seven steps towards the Strategy "Latvia in the EU" are foreseen including studying the situation, launching of a preliminary draft, public consultations on national values and interests in the EU, drafting of the Strategy document, public hearings etc.

Acknowledging importance of public involvement in future of Europe, a great deal of efforts is placed on research of public opinions and on listening to the citizens. Several Regional Round-tables on priorities of Latvia in the EU with participation of various interest groups and experts had been held. Among the debated issues were – 1) Latvia's priorities in the EU, 2) better use of opportunities offered by Latvia's EU membership, 3) the future EU and Latvia's role therein, 4) bringing Europe closer to its citizens, 5) making the European Union more transparent and easier to understand. The Regional Round-tables have comprised 3 functions: listening, dialogue and going local.

Further, the state of play and perspectives for Latvia and the EU are discussed with more focused groups – with representatives of public society, interest groups and experts. Comprehensive consultation process includes academics, government officials, business community, social partners and NGO's.

Finally, in Latvia, every resident had an opportunity to express his/her views on the European matters by a written questionnaire. In co-operation with the European Union Information Agency questionnaires were distributed through the EU Information Points in regions, municipalities and also through Internet. More than 3300 responses have been received and analysed.

Reflections of citizens, their views, comments gathered during the public consultation process have been analysed and made public. The draft strategy will be open for further public comment early in 2006.

Another debate is being launched on the communication process on the EU affairs in Latvia. In this context several debates on the expert level have been organised in the recent months. One of them involved a public meeting with Commissioner Wallstrom. In the result of the debates the Communication Strategy of the Government on the EU issues will be developed. The draft of the Strategy will be available for revision for experts, NGOs and public in January 2006.

Several activities have been organised also on specific policy issues. E.g. the Ministry of Agriculture launched a questionnaire on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in the Latvian context where it received more than 600 replies.

Further activities are foreseen in all three branches mentioned above. In order to assure synergy between national activities and those, foreseen by the EU institutions, Latvia would appreciate to learn more on new tools planned for fostering the European debate on the EU level within the forthcoming White Book on Communication.

LITHUANIA

CONTRIBUTION BY THE LITHUANIAN DELEGATION

The reflection period, necessitated by the referenda in France and the Netherlands, is now providing Lithuania with an opportunity for a deeper look at the main challenges and issues which is facing the 25-country Community. In order to better characterize the situation, some of the main factors of the reflection period in Lithuania should be mentioned:

- The Lithuanian Parliament ratified the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe on 11 November 2004. In 2005 the discussion on the EU Constitution was limited to political, academic and diplomatic circles;
- Even if the institutionalized framework for the debate on the future of the EU (Lithuanian forum on the future of Europe) was created in 2002 and existed during the work of the European Convention, the Lithuanian debate was inseparable from the debate on Lithuania's membership of the EU;
- Today the main public discussion on EU-related matters concentrates on the use of structural funds, the 2007- 2013 financial perspective, and the possible introduction of the euro on January 1 2007 (this topic is gaining more and more importance, particularly the public information aspect of the issue);
- Public support for membership of the EU remains high (68% in November 2005);

A plan D announced by the European Commission gives Lithuania the possibility of a more structured public discussion on key topics.

Members of the European Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Seimas (Parliament) set up a working group on 28 October 2005 to formulate proposals on the implementation of Plan D. At the meeting of the relevant institutions in the Parliament, it was agreed that the action plan should be drafted.

Some guidelines of the plan were set:

- the main activities of the implementation of the Plan D must be scheduled for the first half of 2006, as the second half may be heavily dominated by the discussion and information on the forthcoming introduction of the euro;
- the discussions on the topics of Plan D must take place in the whole country (to avoid concentration in the capital);
- the “Europe direct” network must play a key role in organising the discussions in the regions;
- the discussion is a political one, so members of the Parliament and other public persons must take an active role in it;

The plan should be finalised by the end of 2005.

Lithuania hopes that the profile of the discussion will be raised by a visit by the President of the European Commission and/or the Commissioner for Communication (such visits to Member States are envisaged in “Plan D” published by the Commission; the new President of the European Commission has still not visited Lithuania). Previous experience shows that the Lithuanian public sees visits by high-ranking EU officials in a very positive light. Close cooperation with the representations of the European Commission and European Parliament are a natural part of the organised discussion.

LUXEMBOURG

CONTRIBUTION BY THE LUXEMBOURG DELEGATION

Luxembourg has just completed an intensive period of information, communication and debate concerning what is at stake in European integration. It should be noted that, on the one hand, Luxembourg's Presidency of the Council of the Union ended on 30 June 2005 and, on the other hand, that an information campaign concerning Europe within the framework of Luxembourg's referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe ended on 10 July with a positive outcome of 56,52% voting in favour.

After that period during which the European stakes were prominently present in the national political space the government decided, in accordance with the European Council's conclusions of 16 and 17 June, to encourage as broad a debate as possible on the future of Europe, involving all the institutional actors concerned and, above all, civil society.

Accordingly, when giving his annual general policy address to the Chamber of Deputies on 12 October 2005, the Prime Minister announced the creation of a national forum on Europe presided over by the Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs. In his annual statement on foreign policy, made to the Chamber of Deputies on 29 November 2005, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stressed the necessity of close coordination with the parliament in the organisation of that forum.

The government will complete the assessment of the detailed results of the referendum period during the first half of the year, and the objectives of and the situation at the start of the coming national debate on European integration. The government has accordingly set up a working party which, under the responsibility of the Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs, has the task of proposing, at the beginning of next year, a series of practical measures to be taken in the short and medium term.

Even if according to the latest Eurobarometers the people of Luxembourg are very broadly in favour of European integration, analysis of the results of the referendum has shown that a majority of young people eighteen to thirty-five years old voted against the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution. In addition, it would appear that the geographical centre of the "No" votes was concentrated in the old industrial communes in the south of the country. The government's action in the context of the national debate will therefore first be to seek greater involvement of the younger generations in the reflection on the future of Europe, in particular by means of the education system (university, conventional schools and technical schools) and associations (cultural and sports), and it will concentrate on topics to which European integration gives direct added value in the daily lives of the citizens concerned. The government will also attempt to involve communes closely in the debate, in order to promote the element of proximity.

These measures will be implemented in close coordination with the Community institutions.

HUNGARY

CONTRIBUTION BY THE HUNGARIAN DELEGATION

The Parliament of the Republic of Hungary ratified the Constitutional Treaty on 20 December 2004, and deposited its instrument of ratification in Rome on 30 December 2004. The cross-party support behind the Constitutional Treaty (more than 90 % of the votes were cast in favour of ratification) continues to exist. In line with this general support, even during run-up to the ratification, the primary aim of EU communication went well beyond the preparation of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, and focused on strengthening awareness of active EU citizenship and that of EU projects. However, it is necessary and justified to reinvigorate social, political and expert level dialogue and debate on European issues.

Hungary firmly believes that regaining the confidence of our citizens in the European project is an essential precondition for the consolidation and further development of common European achievements. The reflection period should contribute to reaching this goal.

At the same time, Member States and EU institutions should do their best to demonstrate clearly their ability and willingness to take the decisions in due time and engage into actions. First and foremost, the political agreement on the next financial perspective should be reached.

Hungary is ready and willing to co-operate with the institutions of the European Union, in particular with the European Commission and the Member States, as well as to assist the incoming Austrian Presidency, in order to bring forward the debate on the future of Europe.

The Hungarian National Reflection Plan (NRP) is based on the following four pillars:

2. The Communication Strategy on the Future of Europe

Main topics: - Hungary in the European Union, Active European citizenship, The EU in the world, Frontiers of the EU, European market (competition and protection), Equality of chances (social, regional, minorities, people with handicaps).

2. The Contribution of National Development Office to social dialogue by using the National Development Plan as a communication tool. Public debate on the new challenges Europe has to face, involving more targeted opinion leaders on specific subjects in the context of globalisation.
3. Debate on the strategic issues of the long-term development of the European Union (planned topics for the debate include how far enlargement should go / role of the EU in a globalising world / relationship between the EU and its member states, possible models of the European integration.)
The debate is planned to involve expert-level and academic consultations, conferences, and it will be concluded by a debate in the National Assembly. The means to channel the opinion of the wider public will also be provided (e.g. through an internet site).

EU communication is a continuous activity, so the tasks concerning the reflection period can be interpreted in this framework. In addition to continuously operating the usual system of tools, and the already existing channels of communication, the elements aimed at interactivity constitute the basis of the EU communication with Hungarian citizens. The communication actions will be implemented by the Department for EU Communications belonging to the Minister without portfolio responsible for European Affairs and the line ministries.

The Hungarian National Reflection Plan includes new ideas and tools which correspond to the characteristics of the country. At the initiative of the government, the Merlin EU Communication and Cultural Centre has opened in Budapest to serve as a discussion centre during the reflection period. Hungarian MEPs are planned to visit 52 locations in 52 weeks to participate in local debates with the rural society. The Ministry of Economy will launch a project of “EU reflection sheets” (e.g. enabling citizens to tell what their expectations concerning transport of European standard).

The Minister without portfolio responsible for European Affairs and the Foreign Minister have already initiated and will initiate series of studies and seminars of strategic issues in the context of the “Hampton Court follow up” and the Future of Europe debate as well.

The NRP will be assessed regularly and adjusted if necessary, taking into account both the experiences at national level and the progress and results at EU level.

MALTA

CONTRIBUTION BY THE MALTESE DELEGATION

1. On July 6, 2005 Malta became the 12th EU Member State to ratify the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The House of Representatives voted unanimously in favour of the Treaty making Malta the first Member State to approve the Constitutional Treaty by a unanimous vote.
2. For the Government of Malta, EU information was always a priority. The Government believes that information on the EU is an ongoing process. To this end the Government had established in 1999 the Malta-EU Information Centre with the specific task of informing and educating the Maltese public about EU matters in a bid to make an informed decision in the accession referendum that was held on March 8, 2003. Post accession MIC is still very active in keeping the public updated about EU policies using all media possible, in a language that is easily understood by everyone and that is relevant to people's everyday life.
3. MIC officials take part every week in radio and television phone-in programmes on both national and private stations answering people's queries on the EU and Malta. MIC's offices are in the main street of the capital city and are accessible to the thousands of people who visit the capital every day.

MIC regularly publishes features in local newspapers and magazines and takes part in public fairs. The Centre also organises a number of public events, including seminars. The latest public events included participation in the Europe Close to You fair in Valletta organised by the EU Representation Office in Malta, the Malta Book Fair (December 1- 4), and the International Trade Fair of Malta held last July. In September a half-day national conference was organised by MIC and the British High Commission on how Maltese NGOs could access EU funding opportunities. MIC is also running a stage programme for Maltese journalists in Brussels to report for two weeks events happening in the EU institutions.
4. In the first three months of the New Year, a national conference on the future of Europe is to be held in Malta.

5. In the meantime, the Government of Malta has established a Forum Malta in Europe with the precise task of enhancing the debate (formal and informal) in the Maltese Islands on EU-related issues. The Forum consists of three elements: the consultation process that is involving Civil Society in the drafting of national positions on draft EU acquis; the information element which is being dealt with by the Malta-EU Information Centre; and a unit on EU funding to help NGOs and SMEs access co-financing opportunities. The Forum, which falls under the Foreign Affairs Ministry, has also opened a new Civil Society Fund allocating EUR 276,000 every year to help NGOs organise EU-related activities, enhancing the debate on the EU at grass-root levels.

6. During 2006, MIC will continue to organise seminars on particular Commission proposals and other EU issues. It will also be continuing its one-hour programme on state radio interviewing people who are in some way involved in EU matters including live links with Ministers, MEPs and EESC/Committee of the Regions members so that they provide listeners with an update on meetings being held in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg. MIC will also be publishing the second edition of the *Directory on Malta in the European Union* containing details on agencies and personalities who work in the EU. MIC will also continue to work in close collaboration with the EC Representation Office in Malta and the European Parliament Information Office.

NETHERLANDS

CONTRIBUTION BY THE NETHERLANDS DELEGATION

The Dutch government is of the opinion that the debates during the period of reflection should focus on the substance of European challenges and policies. Many of the challenges that the Netherlands faces are problems that face the EU as a whole. We have to find agreement on how the EU should develop in the light of globalization, on what the balance should be between competitiveness and social solidarity and on how to deal with ageing and unemployment. Improving our performance in the field of research and development, innovation, the labour market, entrepreneurship, public finance and better regulation are crucial, as well as the fight against terrorism. The first priority is for citizens to regain their confidence in Europe. This is not a new challenge. It is, however, more pressing than ever. The efforts of the Dutch government focus on both reflection on the Dutch position in the European Union and increased communication with parliament and citizens. All the EU institutions should pool their efforts to ensure that the Union performs better and communicates better. Many observers have pointed out that the involvement of citizens in European processes is much less far advanced than in national political processes. The government is doing its utmost to improve the way in which developments in the European Union are integrated into the national political process. This effort to make Europe the subject of genuine political debate is supported by a three-track approach: improving understanding of public concerns, increasing involvement and information, and generating ideas and responses to the challenges facing the Netherlands and the EU.

Improving understanding of various concerns regarding the EU

The Dutch government plans to use the period of reflection and debate in the member states that was agreed on by the European Council of June 2005 to gain a better understanding of the ideas, concerns and feelings of citizens regarding the Union's further development and the Netherlands' role in this regard. To this end, the Dutch government will carry out a large-scale survey on the internet of the wishes of Dutch citizens concerning the future of Europe. In addition a bottom-up study, with the help of focus groups, will be conducted as a way of improving the government's understanding of various concerns regarding the EU. The aim is to listen to these concerns and learn how the public perceives European policies. The report on these surveys should be available by the beginning of May 2006.

The government will study this report and respond to it in a letter to Parliament, outlining the Dutch position for the European Council due to take place at the end of the period of reflection.

Bottom-up approach: increasing involvement and information

In addition to its regular communication policy, and simultaneously with the above-mentioned initiatives, the Dutch government will devise a new communications strategy that will continue in effect after June 2006. The government will abandon its campaign-like approach to communication on European issues, and in its place will adopt an interactive strategy that focuses on the most pressing European political issues and dilemmas and allows ample scope for the provision of information. A new, interactive website will be launched. In addition, the ceiling for grants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Europe Fund will be raised to €2.5 million. This funding will enable social actors to keep the critical debate on the EU going and to organise activities related to European topics relevant for their own target groups. Via the internet and other channels, the government provides teaching materials for primary and secondary schools and their pupils. These educational activities will be continued and, where possible, intensified.

Generating new ideas and responses to challenges

Once identified, concerns should be addressed. New solutions and ideas should be generated. A genuine partnership exists between the EU institutions and the national parliaments of the member states. This partnership should be strengthened in the interests of democratic accountability and transparency. Furthermore, this partnership should be strengthened in order to help build public confidence in the way power is shared in Europe. On this question the Dutch government and the UK Presidency held a conference entitled 'Sharing power in Europe: striking the right balance between EU and Member State action' in The Hague on 17 November. Some 250 participants – ministers, members of national and regional parliaments, members of the European Parliament and the European Commission, academics and businesspeople – from the Member States and the candidate countries debated the question of the level at which legislative initiatives should be taken. The conference placed subsidiarity (and proportionality) high on the agenda and at the heart of public debate. In addition, the conference expressed the conviction that EU action should be taken only where there is a clear case for EU involvement, where the EU can add value to what Member State governments can do, and where the intervention is proportionate to the outcome required. The conference raised a number of ideas for doing this within the framework of the current Treaties. The Dutch government looks forward to further discussion at the follow-up conference on this issue planned by the Austrian Presidency.

AUSTRIA

CONTRIBUTION BY THE AUSTRIAN DELEGATION

Following the meeting of the European Council on 16/17 June 2005, where Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States agreed on a period of reflection, the Federal government of Austria already in July 2005 established the **internet platform “Europa hört zu!”** (“Europe is listening!”) on the websites of the Federal Chancellery and the Foreign Ministry. Every interested citizen has the opportunity to comment on specific questions like “Does Europe need a new budget structure?”, “Does the EU need a constitution?” or “Should EU enlargement be stopped or at least be slowed down?”. Moreover, general ideas, wishes, complaints and thoughts about Europe can be expressed on this platform.

On 15 September 2005 the Federal government started an **EU information campaign** containing the following elements:

- an **interactive website** on the future of Europe, www.zukunfteuropa.at, containing an EU quiz, an EU chat room, statements of popular personalities on Europe etc. The platform “Europe is listening” was transferred to the new website, which is linked to the websites of the Foreign Ministry and the Federal Chancellery.
- **TV spots** and an **advertisement campaign** making the added value of EU membership more visible and calling on citizens to engage in the debate on Europe via internet or via telephone;
- **“Road show”**: a Europe bus toured through Austria in autumn to “bring Europe to the citizens”. Experts informed on EU issues, answered questions and asked for ideas and opinions of interested citizens.

The information campaign strives for the following objectives:

- To motivate citizens to express their ideas and proposals on Europe (via website or via Europe telephone 0800-221111)
- To take the concerns of citizens seriously, but also to make the advantages and the added value of EU membership more visible
- To increase the offer of information for citizens

Analysis and evaluation of comments by citizens is undertaken regularly. A general trend of comments on the internet platform “Europa hört zu!” shows a continuing commitment of Austrians to Europe and to EU membership; however, there is also criticism concerning price-hikes with the introduction of the Euro, the pace of EU enlargement, excessive bureaucracy and waste of money etc.

On 29 September 2005, the first **Europe Day** in the National Council, the first chamber of the **Austrian Parliament**, took place as a result of a parliamentary decision in May 2005 to dedicate four full-day sessions a year exclusively to European issues.

Further initiatives are planned for the year 2006.

POLAND

CONTRIBUTION BY DE POLISH DELEGATION

On 5 August 2005, in response to the decision by the European Council on the need for European debate on the future of the European Union, the Council of Ministers adopted the programme *Public Debate on Europe*. It is a strategic document which provides the basis for structured information activities including:

- initiating a discussion on the objectives, values and issues of European integration; the discussion allows various social and vocational groups to express their opinions on the subject;
- intensifying information on the European Union, including the issues of particular importance for Poland;
- achieving closer common European values.

The programme was inaugurated on 19 September 2005 at the conference at Warsaw University on the future of Europe. The participants were addressed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Marek Belka. The ideas of the conference have been further developed in a series of regional conferences organised by the governmental and self-governmental administration of Poland. The participants in the conferences include local opinion-makers, academics, students, non-governmental organisations, the regional and local media.

Within the context of the programme two open competitions were organised – one for the NGOs and one for the media. As result of the competition, 38 information and educational projects will be implemented by the winners with the financial support of the Office of the Committee for European Integration (total co-financing from OCEI – 1 301 219 PLN).

Special projects for school students aged 13 – 19 years were inaugurated on 10 October 2005, under the motto “My School in the European Union”. The project is a continuation of the annual competition for teams of students organizing events and writing essays on various European issues. This year, in the framework of the European debate, they will be concentrating on youth opportunities in the European Union (younger age group) and commenting on a quotation by Jean Monnet on the essence of European integration.

The OCEI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared special publications in support of the debate. The publications are available in the European information networks, at meetings and conferences as well as on the website.

One of the possibilities for citizens to participate in European debate is provided by the interactive OCEI website www.debata.ukie.gov.pl where they can express their opinions on drafts of legal solutions debated in the European Institutions.

The *Public Debate on Europe* inaugurated in 2005 will be continued in 2006. The public communication programme adopted by the European Commission *Plan D - Democracy, Dialogue, Debate* will be included in the executive programmes for 2006.

PORTUGAL

CONTRIBUTION BY THE PORTUGUESE DELEGATION

The Portuguese Government attaches the utmost importance to the wide-ranging debate on European issues undertaken in light of the June European Council conclusions and of the Commission's contribution to the period of reflection – “Plan D” – presented in October. In this regard, we have planned a comprehensive programme with the double aim of fostering a truly national debate, involving various representatives of the civil society, and of making available to the public opinion relevant information on EU issues, including *inter alia* Portugal's accession process, benefits from its full membership and the Constitutional Treaty.

In more specific terms, the Portuguese Government intends to create a “Forum for the European Debate”, composed of leading national figures with professional and personal experience in EU matters. This Forum will promote an extensive round of conferences, seminars and roundtables throughout the country, in close collaboration with local authorities, Universities and the business community. In parallel, we will support and engage in other events which are being organized and scheduled by different entities, such as “think-tanks” dedicated to international and European affairs. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Diplomatic Institute, has already established an internal Reflection Group on the Constitutional Treaty, including diplomats, university experts, researchers and journalists. The MFA will also set up a new and interactive website on “Portugal and Europe”.

The Portuguese Government has also sponsored, and will continue to do so, initiatives undertaken in this field by Commission's Representation and the EU Parliament's Delegation in Lisbon, together with the Jacques Delors European Information Centre in Lisbon.

The Government's programme will be implemented in close collaboration with the initiatives launched by Parliament (*Assembleia da República*), which include public hearings on European issues, contacts with the European Parliament and close consultations with several organizations and entities from the civil society, aimed at gathering views and suggestions on the future of the EU.

SLOVENIA

CONTRIBUTIN BY THE SLOVENIAN DELEGATION

In Slovenia the Government Public Relations and Media Office (PRMO) has been running the communication campaign on EU membership and EU issues since the pre-accession period and continuing into EU membership.

The communication campaign or public information programme comprises:

1. direct information to the public, through:

- publications,
- internet site <http://evropa.gov.si>,
- free telephone line “evrofon 080 2002”,
- special post-cards distributed in post offices and railway stations for ordering publications, requesting an answer to a question or stating an opinion,
- presentations and visits to schools and public places
- the main information centre for EU issues in Ljubljana (Center Evropa), co-financed by the government (PRMO).

2. stimulation of public debate, through:

- co-financing NGO information activities
- co-financing and co-organising round tables, public debates and similar events in Ljubljana and other regional centres.
- web site forums

3. cooperation with the media

- regular mail-shots,
- articles
- organisation of training for journalists on EU issues

THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

The Slovene Parliament ratified the Constitution on 1 February 2005, this is earlier than it was planned by the previous government. The PRMO had included the European Constitution in all its regular activities, and in addition to them published and distributed a brochure to all households, launched an Internet forum on that issue, published articles, distributed post cards for two-way communication etc.

REFLECTION PERIOD: ADDITIONAL PLAN OF ACTIVITIES

The PRMO is taking into consideration the European Commission's guidelines for "going local", stimulating dialog and communicating the impact of European policies on the everyday life of citizens.

Within this framework the PRMO is continuing with all the established abovementioned activities and information tools and channels, and is also organising and co-financing additional public presentations and debates, endeavouring to have as many as possible at local level.

In addition to all of the above:

- ✓ Early in 2005 the PRMO became the intermediary body for the introduction in Slovenia of the Europe Direct Information Relays co-financed by the European Commission, which became fully operational in May 2005. In order to "go local" the PRMO is seriously considering launching a tender in order to co-finance information centres in the regions not covered by the Commission's relays. These relays will be in charge of organising public debates in their regions.

- ✓ The PRMO launched a public tender in November 2005 in order to co-finance NGOs organising public debates on the following priority issues:
 - the euro
 - the external border of the EU
 - the future of Europe
 - Europe's diversity and values

These debates will take place from January 2006.

- ✓ As an introduction to the “Euro campaign” in Slovenia, inter alia, the PRMO in co-operation with the Permanent Representation of the European Commission in Slovenia is holding a national conference on the Euro on 17 March 2006, where the discussion will also cover broader European issues. The conference will attend top Slovenian politicians, Commissioner Potocnik etc. Furthermore, a brochure on the Euro will be distributed to all households on February 2006 and the interactive Euro web site will be launched in January/February of the same year.
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SLOVAKIA

CONTRIBUTION BY THE SLOVAKIAN DELEGATION

In the coming days, the Government of the Slovak Republic will implement the project "Hearing the public voice by preparing and administrating various discussions aimed at different strata of the Slovak society". By the end of 2005, inter alia, an international conference called "The European Union today and tomorrow" with the participation of experts and university teachers will be held. The conference will focus on issues concerning EU policies and an enlarged Europe. Furthermore, by the end of 2005 a television programme presenting the regional "Europe Direct" information offices will be broadcast in order to disseminate the information that the offices will organise conferences, panel discussions and seminars aimed at informing the representatives of non-governmental organizations, regional self-governing bodies and civil society in the course of 2006.

The debate will include economic and social development issues in Europe, commitment to Europe, the role of the Union, the EU's borders and its role as a global player. These activities will be coordinated and implemented in cooperation with the Representation of the European Commission in the Slovak Republic.

Moreover, joint information activities by the European Parliament and Slovak institutions will take place in the period of reflection following the referenda in France and the Netherlands. These nation-wide discussions will be held for representatives of civil society, journalists and relevant NGOs. The Government Office of the Slovak Republic will be coordinating regional discussion fora with the participation of the representatives of regional self-governing bodies, and with the Deputies of the European Parliament (elected for the Slovak Republic), who will act as "ambassadors of good will". At the internet portal "euroinfo.gov.sk," a chaired discussion will be held about the future direction of Europe, and the outcome of the debate will be published. Television programmes on the future of Europe, the policies and the dominant issues of the Action plan and Plan D will be broadcast twice a month.

One-way communication will be carried out by means of the euroinfo web page , as well as call and information centers located in different regions of the Slovak Republic. On the anniversary of Slovakia's accession to the European Union (1 May) and Europe Day(9^t May), panel discussions with high representatives of the European Union and MEPs will be held.

The National Convent on the EU as one the most significant public discussions will also be a key player in the period of reflection, and will strengthen the dialogue in civil society via numerous conferences and discussions at regional and national level.

FINLAND

CONTRIBUTION BY THE FINNISH DELEGATION

There has been an extensive debate in Finland during and after the work of the European Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference concerning the Constitutional Treaty and the future of the European Union. Several series of discussion forums, seminars and exhibitions have been organised covering the entire country. Two sets of larger discussion forums were organised in autumn 2003 covering 21 towns and in spring 2005 covering 23 towns. Both the Government and NGOs have dedicated energy to this process.

The Government of Finland submitted on 25 November 2005 a report to Parliament on the Constitutional Treaty. In addition to the debate in Parliament, it also aims at contributing to public discussion on the future of the European Union. The Finnish Presidency in the latter part of 2006 will also keep EU related questions high on the agenda in the country.

The plans envisaged at the moment for 2006 are:

- The Government will organise a **national NGO forum** in the first part of the year 2006. The Government organised eight similar forums during 2001 – 2003 with topics concentrating on the future of the EU. Almost 100 NGOs were invited to meet the Prime Minister and other ministers to give their views on how the Union should be developed.
- The Government will give **financial support to EU related information activities** of the NGOs. This support is given out on an annual basis. In 2005 the total sum was 805 000 €. In the year 2006 the funding will be directed to the debate on the future of the EU. This support is provided both to pro- and anti-EU NGOs.
- Some **open discussion forums and seminars** will be organised in the capital and provinces with politicians, civil servants and representatives of other organisations participating.

- The internet **webpages** launched already during the Convention and IGC both on the Government and Foreign Ministry websites will be kept open also during 2006. All documents regarding the process of the Constitutional Treaty are gathered on these pages. A special website launched earlier as a discussion forum on the future of the EU has been closed, but the discussion has been directed to the Foreign Ministry / Europe Information website.

- The 20 regional **Europe Information offices** will continue to answer questions, give out material and hold lectures on the Constitutional Treaty and the EU in general. Furthermore, an exhibition explaining the Treaty is circulating in libraries all around the country.

SWEDEN

CONTRIBUTION BY THE SWEDISH DELEGATION

Specific action has been taken by the Government to intensify the debate on the EU during the reflection period.

The Government decided on 20 October 2005 to expand and extend the mandate of the EU 2004 Committee, which was initiated in 2001 and played a vital role in the Swedish debate during the European Convention on the Future of Europe (2002-2003) and the Intergovernmental Conference (2003-2004) on the Constitutional Treaty. The Committee consists of representatives from all political parties in the Riksdag. From the start, the main task of the Committee has been to encourage broad public discussion on the future of the EU, focusing mainly on substantive policy issues but also on institutional issues related to the Constitutional Treaty.

The Government decision of 20 October included a broader mandate for the Committee to set up a new forum for debate. The forum should create an open and active discussion with the participation of both the general public and specific groups and organisations. The aim is to involve civil society in the EU debate in a more in depth and long term way. The forum should be open to all political views and analysis.

The Committee is planning to organize a number of activities all over the country during the reflection period. One of the main target groups will be young people and the Committee plan to put much effort into providing information for teachers. The Internet will serve as a main channel for information and debate. The Committee will cooperate closely with other organisations, also in the running of the activities.

In spring 2006, the Committee will report to the Government on the outcome of the debate.

UNITED KINGDOM

CONTRIBUTION BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Introduction

UK activities during the period of reflection can be divided into two phases. The first phase from July to December 2005 includes UK Presidency activities. The second phase starts in January 2006 and takes us through to the June 2006 European Council and beyond. The objective for each phase is essentially the same: to generate broad debate and to build consensus around the future direction of the EU. We aim to evaluate these activities prior to the June 2006 European Council.

Phase 1: July to December 2005

Since the June 2005 European Council Declaration on the EU Constitutional Treaty, the UK has undertaken a range of activities to generate debate about the future direction of the EU. At EU level the Hampton Court Summit gave a clear direction on how Europe responds to the challenges and opportunities of globalisation. The UK Presidency also co-hosted with the Dutch Government the 'Sharing Power in Europe' conference which considered how to ensure we achieve the right balance between action at regional, national and EU levels.

In the UK, the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Minister for Europe and other senior Ministers have all made high profile speeches to further debate on the future of Europe. In this context, pamphlets published by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister for Europe sought to contribute to this debate. Other key stakeholders, including social partners have been targeted through events, conferences and online and offline communications. Information has also been provided to the UK public through regional media and a range of publications.

Phase 2: January 2006 to June 2006 and beyond

In the New Year the UK plans to launch a new website to provide information on the EU and the future of Europe debate. The UK will also continue work engaging with key stakeholders - commercial, governmental and civil society - on issues related to this debate. Finally, the UK will work in partnership with the European Commission and European Parliament to co-ordinate activities, including on implementation of Plan D. In particular, the UK government intends to work closely with the Commission to make their Europe Direct project a success.

