

# Get in there!

How to get involved in Europe:

A guide for communities, individuals and those working with communities



Roger Smith & Sue Hall



strengthening  
communities  
for 40 years

# My Voice in Europe Project



The key aim of the My Voice in Europe Project is to stimulate interest and deepen the debate on Europe at a local level using a community development approach.

The project has worked primarily with women and young people with the aim of highlighting useful and accessible tools to support those working in the voluntary and community sector who are interested in influencing Europe, or simply finding out a bit more about Europe and the EU.

In light of the European year of Intercultural dialogue 2008, the project has run a number of events in order to create reflection spaces for individuals and groups to explore what it means to live in Europe today in terms of identity, human rights, and social and political relationships within and between Europe and the EU.

My Voice in Europe has endeavoured to open up and share information about Europe and has produced this “Get in there!” booklet as a means to support the aims of the project.

The project would like to thank all the individuals, groups, schools and youth forums who have been involved in the project and provided valuable input plus food for thought about having voice in Europe.

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Helen Animashaun

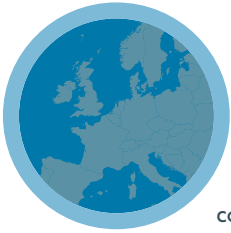
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## Foreword



**“Europe” is a Big Idea, a government that sits beside – not over – the governments of the countries, and that calls them its Member States. But it is in some ways just that: an idea. It has to work with the Member States, and they take or control the decisions in their areas. Europe has some powers to coordinate things but no power to change things.**

For small communities, unless they were somehow involved in receiving European social or economic funding, Europe has had very little real meaning to them in the past. It is not where the decisions that will affect them are taken, and they have not known what it could do, or even how to get in touch with it.

But now this is beginning to change. “Europe”, or more accurately a number of the groupings that make up the European political system, is starting to believe that in order to maintain and strengthen its relationships with the people who live in its boundaries it needs to listen to them more directly, and offer them the chance to get involved. The European Commission is working at ideas to bring this about.

This will create opportunities for people or groups who want to get involved to do so. The European Commission has made it clear that it also wants to make sure that some groups that may have more difficulty than others in getting heard – for example young people and women – will not be in any way be disregarded and, in fact, the reverse.

This booklet tells you more about all this. First it tells you about organising yourself towards a more effective role as a representative – with or without the backing of a group. Then it looks at how Europe might be relevant to you and at why and how to work with it.

I hope it gets you keen to play a part and become better informed about how to do so.

Sue Hall

European and International Unit  
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## PART I: Get in there!

The purposes of *Get in there!* are:

- to tell people who are interested in participating in the decisions that affect their lives, at all levels of government including European, what ways there are to do so
- to suggest ways to strengthen the value of their involvement for the people they are “representing” when they do.

First, a look at what this means.

### “Representation”: what does it really mean?

For decades now, there have been initiatives and administrative processes that have tried to involve people.

Obviously, not everyone who is going to be affected by a decision is likely to be able to be involved in taking it. People may have other things to do, or commitments to keep. They may not know what’s going on, not have the transport or resources to get to a meeting or not be able to understand the papers for the meeting (if they can get a copy of them at all!), or they may be intimidated or baffled by all the rituals about who speaks when and what to call people, and so on.

But if the decision-makers are to make decisions that affect people, and if they want to make sure that those decisions are understood by, relevant to, and acceptable to, the people they affect, then it might seem sensible for them to want people in the room with them who can speak for “the community” and bring the community’s ideas to the table as well as explain and defend the decisions in the community later.

So, one way or another, it is quite common for people to somehow “emerge” from the community and become its “representatives”. Good idea, right? What can go wrong with that?



Well, quite a lot. For example, maybe the people who are chosen, or put themselves forward to be community representatives are not very representative. Maybe they're more part of the government than part of the community, or are selected because their views are convenient or they can be guaranteed to "understand" the government's position rather than insist on changing it. Or maybe they started out very much concerned to represent their community but over time have had no interest from the community, have got caught up in the system, and are no longer independent of it.

These people may be filling a role called "representative", and be trying to fill it well, but is the job being done properly or is it just a paper exercise, so the decision-takers can tick the box that says "we have involved the community"?

If participation is to have a chance to make government work for people, by allowing people to work with the government, then participation needs to be as real as we can get it. If we want to make sure that people are really represented by those people who are said to represent them, we need to make sure that everyone has a chance to have their views represented, by at least being able to:

- help select their representative
- hear her or his views
- get feedback from the meetings she or he attends
- get the chance to comment on what has been said or done and on what is going to be said or done.

For many individuals or groups wanting to get involved, or wanting to work better once they are involved, this might mean:

- learning new skills
- increasing their knowledge about particular areas of concern
- developing useful contacts.



## Representing “the community”

Community representatives and groups representing the community can have a range of different situations and ways of working. For example, they might set out to:

- represent a whole area. In this case they might need to:
  - hold elections
  - carry out consultations
  - carry out research or fact-finding
  - argue the community's case with the authorities.
- to represent a community of interest – which means a community that is not geographical but includes people who have common interests. That might be, for example:
  - people who are young
  - people who are over 60
  - women
  - people who are unemployed
  - disabled people
  - people from a minority ethnic group
  - people of a particular sexual orientation
  - or whatever else seems to them to be relevant.



Such groups do not have to represent everyone in the wider geographical area: whatever they may be told by those “in authority”, they have a perfect right to represent the views of their members. Their only responsibility is to do their best to make sure they genuinely represent their community and are clear about what that community is. For example, they could aim:

- to be a self-help or care group, for example:
  - a credit union
  - a childcare cooperative or group
  - a help-older-people volunteers group
- to be a social or leisure activities group, for example:
  - to run the community centre
  - to run a youth group
  - to manage the allotments
  - to run a sports team
  - and more.

These groups and their members might have views in common. In a democratic society, they all have a right to represent their views to people whose decisions affect them. Whatever some harassed local official might try to tell them, they do not have to limit themselves to voting once and then shutting up until the next election: they can and should make sure they get heard whenever they feel that their interests are involved. They have the right to talk to people in the parish council, the health authority, the local authority, the national government or Europe, such as a member of the European Parliament or anyone else, if they want to. It doesn't follow that that body will want to talk to them, but that's another matter – and it's a lot of what this booklet's about.

## Representation and participation: what you have a right to expect of a good authority

If you want to “Get in there!”, to help the authorities and the communities interact usefully, you have a right to expect the authorities to be competent at listening effectively, and not just at going through the motions. You have a right to ask that the authorities you are dealing with at least try to:

- identify all the relevant local organisations, including public, private, voluntary and community sectors, that represent the relevant community
- communicate with them: tell them about plans that affect them, give them time to talk and think, then listen to their response
- discuss with them ways in which they and their community can be involved on a continuing basis
- find out from the community the kind of activities they want to get involved in and whether extra information, support or perhaps mentoring or training is needed to enable this
- work constructively to support representative groups, so that they:
  - are clear about who they represent
  - know what the views of their members are
  - know how to, and do, stay genuinely representative of their members
  - work effectively on behalf of their members' interests
- provide them with independent advice and guidance so that they can on behalf of their communities, confidently promote ideas which may not be in line with the authority's original intentions

- make sure they are in touch with the authority's elected members and paid officers, at the level that can take the decisions they need
- make sure that any helping agencies that are trying to lead the community are in touch with it and are working properly to determine its views and transmit them faithfully.

Let's be honest about this: sometimes authorities just talk to their "usual suspects"; that is, to people who, because of their professional or political backgrounds or track record of believing the professionals and doing what they're told, are convenient people to work with; or who, because they are well-intentioned but ill-supported, get drafted in whenever there is a need to "tick the boxes", but do not really know how to be representative.

It's not easy to be a good representative: it's hard and sometimes unrewarding work, and we can all find ourselves in that sort of position. Another danger is professional bodies, sometimes from business or outside interests, sometimes from the voluntary sector; that claim to represent the community and may believe they do, but in reality are best at representing themselves.

If you find that you are not getting a voice in the type of "representation" that is happening in your situation, you have two ways forward:

- try to make your authority adopt the kind of practices and standards outlined in this section
- make the authorities clear about who you are prepared to allow to represent you.

## Conclusions so far

"Participation", "representation", "community"... three words that we use a lot, sometimes maybe without thinking much about what they mean. This section has tried to say what it is to be a good representative, what people have a right to expect of their representatives, and how an authority recruiting representatives or participants ought to be thinking, about its behaviour and its standards of performance.

We can now look more closely at how someone, either from a group or as a co-opted individual, can try to make sure that she or he does the job properly.

## PART 2: Making participation real: an outline

### Building up our credentials

To help strengthen your voice and representation – preparation and participation can go a long way.

We have seen in Part 1 that there can be good or bad – we can reasonably say real and unreal – participation. What are the methods and skills involved in getting it right?

Here is an outline list of the things we need to do.

- Know who we are, who we represent and the range and direction of their views.
- Know what we want:
  - What the issue is.
  - Why it matters to us.
  - What the ways forward are.
  - What the goal is.
- Get the community involved:
  - Present our image well.
  - Explain the issues we are dealing with.
  - Bring people in.
  - Organise the discussions.
  - Produce clear-enough views and discuss them with others, so that we do not get information and views only from the “authority” side of the discussion.
- Get things done properly:
  - Be able to show that we have (if we have!) a reasonable number of members or people we consult.
  - If we’re part of a group, be able to show that we are properly organised.
  - Get a constitution and obey it.
  - If we’re part of a group, make sure its finances are transparent and not a cause for concern.
  - Get a track-record as being useful to have around.
- Build networks and relationships with other groups and useful individuals, and with local, national and other levels of government.



- Know how to act, how to work in ways that achieve things, so that we can develop a track record for being useful.
- Make sure we have the resources we need to be effective. For example:
  - finance
  - equipment
  - space to work
  - space to meet.
- Make sure we have the skills we need to be effective. For example:
  - working in groups or committees
  - working with other organisations in partnership
  - building our own skills
  - diagnosing the needs of our group and helping it build its skills and effectiveness.

# PART 3: Making participation real: in more detail

## 1. Knowing who we are and what we want

We need to make sure we know something about the things we are talking about.

We can achieve that by:

- talking, and of course listening, to people who already know about it.
- making sure we hear a range of opinions.
- reading – books, magazines, the internet, whatever.

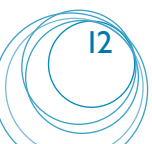
Quite often we hear people talking about “research” or “mapping the topic”. It’s worth remembering that politics – and that’s what we’re getting involved in – is about how people feel and how strongly they feel it. There are other things to do as well, but there’s no real substitute for talking and listening to people.

We need to have a clear set of aims. That will start to happen when we know what we’re talking about and why it matters.

In this, we need to remember that there is often a balance between what the smaller community wants and what the wider community wants. For example, Group A might say that traffic round the town will be better if we widen this road, while Group B says it doesn’t want the road widened there because that’s the children’s playing field.

The view we should take on this is governed by who we represent: if we represent the local community that lives in the area, we want to keep the playing fields and re-route the road. If we represent those who drive through town every morning and get stuck in traffic jams, we take a different view. Very often, communities might think they have a representative, for example a councillor or MP, who will vote in their interests. But the representative may feel as much, or more, obligation to his or her political party, or the people in the Chamber of Commerce, or the Golf Club. Don’t think by the way that that person will necessarily even realise where his or her loyalties really lie, let alone mention them at election time.

Which kind of representative would you rather have? And which kind would you rather be?





## 2. Getting the community involved, by doing things well

As a rule of thumb, if people aren't interested in you, it's because you're not interesting...

If what you are doing or getting involved with is central to people's lives and interests, if you are giving them ways to change things to how they want them to be, then they will probably want to come to the meetings. But, of course, it's not that simple. They may be busy, penniless, scared, watching tv, unable to get a baby-sitter. Or they may never have heard of you, or of the things you're talking about: they may not like the people they see around you, or a whole range of other things.

For example, let's look at how you make arrangements to hold a meeting: something simple like where to hold it. Here is a list of reasons that might stop people coming to that venue.

- It's off the bus routes and there are no safe car parks nearby. So you put off everyone who doesn't live in walking distance.
- People think that area's dangerous – they don't want to walk there in the dark. So you put off women, older people, anyone who might feel vulnerable.
- You chose a time when something important to them was on the television.
- You chose to hold it in a community centre attached to a church, so you put off a number of people who people who only go to churches of their own religion.
- You chose to hold it in the early evening, so you put off everyone who has child care responsibilities.
- You chose to hold it in the afternoon, so you put off everyone who works during the day.
- You chose to hold it upstairs in a place with no lift. So you put off everyone who has a mobility problem.

It might not be the meeting place itself that's the problem. For example:

- Do people associate you with a particular crowd in the community who they don't want to get too involved with or be led by?
- Have you cooked up a number of schemes in the past that have fizzled out, so they don't expect to achieve anything by listening to you again?
- Sorry, but do your green hair, nose studs and tattoos, or your habit of waving your hands in the air every third minute and shouting "Praise be to the Lord", make you attractive to some people but unacceptable to others?

If the answer to any of those is yes, that doesn't mean you can't participate or be a representative, but you may have to ask yourself just what your priorities are and exactly who it is you are hoping to represent.

Or what about the communications you send out? If you don't send any out, many people probably will not hear about what you're doing. Here are some suggestions:

- Whenever you or your group are doing something, try to get it in the local paper or on the local radio. People like to be associated with success, so look for what you've done that's successful and tell people all about it.
- If your activity is local, look for notice boards in shops or public areas, doctors' waiting rooms, places people go.
- If it's anything to do with young people, all the above; but also try school notice boards; tell the teachers; tell the youth workers.

Or what about the meetings you hold:

- Do you run them in a friendly way that lets everybody know what's going on?
- Do you try to make sure that no one is looking as if they want to speak but getting drowned out?
- Is whatever is being agreed being written down somewhere, so there's a list of decisions and/or actions for someone to follow up on, and a record for next time?
- If decisions are being taken, is a list being kept of who's going to do what, with whose help, and by when?

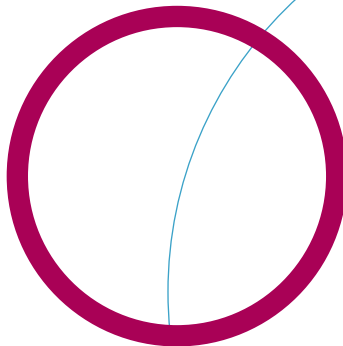


- And is it clear to everybody who is going to be checking on progress and reporting back?
- Do you have a constitution of some sort, and if so are you sticking to it? If other people need a copy, is it easy for them to get one? (For example, you could keep a paper copy or put it up on the internet – something like Google Docs will do if you don't have a website you can use.)
- Do you have a list of members and can people leave their contact details on it so they can be kept in touch with developments?

And so on. All this is not about being "official", it's about giving everybody a chance to be involved and making sure you are not wasting their time. If you don't get these things right, you might, literally be on your own.

Finally: it is not always easy to bring about changes, especially if those running the process and, in the end, making decisions are not listening to what is being said. A useful place to start might be to approach different points of contact. For example, other more senior officers within the authority, or elected members with responsibilities relevant to what you want. Often the best way of lobbying for change is by establishing a collective voice – getting people together with the same concerns and the same ideas about how things should be improved. The more people are pressing for the same changes to be made, then the harder it is to ignore them and the more likely it is that action will be taken. So build up networks, and use them to know who's on your wavelength and who you can lend support to and get support from.

These suggestions are not meant to be a complete guide, just to give you some ideas that you can think about and add to. There are resources listed in Appendix 3 for people who want to think about all this a little further.





### 3. Getting the resources you need

Well, what resources do you need? If you plan to keep a group together, even if it's only a "feedback group" so that you can explain yourself, it will need money.

It might need all the following.

- finance
- equipment
- a space to work
- a space to meet.

#### Finance

Do you know what your expenses for this work are going to be? Coffee, milk, biscuits, maybe. Paper and ink-cartridges? Envelopes and stamps?

What else? Are you prepared to pay for transport for people who can't get to your meeting otherwise? Are you going to hire a room from time to time? Do you need to pay for small ads in the paper (though it's generally better and cheaper to write a letter to the paper, or send them the news so they can think of it as an article)?

If you're trying to run something more than just a feedback group – something like an area youth forum or some other sort of community group – things get more complicated.

Ways you might consider for raising money will vary according to what you are doing, but possibilities include:

- events such as raffles, fetes and sponsored events
- membership subscriptions or admission charges
- donations gathered from collection tins, or mail shots to individuals, companies, trusts or foundations
- grants from local trusts or foundations, or the Big Lottery Fund.

There are guides and directories available, and there is information about this in the Appendix 3. These guides often include advice to help you make sure you are not wasting your time or other people's. It's worth reading it carefully before you start writing letters.

## Space and equipment

Do you have a place to meet? Is it somewhere that people can get to and that doesn't put them off in any way? Here are some ideas:

- A room in your house might be all right as a contact point, address for correspondence or for small committee meetings.
- For larger meetings, or if you want somewhere more neutral, maybe there might be community rooms available, such as places as the back room in a local pub or halls in for example community centres, working men's clubs (but do make sure they don't exclude women ... there are still a few dinosaurs around), village halls, church halls.
- Meeting rooms in schools or local (including neighbourhood based) council offices (for example social services, neighbourhood offices).

The local authority or the local council for voluntary service (it might be called the voluntary service council or have some newer name, but the telephone reception at the local authority should know) might have a list of places.

## Advice and information

If you're working on a committee, topics will come up and, in order to serve your constituents' interests, you may need to take a view. Where you will find the information to form a view will depend on the topic, and of course the committee itself may be able to point you to information sources. But it's better not to limit yourself to any one source and certainly not that one.

Other possible sources of information could be:

- the press and the internet
- local or national government publications
- local authority staff concerned with your issue
- other helpful professionals for example police officers, local health workers
- local business people, maybe through the Chamber of Commerce
- community and voluntary groups
- national resource agencies
- expert contacts, or donated or paid for expertise
- european resources and information.

Remember that if you're representing a particular grouping, and the issue is something it cares passionately about, or does not care at all about, that might decide for you, whether you want to have a view and how much work to put into getting it right.

## 4. Increasing groups' and members' skills

If you're working with or for a group or federation, you already know you might have to work at helping the group keep its credibility high, because the group's credibility will, to some extent, affect the amount of weight you are given as an individual. You can overcome that by hard work and being useful but there's often a case for helping your group work on its skills. For example some members of the group who have been allocated particular roles, such as managing the group's finances, might be able to undertake their work more effectively if they receive some kind of training.

Skills are not always learned just through formal training courses, and there are different ways of improving people's ability to do something. For example:

- It might be possible to arrange regular visits from a volunteer who has relevant expertise.
- New skills can be learned as and when the need arises. Many people learn much better when the need is real and right in front of them.
- Each member's skills contribute to what the group is able to achieve. The group does however need to be able to work effectively as a whole. There are therefore particular skills that might need to be developed by the collective group.

There is a wealth of organisations that can provide skills training, including national organisations such as Community Matters and the Directory of Social Change. If your membership is local, your council for voluntary service (or equivalent) should know of any relevant skills training in your area. There's more on this in Appendix 3.



## PART 4: What use is this “Europe” to me?

Europe, including the European Commission, decided to take a hard look at itself when, in June 2005, the people of both France and Holland voted against accepting the proposed European Constitution. The aim of the proposed constitutional treaty was to re-establish how the future of the European Union would be run. France and Holland are not usually, as many in Britain can seem to be, sceptical about the European Project: they are at the heart of it. So what was going wrong?

Margaret Wallström, Vice President of the European Commission, set the tone for a response when she suggested, at the launch of the European Commission’s communication strategy, that:

*“This [the European Project] has been a project for a small elite, a political elite. That has worked, until now. Has it ever been alive, European democracy? That is a very good question.”*

So the idea grew, inside the European Commission and elsewhere that Europe needed to become more participative, so that people could become more a part of what was happening in European government, and feel more allegiance to it. As part of this, a movement called “Plan-D” has been growing, which calls itself *Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue, and Debate*. These ideas were not new at government level. In fact in Britain, from 1997 when the Blair government was elected, there was a set of schemes called the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and alongside it one called Modern Local Government, which were strongly focused on the benefits of citizen participation.

So, three years after rejection of the European Constitution is Europe relevant to people? What is there to participate in? The first thing to note is that there is no Europe-wide structure or process for citizen participation.

The European Commission says in Plan-D:

*“There is no standard model for the organisation of debates in the Member States. In some, there are permanent structures, forums or platforms which seek to hold regular debates on European issues. In others, there is less of an organised system for dialogue and debate. Models such as the National Forum in Ireland<sup>2</sup> or the Platform for Europe in Spain may offer inspiration to Member States.”*

The questions for us, though, are whether and how to get involved.

## Whether to get involved with Europe

### What use is Europe to us? Maybe more than we think.

It is true that Europe cannot direct its Member States, and that most or all decisions that affect us come from national and local government in our own countries. But Europe does have ways of influencing national governments, and these can filter down. For some of us, Europe is relevant only when we look to it as a source of funds; and with the concentration of European funds on its new members in eastern Europe where needs are generally the greatest, European finance in the UK is becoming a declining feature. However, there are still places in western Europe where European money is very much a support in bringing roads, buildings and amenities, even communications and the internet to hard-pressed communities; and maybe we can take an interest in such topics and the ways, whys, and wherefores of what is being done. And we might want to be involved in debates, for example, about Europe's priorities and how it's going to allocate its future finance, whether it will create linkages or debates that might interest us between groups in different countries, whether we want it to try to influence ideas about social or economic development in the UK, or more.

That may not be easy. Europe wants participation, but there are suggestions that it very often sees the issues in ways that focus on its needs and how we can help its agendas, rather than on what we see as our needs. For example, Plan-D states that:

*"The initiative of the Commission seeks to inspire EU citizens to become politically active in the debate on the future of Europe; to publicise the added value that the European Union brings; and to encourage government, political parties and opinion formers to place the issue of Europe at the forefront of public consciousness."*

But Plan-D also suggests that:

*"The national debates should focus citizens' attention on the future of Europe, examining their expectations and discussing the added value and the concrete benefits of Community action... In this way, the debate should go beyond institutional questions and the Constitution. It should focus on how Europe is addressing issues such as jobs, the economy, transport, the fight against terrorism, the environment, oil prices, natural disasters or poverty reduction in Africa and elsewhere."*

Europe has agendas across a wide span of subjects, including such topics as: budget; consumers; development; education; training; youth; employment; environment; human rights; information society; justice, freedom and security; public health; and transport. Most community groups and most community workers have interests which fall within some of those areas.

And the point here is, it is not true, as some have suggested, that it does no good to change or expand ideas at the "Europe" level. While it is true that national governments, not Europe, most directly affect us, nevertheless Europe has been working at finding ways to make itself useful at all levels, and has developed the "Open Method of Coordination", which is an attempt to work with Member States in ways that allow it to involve itself in their agendas, priorities and performance. By means of working parties, joint committees, ideas papers and demonstrations of best practice, Europe can influence the directions and the standards of performance, within Member States.

## So: should we get involved in Europe?

Some people will nevertheless see no reason to, at least for now. Others will see the issues as vital and will want to get involved. For those in between, maybe it is more constructive to see Europe as taking early steps down an unfamiliar road, and to regard it as a possible resource together with other more direct or localised solutions.



## How to get involved in Europe

It has always been possible to create a level of influence for yourself in Europe if you are part of the action in, or part of the management of European economic or social development projects; and for some people that route is still open.

Beyond that, Europe says it wants to “stimulate a wider public debate”; and that is bound to create arenas where you can get involved. For example:

- Under the banner of “Promoting citizens’ participation in the democratic process”, the European Commission is as part of Plan-D, planning to establish more effective consultation with stakeholders by extending its use of Green and White Papers and its internet consultation facilities. If you want to get involved, and take the time and trouble to read the papers and communicate in the ways they set out, you will be able to respond and perhaps even establish dialogue.
- The European Commission has discussed the ideas of:
  - European Citizens’ Panel initiatives, which will assemble, when possible, a representative cross-section of citizens from European regions to discuss specific policy areas. There is information to help you keep abreast of such developments in the Appendix
  - activities involving Commissioners. That is a very senior level of involvement from Europe. The probability is that those people will talk to very senior politicians in the Member States. But if you are involved with politicians or administrators with the right access, you might find ways to attend related events
  - “European Goodwill Ambassadors” – well-known public figures recruited to the task
  - “Open Sessions”. The Seville European Council decided to open Council meetings to the public “on those occasions when the Council acts as a co-legislator”. The decision was taken in a spirit of good will, but obviously, from the point of view of relatively-excluded community organisations there are limitations placed against public attendance at European events by such mundane matters as cost, language and time, and awareness about timetables and agendas. In such situations the danger is that, by opening the door to those who already have levels of resources and access, the Commission may in practice close it more firmly, rather than open it, to those who are outside the relative elites. For the moment, though, the Commission reports that “These commitments have not yet been translated into practice.”

## Conclusions from this section

Europe is not the level of government where the decisions that immediately affect people's lives get taken. But Europe does have, through such processes as the Open Method of Coordination and Plan-D, the potential to impact over a longer timescale on the biggest of issues.

In participation terms, Europe is at best a work in progress. Much hard thinking may have been done behind the scenes, but what is on public display suggests that many questions remain unasked, let alone unanswered. But good will appears to be present, and the best way to maximise the advantage it offers will be to press for more access.

Whether Europe is the best level to address, either for communities, community representatives, or people coming forward with their own agendas, is a question for individual cases. This booklet has attempted to suggest ways to think about the question, but cannot suggest an answer.



## Appendix I: “Plan-D”

In June 2005, in response to the “No” votes in France and the Netherlands, bona fide and committed members of the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) heartlands, the European Council decided to take stock. The Heads of State and Government asked for:

*“...a broad debate to take place in each of our countries, involving citizens, civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties”. It also indicated that the European Institutions should ‘make their contribution, with the Commission playing a special role in this regard’. The purpose of this communication is to respond to the request by Heads of State and Government.”<sup>3</sup>*

### The goals for Plan-D

Stated goals for the Plan-D process include:

- to make the European Union more democratic, transparent, effective and stronger to the outside world
- to build on a clear view on citizens’ needs and expectations
- to dovetail with the Action Plan on communicating Europe which seeks to improve the way that the Commission presents its activities to the outside world and the forthcoming White Paper on communication strategy and democracy which will start a consultation process on the principles behind communication policy in the European Union and the areas of cooperation with the other European institutions and bodies
- to reinvigorate European democracy and help the emergence of a European public sphere, where citizens are given the information and the tools to participate actively in the decision-making process and gain ownership of the European project
- to stimulate a wider debate between the European Union’s democratic institutions and citizens. It has to be seen as complementary to the already existing or proposed initiatives and programmes such as those in the field of education, youth, culture and promoting active European citizenship
- to involve civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties. Also there would be an added value in listening to specific target groups, such as young people or minority groups, that were not reached during the referendum campaigns. The use of television and the internet is mooted.



## Models for participation

There is no Europe-wide structure or process for citizen participation. The European Commission says in Plan-D that it stands ready to assist, and it offers the Irish and Spanish processes as examples of best practice. It's worth noting here that the EC's perspective, despite its best intentions, remains clearly top-down and Europe-focused. For example:

*“Notwithstanding the individual national specificities, the national debates should focus citizens' attention on the future of Europe, examining their expectations and discussing the added value and the concrete benefits of Community action. ... In this way, the debate should go beyond institutional questions and the Constitution. It should focus on how Europe is addressing issues such as jobs, the economy, transport, the fight against terrorism, the environment, oil prices, natural disasters or poverty reduction in Africa and elsewhere. The results of these debates should help the European Institutions, and in particular the Commission to better define its priorities. This should be a two way process, informing people about Europe's role through concrete achievements and projects and listening to people's expectations about what should be done in the future.”<sup>4</sup>*

and:

*“The initiative of the Commission seeks to inspire EU citizens to become politically active in the debate on the future of Europe; to publicise the added value that the European Union brings; and to encourage government, political parties and opinion formers to place the issue of Europe at the forefront of public consciousness.”<sup>5</sup>*

So, the intention is firmly to involve people in Europe's processes for Europe's benefit, rather than to constitute a resource through which people can try to broaden and amend institutional agendas.

This is not necessarily a reason to disregard Europe as an avenue for people with other concerns and agendas, who want Europe to help them with their agendas rather than the other way round. Certainly the European Commission is taking the matter seriously, proposing to “stimulate a wider public debate” by activities involving Commissioners, national parliaments and “European Goodwill Ambassadors” – well-known public figures recruited to the task.

Under the banner of "Promoting citizens' participation in the democratic process", the CEC is, as part of Plan-D, planning to establish more effective consultation with stakeholders by extending its use of Green and White Papers and its internet consultation facilities. Clearly this still needs to go some way before it ceases to be participation for the elites, but the door is ajar: Going rather further is the notion of "citizens' panels", which have already been established in some Member States and may go further: The European Commission says it "will seek to support European Citizens' Panel initiatives to assemble when possible, a representative cross-section of citizens from European regions to discuss specific policy areas"; and while community development workers may worry that such bodies typically represent majorities and do not concern themselves with the question of who is excluded, again the door is ajar for community development as a profession to push it further; or the incorporated third sector<sup>6</sup> to try to find ways to include its service users in the process.

#### Further recommendations of Plan-D:

- The CEC "will propose to the other European institutions that they jointly look into ways to increase voter participation in European elections and national referenda on European issues. Specific attention should be given to participation of young people and minority groups and the use of new technologies to increase participation. A joint inter-institutional working group could be established to coordinate efforts in this area."
- The Commission will present a specific Eurobarometer survey on the Future of Europe, assessing citizens' views on the future of the European project as well as citizens' support for and expectations of European policies and actions.
- "Increasingly, experiences shows that the internet has become an important forum of political debate. If the Commission intends to play an active role in moderating the debate on the Future of Europe it should explore the use of every interactive communication medium that can facilitate this debate. The Commission will therefore use state-of-art Internet technology to actively debate and advocate its policies in cyberspace, which has become an important opinion-forming forum of debate."
- "As an essential part of the listening exercise, the Commission should build on the existing good practice of using focus groups as a first step in open policy making processes. Particular emphasis should be placed on the views of young people. This could help Member States to strengthen the feedback process in the national debates."

- “The wide-ranging debate on the future of Europe must be supported by appropriate financial assistance. The Commission will seek to assist Member States and civil society through support of individual initiatives. At the start of 2005, nine million euros was allocated under the Prince budget line for the future of Europe debate... All Member States have received some financial assistance with just less than six million already allocated during the ratification process. The Commission believes that the remaining resources should be used to support Member State and civil society initiatives.”
- “Plan-D must seek to clarify, deepen and legitimise a new consensus on Europe and address criticisms and find solutions where expectations have not been met. Accordingly, the European Commission recommends that Member States:
  - take the necessary steps to structure a national debate as soon as possible in each country
  - work with the Commission and other institutions and bodies to organise the most effective assistance and contribution, including national visits, that they can make to the national debate
  - by the next European Council, agree on the feedback process to ensure that the concerns and expectations of citizens are disseminated and fed into the stocktaking exercise to be held during the Austrian Presidency”

The summary of the above has to be that Plan-D remains, like European participation in general, a work in progress. Not all the intentions listed have as yet shown any sign of being implemented. Openings do exist but they are not yet as some in Europe would hope them to be, and access remains a matter of chance or skill, rather than being routinised and distributed.

## APPENDIX 2: The Open Method of Coordination

This Appendix is adapted from sources about the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). OMC outlines the strategies that Europe can adopt which make its activities relevant to local people. Europe does not have statutory powers within Member States and its expenditure within nation states is negotiated with their national governments. The OMC is a statement of a strategic response adopted by Europe to make itself relevant and useful in that situation. It works through mechanisms such as

- guidelines and indicators
- benchmarking
- sharing of best practice

This means that there are no official sanctions for laggards. Rather, the method's effectiveness relies on a form of peer pressure and naming and shaming, as no Member State wants to be seen as the worst in a given policy area.

### The experience of the OMC in practice

#### How does the OMC work in practice?

Generally, the OMC works in stages.

1. The Council of Ministers, on behalf of and therefore relevantly, to the Member States agrees on broad policy goals.
2. Member States develop appropriate guidelines and embed them into national and regional policies.
3. Specific benchmarks and indicators of best practice are agreed.
4. Results are monitored and evaluated.

There may be local variations with regard to timescales, guidelines, ascribed priority and means of enforcement. The point is that, where no formal control exists, the adoption of policies and the improvement of practice in specific policy areas is nevertheless within grasp.



### The OMC and Employment

The original European Employment Strategy (EES) was the first recognised expression of the OMC. It was devised as a means to assist the Europe-wide dissemination of the Lisbon Summit's (2002) economic strategies. It has suffered in the past from becoming a political arena, and is now represented as a relatively politics-free administrative mechanism, occupying an intellectual centre-ground open to neither radical wing of the debate.

### The OMC and social protection

In 1999 the European Commission (EC) moved towards a Europe-wide strategy on social protection, by establishing a Social Protection Committee (SPC). The SPC established the initial standards for social protection, and thereafter, each Member State was asked to benchmark its situation within a two year national action plan (NAP), in which they also presented national-level strategies for improving their situation. These were made available in June 2001. Eighteen months later the European Union released a joint report on social inclusion where the Member States' approaches were compared and contrasted and recommendations were given.

While the NAPs form a first level of action, the Community Action Programme to combat poverty and social exclusion, which aims to improve cooperation between the Member States, can be considered the second level of action.

In the social inclusion OMC some funds were made available for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and so its "inclusive" approach to civil society has been favourably commented upon. However, this is not necessarily the case for other OMCs. Reportedly, for example, the pensions OMC is more closed and involves mainly the CEC and national civil servants.

## The OMC and health

There is a mood within the CEC to apply OMC to the topic of ageing. In March 2004 the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the CEC to present a proposal for the use of the OMC in health and long-term care, and in April 2004 the CEC recommended the use of OMC for the development and modernisation of healthcare provision and funding. As potential advantages the Commission pointed to:

- greater consistency with existing social protection mechanisms
- closer coordination with other political processes such as the EES (in particular regard to the ageing workforce). This suggests that health, as a policy area, should better reflect the Lisbon strategy, involving the providing agencies, the relevant professions and occupations, and consumers. Community bodies and community development workers in the UK who have become involved with the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and a range of associated innovations, including local strategic partnerships (LSPs), will recognise the concepts and will be aware of the many and varied potentials that may result. Meanwhile, moves towards the introduction of OMC methodology to new policy areas continue.

## The OMC's relevance to community development

Reference is made in Appendix 1 to the comparisons that can be made with the best practice disseminations, and joint provider-receiver relationships, in the OMC and in the Labour Government's *Modernisation* agenda of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

A clear difference exists in that, ostensibly at least, the rationale in the Learning Strategic Partnerships and other related forums is that local solutions are found to local problems according to local norms and priorities, and rebalancing occurs between the power of service-providers and that of service-receivers (at least until local authorities find ways to assert their traditional areas and degrees of control). The European version looks to be more top-down, more concerned with the agreement and dissemination of best practice. Possibly in consequence, while the British model has established movements of service-receivers at community level and created structures and access points to routinise their participation, Europe is still working towards clarity on how to achieve worthwhile citizen participation.

Relevant to this is the EC's Plan-D. *Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue, and Debate* seeks to make European politics more "participative and relevant", and "to reinvigorate European democracy and help the emergence of a European public sphere, where citizens are given the information and the tools to actively participate in the decision-

making process and gain ownership of the European project." The Plan-D debate is relevant to the present discussion and is discussed in Appendix 1.

Meanwhile the OMC methodology is being used increasingly widely, and may well be brought to bear on areas such as immigration and asylum. The strength of the approach can vary; for example, while the European Employment Strategy was a formal treaty, the Social Inclusion Committee was not. Clearly this derives from the added importance assigned to employment over exclusion, and equally clearly, it also impacts on the amount of force that can be given to decisions taken.

The choice of indicators is crucial to the best working of the OMC, and the needs are:

- to set the bar at accessible and useful levels, so as to encourage implementation while also improving standards of practice
- to set standards that are politically acceptable across the EC
- to set standards that accurately address the desired topic areas
- to ensure that problems of incompatible raw data within Member States do not affect apparent outcomes
- to avoid the "perverse effects of outputs"; that is, to ensure that the achievement of indicator outputs does not become an end in itself in such a way that it distorts attempts to address the target issue.

If, through these developments, the European Commission is increasingly an arena where political priorities can be set and influenced, it becomes correspondingly potentially relevant to community development work.

It is to be expected that professional and community lobbies will form to focus on the topic area – and they already have. NGOs and similar bodies, and a range of other players, now populate committees with appropriate levels of access. The flaw in that apparently desirable scenario is that there is no call on those organisations to exercise any kind of accountability or even to report back on what they are discussing and whose interests are being served in the discussions.

In such situations, community development workers will ask the old question: "who gains?"; and the answer is very often, unless they rigorously and conscientiously guard against it, the participants. Europe, regarded by people in some circles largely outside it as something of a gravy-train for those who are on board, needs to be transparent in ensuring that no such misgivings can be entertained.

It is clearly possible that, with increasing relevance and participation, demands for transparency and due process (from a community perspective) in European arenas

will grow, and that bodies and forums will find increasingly useful ways to broaden the extent to which they provide access and accountability to communities. Community development workers may find it appropriate in their own work contexts to suggest to their own professional bodies and to the communities they support that such demands would be a worthwhile part of their agenda. European resources, and structured-in roles and access arrangements will greatly assist the development of participation in European structures, as long as they are realistic and show evidence that they are an appropriate use of people's time. Again the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal provides appropriate experience.

Community development workers have to balance a range of factors when they try to shape their own strategies and when they advise groups as to the best places to put their energies and resources. The OMC puts Europe into that context, and workers need to determine for themselves the nature and relevance of the complexities, the timescales, and the balance between concepts and detailed applications. Plan-D shows that the CEC wants to make participation more available and effective; and from the point of view of the EC, community pressure for access and then for community agendas, needs to follow.



## APPENDIX 3: Useful resources



### Where to find information about Europe

The best gateway to the affairs of the European Commission and associated bodies is the **Europa** website: <http://europa.eu>

The **Europa** website also has specific areas for different groups or interests: for example [http://europa.eu/youth/index.cfm?!\\_id=en](http://europa.eu/youth/index.cfm?!_id=en) is for young people, [http://europa.eu/euinyourcountry/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/euinyourcountry/index_en.htm) is for separate countries, and <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/home/en/default.htm> is to contact the European Ombudsman.

**EU on YouTube** find out more about Europe through the youtube space of the European Union [www.uk.youtube.com](http://www.uk.youtube.com)

**European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)** – ECAS was created in 1990 as an international non-profit organization, independent of political parties, commercial interests and the EU Institutions. ECAS mission is to enable NGOs and individuals to make their voice heard with the EU by providing advice on how to lobby, fundraise, and defend European citizenship rights. [www.ecas.org](http://www.ecas.org)

**EuroparlTV** – The European Parliament has launched its new, web-based TV service at [www.europarltv.europa.eu](http://www.europarltv.europa.eu). EuroparlTV is split into four channels, each directed to a different audience:

- Your Parliament, aimed at those with a particular interest in politics at the EU level.
- Your Voice, for the general public.
- Young Europe, aimed at school-aged children.
- Parliament Live will carry continuous coverage of events in the European Parliament.

**Citizens First** – information on European countries including living, working, studying, training and doing research, buying goods and services, travelling, equal opportunities and looking for work. [http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/front\\_end/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/front_end/index_en.htm)

## UK Representation Office

The European Commission has offices, called Representations, in all the Member States of the European Union. The UK Representation is in London; there are also offices in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

Their chief duties are:

- speaking for the Commission as its voice in the UK. This includes providing background briefings for the media as well as on-the-record comment on issues relevant to the Commission
- reporting back to the Commission in Brussels on political, economic and social developments in the UK
- providing information about the European Union across the UK through recognised outlets such as public libraries, business advice centres and education services.

[http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/index_en.htm)

### European Commission Representation in the UK

8 Storey's Gate, London SW1P 3AT

Head of Representation: Reijo Kempainen

Tel: 020 7973 1992 Fax: 020 7973 1900/1910

E-mail: [Reijo.Kempainen@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Reijo.Kempainen@ec.europa.eu)

### European Commission Office in Northern Ireland

9-15 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7EG

Head of Office: Maurice Maxwell

Tel: 028 9024 0708 Fax: 028 9024 8241

E-mail: [maurice.maxwell@ec.europa.eu](mailto:maurice.maxwell@ec.europa.eu)

### European Commission Office in Scotland

9 Alva Street, Edinburgh EH2 4PH

Head of Office: Neil Mitchison

Tel: 0131 225 2058 Fax: 0131 226 4105

E-mail: [neil.mitchison@ec.europa.eu](mailto:neil.mitchison@ec.europa.eu)

### European Commission Office in Wales /

### Swyddfa'r Comisiwn Ewropeaidd yng Nghymru

Head of Office/Pennaeth Gweithredol y Swyddfa: Andy Klom

2 Caspian Point/2 Pentir Caspian, Caspian Way/Ffordd Caspian  
Cardiff/Caerdydd CF10 4QQ

Tel: 029 20895020 Fax: 029 20895035

E-mail: [Andy.Klom@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Andy.Klom@ec.europa.eu)



**Plan-D:** for the UK is being led by the UK Representation Office in London. Plan-D is based upon a Communication from the European Commission that can be found at [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/wallstrom/pdf/communication\\_planD\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/wallstrom/pdf/communication_planD_en.pdf)

Commission of the European Communities Brussels, 13.10.2005 COM(2005) 494 final:  
Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic & Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions:  
*The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond:  
Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate*

See Appendix 2 of this booklet for a brief discussion.

More information can be found on this strategy on Margot Wallström  
<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/wallstrom/>

and here under the heading "why is communicating so important"  
[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/wallstrom/communicating/policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/wallstrom/communicating/policy/index_en.htm)

## Europe Direct

### Agencies in the nine UK regions providing:

- immediate responses to your general questions on EU matters or a reference to further sources of information
- contact details of relevant organisations you may need to deal with – answers in the official EU language of your choice
- free postal delivery of certain EU publications  
free phone contact 00800 6789 10 11 from anywhere in the EU.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/europedirect/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.html)

## European Activist Organisations and Resources

### Social Platform

The Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform) is the alliance of representative European federations and networks of NGOs active in the social sector. The Social Platform and its members are committed to the advancement of the principles of equality, solidarity, non-discrimination and the promotion and respect of fundamental rights for all within Europe and in particular the European Union. Links to all member websites can be found on the Social Platform website: [www.socialplatform.org](http://www.socialplatform.org)

### **Civil dialogue: making it work better**

(study commissioned by the Civil Society Contact Group)

This study can be found here

<http://act4europe.horus.be/module/FileLib/Civil%20dialogue%2C%20making%20it%20work%20better.pdf>

Civil Society Contact Group, 18 Square de Meeus, B-1050 Bruxelles

[www.act4europe.org](http://www.act4europe.org)

The study notes:

*“NGOs play a growing role in shaping the EU project through participation in a ‘civil dialogue’ with the EU institutions. After several decades of involvement in the European project, members of the Civil Society Contact Group increasingly came to the conclusion that, as the debate on how to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens heats up, the time had come for a common reflection on how to make this dialogue work better.”*

In relation to the UK the study also notes:

*“NGOs in the United Kingdom benefit from a close and structured relationship with the British government. Although not perfect, processes of consultation function well and appear to be invested with considerable political will. Although the Government does consult on European policy proposals, Europe has not entered the foreground of political debate – or rather, has only entered the debate in a negative way – and NGOs reflect this in their relative lack of engagement with the EU institutions. European debates may be followed, but only occasionally entered into. One major NGO platform reports that most of the members of its European Policy Group are passive recipients of information only. British NGOs need to take on board a greater sense of the importance of European policy development and how it connects to British processes; in turn, the UK can offer models of consultation from which lessons can be drawn for the European level.”*

## Community development organisations and networks in Europe

### Community development

Community development is the process of developing active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about influencing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives.

Community workers facilitate the participation of people in this process. They enable connections to be made between communities and with the development of wider policies and programmes.

Community development expresses values of fairness, equality, accountability, opportunity, choice, participation, mutuality, reciprocity and continuous learning. Educating, enabling and empowering are at the core of community development.

Community work aims to:

- promote co-operation and encourage the process of participatory democracy
- encourage self-determination
- ensure the sharing and development of knowledge
- change the balance of power and power structures in ways that will facilitate local democracy, challenge inequalities and promote social justice.

Below are a list of community and social development organisations in Europe.

**Combined European Bureau for Social Development (CEBSD)** is a non-governmental European umbrella organisation which brings together a variety of partners from a dozen countries both inside and outside of the European Union. CEBSD members actively promote social and community development. The emphasis is on people working together – collective action which is anti-discriminatory and which seeks to bring about individual and social change.  
cebsd@cebsd.org    www.cebsd.org

**Central & Eastern European Citizens Network** The mission of the Network is to promote citizens' participation in central and eastern Europe and provide opportunities for grassroots initiatives to learn and exchange experiences and ideas. The main aim of the Network is to ensure democratic systems through citizen participation. **Contact** Co-ordinator; Anna Karailieva Kapitulska 13, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, Bulgaria Tel: 00421 48 415 24 68    anna@ceecn.net    www.ceecn.net

**International Association for Community Development (IACD)** is a volunteer led, not-for-profit, non governmental organisation committed to building a global network of people and organisations working toward social justice through a community development approach. **Contact** PO Box Edinburgh EH6 6XX Scotland UK  
Tel: 00 44 7717 223 023 info@iacdglobal.org www.iacdglobal.org

## Belgium

**Samenlevingsopbouw Vlaanderen, Community Development, Flanders** is the institute for the development and promotion of community development in Brussels and the Flemish region of Belgium. It provides support for community development regional centres, community workers and local authorities. Its activities include training, research and publications. Samenlevingsopbouw Vlaanderen is a member of the Combined European Bureau for Social Development network and Gerard Hautekeur is also Chair of the CEBSD. **Contact** Lies Beunens Vooruitgangstraat 323, B-1030 Brussels, Belgium Tel: 00 322 201 0565  
lies.beunens@samenlevingsopbouw.be www.samenlevingsopbouw.be

## Networks in Flanders and Brussels

**Partners in Vorming (PIV)** Partners in Training involves all regional organisations for community development in Flanders and Brussels. Samenlevingsopbouw Vlaanderen coordinates and provides support to PIV **Contact** Lies Beunens and Rita L'Enfant  
lies.beunens@samenlevingsopbouw.be rita.lenfant@samenlevingsopbouw.be

## Bulgaria

**Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives (CEGA)** is an action-oriented organisation, which supports organisations and groups that participate in the transformation of their communities. It also disseminates working democratic practices and links community-based initiatives. The focus of support in recent years has been on initiatives for sustainable development, Roma communities in the regions of Montana, Plovdiv, Sofia, and the geographically isolated regions in the Rhodope Mountains **Contact** Director: CEGA Foundation, 96, G.S. Rakovski Street, 2nd floor, Sofia 1000, Bulgaria Tel: 00 359 2 988 36 39

## Czech Republic CpKP

**Centrum pro komunitní práci, the Centre for Community Organising (CCO)** is a non-profit organisation that has engaged in involving public and citizen organisations in the development of villages, towns and regions since 1996. CpKP pursues the principle of partnership and transparent decision-making. It supports and educates members of other citizen and non-profit organisations. It works with volunteers, organises seminars and educational courses with the aim of reinforcing the non-profit sector and participatory democracy. **Contact** Roman Haken, Director, Centre for Community Organising, Middle Moravia Palackeho 30750 02 Prerov, Czech Republic Tel: 00 420 7777 937 11 roman.haken@cphp.cz www.cphp.cz



## Denmark

**Kristeligt Studenter-Settlement KSS, Christian Student Settlement** is based in Vesterbro, traditionally the workers' area in Copenhagen. It is developing a Networking and Skills Centre, which seeks to explore and exchange the community development methodology underpinning the different facets of the work.

**Contact Johannes** Bertelsen, Director, KSS (Kristeligt Studenter-Settlementet)  
Dybbølsgade 41, 1721 København V, Denmark Tel: 00 45 33 228820  
bertelsen@settlementet.dk

### The Volunteer Centre in Denmark

On a national basis the centre promotes and support the development and education of volunteers within community development and social work. The centre offers a range of courses for volunteers dealing with subjects as cooperation, fundraising, personal recourses, PR and management. [www.frivillighed.dk](http://www.frivillighed.dk)

## Finland

**Kylatoiminta** The Village Action Association of Finland. **Contact Johani** Larjenko  
Finland Adult Education + NILE network Tel: 00 358 961203712  
[www.kylatoiminta.fi](http://www.kylatoiminta.fi)

### Svenska studiecetralen, Study Centre for Swedish Minority in Finland

The Swedish Study Centre (SSC) is a service organisation for more than 50 NGOs in the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland, spread mainly along the coastal region. The basic aim of SSC is to "support and stimulate the Finnish-Swedish civil society through activities for learning individuals and organisations, and a sustainable local and regional development." Host organisation for SSC is the Swedish Folk School Foundation (SFV), which promotes education and culture.

**Contact Peter** Backa, Rådhusgatan 21 C 65100 Vasa, Finland  
Tel: 00 358 40 5950444 [peter.backa@ssc.fi](mailto:peter.backa@ssc.fi) [www.ssc.fi](http://www.ssc.fi)

## Germany

**Paritätisches Bildungswerk Bundesverband (PBW)** in Germany coordinates information between local, regional and community development organisations, most of which are in the non-governmental sector. PBW is a member of the national network "Community Work and Social Urban Development" (BAG Soziale Stadtentwicklung und Gemeinwesenarbeit). **Contact Armin** Kuphal, Rheinland Pfalz/Saarland Kohlweg 52, 66123 Saarbrücken, Germany Tel: 00 49 681 62471  
[a.kuphal@quarternet.de](mailto:a.kuphal@quarternet.de) [www.quarternet.de](http://www.quarternet.de)

**Kommunales Forum** is a not-for-profit association that has worked in Wedding/Mitte, Berlin since 1988 on the promotion of cooperation between actors from the public, private and third sector mobilising communities, community (economic) development and local employment initiatives. Kommunales Forum participates in the national network "Community Work and Social Urban Development" (BAG Soziale

Stadtentwicklung und Gemeinwesenarbeit). **Contact** Hans-Georg Rennert, Wiesenstraße 29 | 3357 Berlin, Germany Tel: 00 493046507355 Kom.forum.rennert@web.de www.alles-m-arbeit.de

## Hungary

**Közösségfejlesztők Egyesülete, Hungarian Association for Community Development (HACD)** The HACD is a nationwide registered charity founded in 1989. Its objective is the development of the capacity of citizens to initiate and act in the community. This goal is designed to be achieved through increasing participation of citizens in their own and in their common affairs, through improving the community-related conditions for local action and through building up the local institutions of democracy. **Contact** Ilona Vercseg, Corvin tér 8. 1011 Budapest, Hungary Tel: 00 36 | 201-5728 vercseg@kkapcsolat.hu www.kka.hu

**Civil Kollégium Alapítvány, Civil College Foundation (CCF)** is a nationwide adult training organisation which organises practical training for citizens willing to act, the members of self-organising communities, and the participants of vocational training programmes in community development and community work. The CCF is in partnership with the Northern College, Barnsley, UK. Further information is available on its website: www.civkol.hu **Contact** Máté Varga, Corvin tér 8, 1011 Budapest, Hungary Tel: 00 36 | 201 5728 matev@kkapcsolat.hu

**Magyar Népfőiskolai Társaság (Hungarian Folk High School Society)** a public NGO established in 1988. **Contact** János Sz.Tóth Puskin utca 12 Budapest 1088 Hungary Tel: 00 36 | 411 14 59 eaea@nepfoiskola.hu www.nepfoiskola.hu

## Ireland

**Combat Poverty Agency (CPA)** a government-funded organisation in the Republic of Ireland. It initiates and evaluates measures aimed at overcoming poverty. CPA supports pilot projects, acts as a national resource centre for community development and helps local groups to influence policymaking. **Contact** Joan O'flynn, Bridgewater Centre, Conyngham Road, Island Bridge, Dublin 8, Ireland Tel: 00 353 | 6 706 746 www.cpa.ie

## Italy

**Comune di Bologna Settore Istruzione Centreo di Documentazione/Laboratorio per un'Educazione (Documentation Centre Laboratory for Intercultural Education, Bologna Municipality)** **Contact** Miriam Traversi, Tel: 00 39 051 6443358 / (00)39 051 6443316 miriam.traversi@comune.bologna.it

**Movement of Cooperative Education (MCE)** is an association of teachers, educators and managers founded on cooperation. MCE agrees to FIMEM (Federation Internationale de l'École Moderne) organising exchanges amongst educators who refer to Freinet's pedagogy. **Contact** Movement for Cooperative Education, via dei Piceni 16, 00185 Roma, Italy Tel: 00 39 051 64457228 mceroma@tin.it www.mce-fimem.it

### Netherlands

**MOVISIE** is the Netherlands centre for social development. Its mission is to promote the participation and independence of citizens. **Contact** GC Utrecht Postbus 19129, 3501 DC Utrecht, Netherlands Tel: 0 030 789 20 00 info@movisie.nl www.movisie.nl/115032/def/home/english

### Norway

**Stiftelsen Idébanken**, The Ideas Bank was set up in 1991 and has a history of campaigning under Agenda 21. Its main purpose is to demonstrate good practice in community development, environment and sustainable development and to promote creative dialogues on local futures and through this work to influence national policy and encouraging public debate. **Contact** Kirsten Paaby, Akersgata 34, 0180 Oslo, Norway Tel: 00 47 23 310960 kirsten@idebanken.no www.idebanken.no

### Poland

**The Association of Local Activity Support Centre (CAL)** is an NGO supporting community development in Poland. Established in 2000, CAL has managed to involve 160 institutions in an all-Poland network.

**Contact** Pawel Jordan, Ul. Szpitalna 5/5 00-031 Warsaw, Poland Tel: 00 48 22 828 91 28 ext.162 pawelj@boris.org.pl www.cal.ngo.pl

### Romania

**Asociate Romana de Dezvoltare Comunitara, Romanian Association for Community Development (RACD)** contributes to the building of a strong civil society by working with poor and disadvantaged communities in eastern Europe so that they can rely on their own power and enjoy self-determination, self-dependence and improved collective welfare. **Contact** Ionel Dobre or Magda Tancau, COMUNITARA Aurora 9B, ap1, sector 1, Bucuresti, Romania Tel: 00 21 3120989 dobrei@wdesign.ro magda.tancau@ardc.ro www.ardc.ro

## Scotland

**Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)** is the designated National Development Centre for community development in Scotland. It is an innovative partnership between the Community Development Foundation (a UK non-departmental public body funded by government to support community development) and the University of Glasgow.

**Contact** Suite 305 Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ  
Tel: 0141 248 1924 [info@scdc.org.uk](mailto:info@scdc.org.uk)

## Slovakia

**Centrum komunitného rozvoja, Centre of Community Development (CDC)** is an NGO which is supporting urban communities to develop according to their needs and to shape their local environments. The organisation promotes community participation and self-organising, reliance on internal resources and capacities, and strengthens socially excluded Roma communities. CCD works in three Slovak cities.

**Contact** Leo Singer, Hrobakova, 5 851 02 Bratislava Tel: 02/ 6381 5025, [leo@ckr.sk](mailto:leo@ckr.sk)

**Centre for Community Organising (CKO)** is a registered NGO to assist citizens across Slovakia get active in their communities. The focus of the work is empowering citizens, mostly in urban high-rise neighbourhoods. CKO assists citizens in conducting campaigns to improve their lives and the communities. **Contact** Chuck Hirt

Kapitulská, 13, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovensko, Slovakia  
Tel: 00 421484123880 [chuck@cko.sk](mailto:chuck@cko.sk) [www.cko.sk](http://www.cko.sk)

## Spain

**Fundació Desenvolupament Comunitari (FDC)** is a not-for-profit organisation, which promotes community development in Catalunya, Spain. It sets up and runs community development projects and provides support and training to community groups and professional organisations. **Contact** Gianni Orsini, Via Laietana 54, 4t 3a, 08003 Barcelona, Spain Tel: 00 34 9 3268 0477 [gorsini@fdc.cat](mailto:gorsini@fdc.cat)

## Sweden

**Centrum för samhällsarbete och mobilisering (Cesam)** is an NGO offering training and learning for NGOs and local authorities. Cesam provides support for the public, voluntary and private sectors in the field of community development in Sweden.

**Contact** Hans Andersson, Rudbecksgatan 28, 5tr, 70223 Örebro, Sweden  
Tel: 00 46 19 17 0750 [hans.andersson@cesam.se](mailto:hans.andersson@cesam.se) [www.cesam.se/main\\_new.asp](http://www.cesam.se/main_new.asp)

## Glossary of UK based organisations working with or in communities

The following organisations can point you at ways to get involved in your community and build up your levels of information and influence.

**ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England):** *the umbrella body for rural community councils.* Somerford Court, Somerford Road, Cirencester GL17 1TW  
Tel: 01285 653477 [acre@acre.org.uk](mailto:acre@acre.org.uk) [www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)

**BASSAC (British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres):** *the umbrella body for settlements and social action centres.* 33 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR Tel: 0845 241 0375 [info@bassac.org.uk](mailto:info@bassac.org.uk) [www.bassac.org.uk](http://www.bassac.org.uk)

**BITC (Business In The Community):** *an agency promoting and assisting the involvement of the private sector in community-level activities. This is the central address – ask them for local branches.* 137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ  
Tel: 020 7566 8650 [information@bitc.org.uk](mailto:information@bitc.org.uk) [www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk)

**CDF (Community Development Foundation):** *non departmental public body specialising in community development.* Unit 5, Angel Gate, 320-326 City Road, London EC1V 2PT Tel: 020 7833 1772 [admin@cdf.org.uk](mailto:admin@cdf.org.uk) [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)

**The Community Development Exchange (CDX):** *the UK-wide membership organisation for community development.* Scotia Works, Leadmill Road, Sheffield S1 4SE  
Tel: 0114 241 2760 [admin@cdx.org.uk](mailto:admin@cdx.org.uk) [www.cdx.org.uk](http://www.cdx.org.uk)

**Citizens Online:** *a national charity committed to researching and addressing the issues of universal internet access and promoting digital inclusion.*  
1 Town Square, West Swindon Centre, Tewkesbury Way, Swindon SN5 7DL  
Tel: 01793 88 28 00 [info@citizenonline.org.uk](mailto:info@citizenonline.org.uk) [www.citizenonline.org.uk](http://www.citizenonline.org.uk)

**Community Matters:** *the national federation for community organisations and provides much valuable reference material for community groups*  
12-20 Baron Street, London N1 9LL Tel: 020 7837 7887  
[communitymatters@communitymatters.org.uk](mailto:communitymatters@communitymatters.org.uk) [www.communitymatters.org.uk](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk)

**CSC (Community Sector Coalition):** *a national federation of resource and umbrella agencies promoting the interests of the community sector, as distinct from the voluntary sector.* 33 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR [www.communitysectorcoalition.org.uk](http://www.communitysectorcoalition.org.uk)

**DTA (Development Trusts Association):** *the national resource and umbrella body promoting and supporting development trusts.* 33 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR  
Tel: 0845 458 8336 info@dta.org.uk www.dta.org.uk

**DSC (Directory of Social Change):** *an organisation providing details of charitable funding and other relevant topics through a range of courses and publications.*  
24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP Tel: 020 7391 4800  
enquiries@dsc.org.uk www.dsc.org.uk

**FCDL (Federation Community Development Learning):** *a fieldwork-led federation of community work training agencies. Will have details of courses, and of any of their member organisations working in your area.* The Circle, Rockingham Lane,  
Sheffield S14 4FW Tel: 0114 253 6770 www.fcdl.org.uk

**NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action):**  
*Until 14 June 2006, NAVCA was called NACVS (the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service). Their purpose is to promote the local third sector nationally.*  
The Tower, 2 Furnival Square, Sheffield S1 4QL  
Tel: 0114 278 6636 navca@navca.org.uk www.navca.org.uk

**NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations):** *the national resource and umbrella body for voluntary organisations.* Regents Wharf, 8 All Saints Street,  
London N1 9RL Tel: 0800 2 798 798 ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk www.ncvo-vol.org.uk



**NIF (Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation):** *NIF is all about finding simple, effective ways to involve unempowered people in decisions affecting their own neighbourhood.*

The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford TF4 3QN Tel: 01952 590777

info@nif.co.uk www.nif.co.uk

**SCDC (Scottish Centre for Community Development)**

Suite 305, Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ

Tel: 0141 2481924 info@scdc.org.uk www.scdc.org.uk

**TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service):** *the leading national tenant participation organisation working to promote tenant empowerment.*

5th Floor, Trafford House, Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS

Tel: 0161 868 3500 info@tpas.org.uk www.tpas.org.uk

**Urban Forum:** *an umbrella body for community and voluntary groups with interests in urban and regional policy, especially regeneration. It was set up in 1994 as the national voluntary organisation through which local and central government could relate to the community and voluntary sectors on such issues.*

33 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR

Tel: 020 7253 4816 info@urbanforum.org.uk www.urbanforum.org.uk

**WCVA (Wales Council for Voluntary Action)** *umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector in Wales.*

Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF10 5FH

Tel: 029 20431700 enquiries@wcva.org.uk www.wcva.org.uk

## Gender resources

**Engender Scotland** is about creating a fairer, safer place where women can flourish and contribute to both the social and market economies with dignity, freedom and justice. 1a Haddington Place, Edinburgh EH7 4AE Tel: 0131 558 9596  
info@engender.org.uk www.engender.org.uk

**European Women's Lobby (EWL)** is the largest umbrella organisations of women's associations in the European Union (EU). The EWL Secretariat is based in Brussels, but EWL has member organisations in 25 Member States of the EU and in three candidate countries. The European Women's Lobby aims at promoting women's rights and equality between women and men in the EU. EWL is active in areas such as women's economic and social position, women in decision-making, violence against women and women's diversity. EWL works mainly with the institutions of the EU: the European Parliament, the European Commission and the EU Council of Ministers. 18, rue Hydraulique, B-1210 Bruxelles Tel: 00 32 2 217 90 20  
ewl@womenlobby.org www.womenlobby.org

**National Association of Women's Organisations (NAWO)** is an umbrella organisation for over 100 organisations and individuals based in England. All members are concerned to ensure women gain access to their human rights, and to make equality between women and men a reality. Its diverse membership includes single issue to specialist organisations, faith groups, health centres, arts-based organisations and others offering services and campaigning across a broad range of women's concerns.  
Suite 405, Davina House 137-149 Goswell Road London EC1V 7ET  
Tel: 020 7490 4100 info@nawo.org.uk www.nawo.org.uk

**Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)** is an umbrella NGO with membership groups across a wide range of civil society and social partners in Northern Ireland. NIWEP seeks to ensure that women in Northern Ireland contribute to the debates on women's concerns at local, regional, national, European and international levels. 58 Howard Street, Belfast BT1 6PJ  
Tel: 028 90 501 805 niwep@btconnect.com www.niwep.org.uk

**Council of Europe and Equality between women and men** The aim of council of Europe is to to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law; to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity. www.coe.int/T/E/Human\_Rights/Equality

### **European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality**

This Committee is responsible for the definition, promotion and protection of women's rights in the Union, the implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy sectors; and promotion of women's rights in third countries.  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/homeCom.do?language=EN&body=FEMM](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/homeCom.do?language=EN&body=FEMM)

**The UK Joint Committee on Women (UKJCW)** is made up of four sister organisations from the different regions of the UK, comprising **Engender**, Network of Women's Organisations (Scotland), the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (**NIWEP**), the Wales Women's European Network (**WWEN**) and the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (**NAWO**) for England. The UKJCW was set up to coordinate a UK view with respect to the **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) and to provide forums for discussion for and information to women and women's organisations on the theme of Europe. Contact NAWO

**Wales Women's National Commission (Women's Voice)** has a membership of 33 organisations representing over 750,000 women across Wales. Founded as the Wales Women's National Coalition in 1997 in preparation for devolution, Women's Voice has developed to be a progressive authority on gender issues in Wales. Members have a wide range of viewpoints, but are all agreed on the promotion of women's concerns and interests. Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff CF24 5JW  
Tel: 029 20478918 [www.womensvoice.org.uk/index.php](http://www.womensvoice.org.uk/index.php)

**Women's National Commission UK (WNC)** the official and independent advisory body giving the views of women to the government of the United Kingdom. Established in 1997 the National Commission is an umbrella organisation representing women and women's organisations in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to ensure women's views are taken into account by the government and are heard in public debate. The WNC is based alongside the Government Equalities Office, which was formed from the Women and Equality Unit established in 1997 as the Women's Unit, to support the Ministers for Women. The WNC is an advisory non departmental public body (NDPB), meaning it is fully funded by Government but able to comment freely on government policy. In its unique role, the WNC liaises with, and is consulted by, the Government Equalities Office, as well as other government departments.  
4/G9 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU  
Tel: 020 7944 0585 [www.thewnc.org.uk](http://www.thewnc.org.uk)

## Youth resources

### Participation Spice it up!

This is a valuable publication for all professionals who work with young people. If you are serious about involving young people then this book is for you. There are 49 practical activities to involve and engage young people.

Dynamix Ltd, Unit 4D, Cwm Road, Hafod, Swansea SA1 2AY Tel: 01792 466231  
info@dynamix.ltd.uk www.dynamix.ltd.uk

### Toolkit for Connexions Partnerships

The toolkit was produced with and by those working in Connexions partnerships and community development as guidance on engaging community and voluntary organisations in order to help young people, reconnect with learning and employment opportunities.

Community Development Foundation  
Unit 5 320-326 City Road, London EC1V 2PT Tel: 020 7833 1772  
admin@cdf.org.uk www.cdf.org.uk

**UK Youth Parliament, (UKYP)** enables young people to use their energy and passion to change the world for the better. Run by young people for young people, UKYP provides opportunities for 11-18-year-olds to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change.

15 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DP Tel: 020 7553 9890  
mail@ukyouthparliament.org.uk www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

**European Youth Organisations & Resources (YFJ)** is a platform made up of 96 national youth councils and international youth NGOs from across Europe. YFJ works to empower young people to participate actively in society and improve their living conditions by representing their interests to the European Institutions, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and other partners active in the youth field.

Street Joseph II, 120 1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel: 00 32 2 230 64 90  
www.youthforum.org

### European Youth Portal

If you are thinking of going to another European country to study or work, or on holiday – if you are looking for activities or opportunities in Europe – if you have something to say, or ask, about European issues, this portal could be a good place to start. It offers you information, news and discussions – all about Europe and relevant to young people. [http://europa.eu/youth/index.cfm?!\\_id=en](http://europa.eu/youth/index.cfm?!_id=en)

**Erasmus Student Network (ESN)** – a non-for-profit international student organisation, offering services to students including support and information on student exchanges and studies across Europe. [www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org)

## Lobbying EU and National political representatives

The content in this section has been downloaded and adapted from the BBC Action Network website.

[www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A2109764#117/09/2008](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A2109764#117/09/2008)

An MEP is a Member of the European Parliament and one of their main tasks is to vote on laws in the European Parliament. MEPs also sit on parliamentary committees, where they scrutinise and modify new European laws before they are passed.

You can lobby an MEP to:

- Vote in a certain way on legislation
- Represent your opinion in committee discussions on new laws
- Put you in touch with other MEPs interested in your campaign's issue

It is important to remember that there are different types of European legislation with different levels of impact on national laws. For example, the European law about the freedom of movement of workers commands more weight and power in EU countries than laws on public health, culture and education.

Your MEPs have a responsibility to help you understand European laws and advise you on their impact. There are 78 MEPs and 12 European Parliament constituencies in the UK. Each constituency is represented by several MEPs - from three to 11 - depending on the population of the area.

You can find your MEPs on the website of the UK Office of the European Parliament.

### What can an MSP, AM or MLA do for you?

#### Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)

MSPs represent their constituents on matters which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, including education, health, planning, housing, environment and the courts system. MSPs debate and vote on new laws and on taxation.

In most cases your first contact should be your constituency MSP but, as an MSP is not allowed to deal with issues raised by people beyond their constituency or region, it's important that it is one of your eight local MSPs.





You can lobby an MSP to:

- Ask a parliamentary question
- Initiate a parliamentary debate
- Move an amendment to a bill
- Introduce a member's bill
- Write to a relevant minister
- Meet a relevant minister.

The Scottish Parliament has a useful fact sheet on You and Your MSPs.

### **Assembly Members (AMs) - National Assembly for Wales**

The National Assembly for Wales has powers over health, education, economic development and rural affairs. The Assembly can amend laws passed by the UK Parliament by passing secondary legislation, such as new orders, rules, regulations, schemes, warrants or byelaws, but it cannot make new laws or alter taxes.

You can lobby an AM to:

- Ask a question in the assembly
- Write to a relevant assembly minister
- Meet a relevant assembly minister
- Represent your views on any committees they sit on.

The assembly also has information leaflets on questions to the assembly, secondary legislation, general procedure and visiting the assembly in person. The assembly's website has an interactive map to help you find your AM by constituency and information on the Assembly's committees.

### **Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) - Northern Ireland Assembly**

Each of the 18 constituencies of Northern Ireland is represented by six MLAs. The assembly addresses many areas of administration including education, health and agriculture. The UK Government still deals with policing, defence, taxation and foreign policy.

You can lobby an MLA to:

- Introduce a private member's bill
- Ask a question in a meeting of the assembly
- Write to a relevant minister
- Meet a relevant minister.

You can find more information on your MLA at the Assembly's website.

## Writing to a representative

The best way to get in touch with your representative is to put it in writing. It will give them time to brief themselves on the issue and on your organisation or group.

### The letter

Use headed paper, if you have it, but make sure your address is on the letter so they can work out your constituency.

Never send a standard letter that you may have for your campaign, or from a national campaign. If the letter is identical to others the representative has received you are unlikely to get a favourable response. You can borrow a format, but make sure each letter is individual and personalised.

Begin your letter by saying who you are and what your concerns are. Explain why you are writing, preferably giving examples and facts. Keep the letter as short as possible, try to limit yourself to one side of A4 paper, and tackle just one subject per letter. Make sure the first paragraph is a short summary of the main points.

If you can you should attempt to connect your request to the representative's interests, or something they have said recently, and state this early in your letter. For example, if they are sitting on a committee which addresses your issue, explain how your request relates to their committee responsibilities.

If it is a national issue but there is a special constituency reason why your MP should be concerned about it, mention this in the letter too.

Send your letter with clearly labelled supporting information and evidence, such as photos or videos.

Always ask for a response to your letter.

## Other ways of reaching a political representative

**Email:** Many email addresses can be found on council or government websites. Generally though, it seems that people respond less frequently to emails than to letters that arrive in an envelope.

**Telephone:** If you need to phone a representative, do not expect to speak to the individual directly. You are more likely to be offered a time to meet them in person than talk over the phone. You should always avoid harassing or being impolite to assistants or secretaries as they have a big influence over what the representative will and won't take time to do.

**Fax:** If you do fax your letter make sure that you also send a hard copy through the post, and make sure that it is clearly marked who the fax is for. There's more on this on the website.

### Getting attention

Elected representatives often welcome press coverage of their support for a campaign. You can read the BBC Action Network guide on How to use the media and write press releases. Offering media coverage may be the clinching factor in securing their support.

### Keep in touch

Remember to keep your supporters informed about the progress of your campaign or issue and on any decisions or changes as they occur.

[www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A2109764#1](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A2109764#1) 17/09/2008





## Tools and databases

### UK

**Together We Can** - <http://togetherwecan.direct.gov.uk>

This UK government website provides help, advice and support and provides the opportunity to share your own experiences with others. As more people use the site there will also be case studies and forums to discuss topical issues.

**National Empowerment Action Plan** -

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityempowermentactionplan](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityempowermentactionplan)

The plan includes some good examples of people influencing decisions and services in their local area and you can find out more information about some of the activities mentioned (like participatory budgeting and citizen's juries).

**People & Participation** - [www.peopleandparticipation.net](http://www.peopleandparticipation.net)

This site can help you choose the best method of getting involved for your particular situation. Key in a few basic facts about what you're trying to achieve, what your budget is and who you want to involve and out pop some suggestions and some relevant real life examples.

### Europe

**Register of interest representatives!** -

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/transparency/reg/in/welcome.do>

Not a very friendly title, but basically this is a voluntary register of interests so you can see who is behind and influencing decisions. By opening the register, in the context of the European Transparency Initiative, the European Commission wishes to let citizens know which general or specific interests are influencing the decision-making process of the European Institutions and the resources mobilised to that end. Registrants have the opportunity to demonstrate their strong commitment to transparency and the full legitimacy of their activities. While registering, interest representatives commit themselves to the elements of the Code of Conduct.

**European Women's Lobby Resource Kit on Institutional Mechanisms for the Promotion of Equality between Women and Men**

The EWL Resource Kit aims at helping interested actors to evaluate and influence international and European institutions as well as their national governments and enable them to strengthen weak or inefficient institutional mechanism.

[www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org)

**Your Voice in Europe website** - <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice>

“YourVoice in Europe” is the European Commission's single access point to a wide variety of consultations, discussions and other tools which enable you to play an active role in the European policymaking process.

It is divided into four parts:

**Consultations:** this is a space to give your opinion on EU policies and influence their direction. It is an opportunity to take part in shaping European policy by responding to a consultation in one of many activity areas.

**Discussions:** this is a space to discuss the main issues of the day and chat online to the EU's leaders. This is an opportunity to have your say in discussions on the EU and its future.

**Your experience:** this is a space to help you overcome problems you have experienced in the EU and help the EU – anonymously – monitor how EU policies work in practice.

**Useful links:** there are many useful links here to resources and ways in which you can make your voice heard in Europe.

“YourVoice in Europe” has been set up in the context of the Interactive Policy Making initiative. As part of the Commission's Minimum Standards on Consultation it aims to improve European governance and introduce better regulation.

## **URBACT – Young Citizens' Project**

### **Toolkit for Youth Participation in Urban Policies**

A product of two years of work by a network of nine European cities in six Member States, this toolkit is intended to provide professionals with tools and examples of good practice to help them structure and evaluate their efforts in the planning, implementation and political enforcement of processes that young people participate in. It is intended to be usable across a wide-range of local authority departments, and aims to demonstrate that young people can and should be involved in decision-making in all areas that impact on them and their communities.

### **Participation toolkit**

This toolkit focuses on civil participation at the local level. Over 100 sample cases from across the world of civil participation projects in local governance are described and analysed here, along with articles and news bulletins updated regularly by the regional coordinators of the project. [www.toolkitparticipation.com](http://www.toolkitparticipation.com)

# Get in there!

## Notes

- 1 [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/oct/14/eu.politics](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/oct/14/eu.politics)
- 2 You can see the Irish model described on the internet at [www.forumoneurope.ie](http://www.forumoneurope.ie)
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Ibid
- 6 The term “third sector” refers to organisations including NGOs and the voluntary sector, the cooperative and trade union movements, and government-appointed agencies such as the Community Development Foundation. It ought probably, to include numerous individuals who operate in consultancy roles to those bodies. “Incorporated” refers to a position on the edge of the decision-making process, where they may be given levels of funding and access which place them in a gatekeeper role, where their impact’s positive and negative effects are determined by their own self-awareness and commitment to mission rather than self-interest.





My Voice in Europe Project is managed by the European and International Unit of the Community Development Foundation and co-funded by the European Union

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European and International Unit  
Community Development Foundation  
Unit 5, 320-326 City Road, London EC1V 2PT

020 7833 1772 [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)



strengthening  
communities  
for 40 years