REBOOTING EUROPE
Digital Deliberation and European Democracy

By Mats Engström

This document is the fourth output from the 'Next Generation Democracy: Legitimacy in Network Europe' project, which aims to:

- **Reinvigorate discussion about democracy in an enlarging Europe, working from 'first principles' of democratic participation rather than established hierarchies and institutions.**

- **Explore how citizens can interact with policymakers in developing a powerful analysis of the role Europe can play in solving problems of national democracy.**

- **Analyse how democratic debates can operate effectively across cultural, social, political and national frontiers, and link local-level government to European institutions.**

- **Establish an on-line practice of communication across countries, and explore how new media of communication can help in harnessing shared democratic values.**

ABOUT MATS ENGSTRÖM

Mats Engström is the editor of the Swedish newsletter Europapolitik.nu and writes on European affairs for the largest Scandinavian daily newspaper, Aftonbladet.

He was previously Special Adviser to Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh and a Deputy State Secretary at the Ministry for Environment in Stockholm.

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Rebooting Europe

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The debate about democracy in the European Union is not only about institutions, competences and formal decision-making. It is also about creating European political spaces, where citizens feel they can debate and influence policy. Digital technologies such as the internet and digital television play an important role in this context. They pose both opportunities for and threats to deliberative democracy at the European level.

- Information and communication technologies are already influencing European politics. The transfer of information through e-mail and websites, practically immediate, contributes to quick decision-making. Mass media and lobby groups can use electronic surveys to present a picture of public opinion – even if such surveys seldom are representative. Non-governmental groups use the internet in their co-ordination and lobbying.

- Strategies to date at European level have been uncoordinated and piecemeal. The European Commission is to some extent already using electronic consultations on new proposals. Members of the European Parliament have initiated the wider use of e-democracy tools.

- A new start is needed, linking the development of electronic tools and the state of the digital commons to the wider debate on the future of Europe and the reform of the institutions. Before the end of 2002, the Commission will report on progress after the launch of its Governance White Paper in July 2001, and will draw conclusions for further work. This assessment should include concrete proposals on how ICT can be used to encourage public participation, and how it can be better implemented by the EU institutions.

- In this paper, twenty such proposals are presented. They include new and reinforced methods for electronic consultations, better links to real decision-making, promoting transparency and broad participation, and a

pilot project in the next elections to the European Parliament. A democracy and participation target should be included in the revised structural funds, and the current e-Content and Media plus programmes should devote more resources to tools for deliberative democracy.

- Access for all is a crucial factor if the democratic potential of digital technologies is to be leveraged. Presently, household access to the internet ranges from 65% in the Netherlands to less than 10% in Greece. Member states should increase their efforts to reach the goals set in the e-Europe programme, aiming at an information society for all. The trend towards closed digital networks should be countered by support for digital commons and an international agreement on governance of the internet. Public service media should be promoted at both national and European level.

- European policy-making is facing a new, multimedia environment. Successful political arenas are open for all and have a wide participation. Left to the market, a true digital commons will not appear. A political strategy is urgently needed to make these new technologies contribute to a more democratic Europe.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Debates on the future of Europe have focused on formal institutions and procedures: constitutions, competences and the like. These are evidently important issues in connecting Europe's citizens with their institutions. But there is a further question that needs to be asked: How can citizens play a more active part in the European policy-making process?

If citizens are to feel that they really belong to the European Union, and can influence decisions made in Brussels, there has to be a European public debate. Without open and common political arenas, confidence in European institutions will remain low no matter how they are designed. Debate has to reach out beyond the usual suspects: today, pan-European political debates are mainly conducted by a jet-set of specialists in the European institutions.

Traditional political arenas such as parliaments, party organisations, social movements and public meetings remain important. But more interest needs to be attached to the question of how to design the new digital forums for political debate and decision-making. This is not because they are a once-and-for-all solution to the current democratic deficit in Europe. It is because information and communication technologies (ICT), in varying shapes, are already beginning to play crucial roles in the political process at national and local levels. Newspapers, institutes and lobby groups already publish electronic surveys and organise campaigns over the internet.

What is lacking is a long-term commitment from European decision-makers to let their citizens and organisations have their voices heard in this new political environment. The purpose of this paper is to explore how political decisions and processes in the European Union can make the most of the democratic potential of new technologies.

Information and communication technologies can offer real democratic benefits. This paper follows other studies (such as *Bowling Together: Online Public Engagement* by Stephen Coleman and John Goetze) in making a distinction between direct democracy, or gauging public opinion, on the one hand, and online public engagement in policy formation on the other. While it is undeniable that ICT offers tools for measuring public opinion through electronic polls or voting which can be very useful in EU policy-making, this paper focuses instead on the second aspect. It asks how ICTs can be used to increase the quality and quantity of public participation in the European Union's policy-making process.

Rebooting Europe

At European level, the European Commission has taken some important initiatives, for example through electronic consultations on new proposals. Members of the European Parliament have initiated a resolution on the wider use of e-democracy tools. That said, strategies to date at European level have been uncoordinated and piecemeal.

A new start is needed, linking the development of electronic tools and the state of the digital commons to the wider debate on the future of Europe and the reform of the institutions. Before the end of 2002, the Commission will report on progress after the launch of its White Paper on Governance in July 2001, and will draw conclusions for further work. This assessment should include concrete proposals on how ICT can be used to encourage public participation, and how it can be better implemented by the EU institutions. The on-going reform of the working methods of the Council should also put greater emphasis on the use of ICT tools for bringing citizens closer to the EU decision-making process.

Successful political arenas often have some characteristics in common. They are transparent and open for all. They have a wide participation and are not only a discussion among the political elite. They are often built on public ownership, and are independent from market forces. These factors are also important for the new digital environment of politics. Left to the market alone, these political spaces could become inaccessible to many.

The issue of connectedness is important. Today, many citizens do not have access to the internet or other digital resources. However, this imbalance does not imply that we should not try to use ICT to improve public participation, even if we are currently far from a situation where every citizen can use the internet to communicate with decision-makers and institutions.

Achieving access for all is also a matter of preserving and developing the 'digital commons'. It is important to deal with the possible evolution of the internet from a network open to all to a series of more closed spaces. If this tendency continues, then most of the possibilities for e-democracy will not be realised, since citizens would not be part of the same communication networks. Such a development would also bring commercial control over electronic public debate, potentially reducing opportunities for 'democratic' participation to simplified voting on simplified issues, such as soap operas or 'most charming politician'.

Technological development brings convergence between today's electronic networks and the media. Interactive television could influence politics by surveys of public opinion, campaigning and online dialogue – in a similar way that today's internet can be used, but with clearer ownership of the channels. Broadband internet will be hard to distinguish from Television on Demand.

There is a choice to be made. One scenario is open dialogue in electronic commons similar to ancient Greek Agoras, open places in the middle of the cities where citizens could participate in decisions. Another option is a division of citizens in privately-owned networks where entertainment and intrigue are the main elements of politics and whereby ICT becomes an elite tool to influence Europe. We should make this choice in an informed democratic way. Otherwise the decision will be made without us.

Rebooting Europe

SECTION TWO: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

The European Union is often criticised for its democratic deficit. It is argued that citizens do not feel they can influence European decisions, and that there is no clear way of making decision-makers directly responsible for their actions.

E-democracy is not an all-encompassing solution for such a lack of trust in the European institutions. The reasons for the current problems go deeper. Yet ICT tools offer real possibilities for improving democracy and public participation in the EU.

Much has been written on democracy and ICT technologies, and there are a number of local and national examples, some successful, some not. They include many interesting ideas and projects, but vary in quality and results (see Appendix One for a brief overview). Based on existing examples, Jay G. Blumler and Stephen Coleman identify seven major benefits of online civic engagement in their important study *Realising Democracy Online: A Civic Commons in Cyberspace.*

1. Transcending time: participants can discuss over any time-frame in an asynchronous fashion.
2. Transcending place: participation can be open to all, regardless of geographical spread.
3. Making connections: groups meet online that would otherwise probably not have made contact.
4. Language: online discussion tends to be closer to the language of ordinary people.
5. Community-building: online civic engagement tends often to develop into a broader network.
6. Recruitment of experience and expertise: people with specific competences can inform policy decisions.
7. Learning to deliberate: participants can encounter new ideas and new ways of thinking.

Blumler and Coleman point to a number of risks, such as political control, vague objectives, bogus democracy, lack of informed inputs and fragmentary marginalisation. These risks are also apparent from the examples detailed in Appendix One.

The European arena is different from local and national policy-making in a number of ways:

- Issues are complex, and often bureaucratic in nature.
- The European dimension is little understood: the barriers of understanding among a sceptical electorate must be overcome.
- Different languages complicate online dialogue and necessitate some kind of translation in order to achieve a debate that genuinely crosses frontiers.
- Elites come into debates with enormous advantages: there is a risk of a technocratic or eurocratic elite dominating discussions in new electronic arenas.

Still, given the considerable need for an improved link between European citizens and policy-making, more effort should be made to exploit the potential of online civic engagement.

It is necessary to link such initiatives to real institutions both in the EU and nationally, and avoid creating new arenas separate from the places where decisions are made. Too often, efforts to improve online consultations have failed because they have not been sufficiently linked to existing political decision-making. Before we take a look at possible new EU initiatives for online civic engagement, we need to assess existing measures.

Learning from past EU initiatives

There has been no shortage of will from the Commission to develop inclusive forums in which citizens can feed directly into the process of European policy formulation. Recently, such efforts have materialised in the form of the Interactive Policy Making initiative (IPM), with the aim of making wider use of digital technologies (the 'e-Commission'). The IPM web service *Your voice in Europe*[i] is a significant example of a website for European dialogue on policy issues, since it is directly linked to the development of new proposals. *Your Voice* includes discussion forums, chats with Commissioners, the possibility to comment on new policy initiatives, and links to other debates. It is available through the Europa portal[ii], which brings together all the EU institutions.

But in practice, progress has been slow. In October 2002, only five specific discussion forums were active on *Your Voice*. Among hundreds of proposals being prepared by the Commission, eight were open for comment, most of them in the area of enterprise policy.

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[i] http://www.europa.eu.int/yourvoice
[ii] http://www.europa.eu.int

Previously, the Commission has launched electronic consultations on issues such as biotechnology, telecommunications and regional policy. These have resulted in many substantial proposals. However, relatively few contributions came from ordinary citizens or local non-governmental organisations, compared to the large number of views from industry. "Open and better consultation", in particular through the internet, is a key element of the recent *Modernisation plan for clearer and better European legislation*, adopted in June 2002. The report proposes to increase the degree of consultation with stakeholders and sets minimum standards for the Commission services.

Every Directorate-General (DG) of the Commission now manages at least one website. The Commission's ambition is to develop its europa.eu.int portal into a highly interactive space, including content from different DGs, and also allowing for the delivery of personalised content. The e-Europe portal of DG Information Society is the first in a series of new thematic portals. The new public-services.eu web portal aims at providing information and services to assist Europe's citizens and enterprises to carry out cross-border activities. It also contains links to interactive discussion sites such as *Your Voice*. Some Commissioners ask for comments on their policies via personal websites. Margot Wallström, responsible for environmental issues, has launched an ambitious dialogue with schools on future EU policy.

Another example of EU-wide consultations is the *Futurum* website. It aims to be a gateway for information on the Future of Europe. The initiative was launched at the Nice Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in December 2000. It forms part of a process of discussion and exchange of ideas which will contribute to the preparation of a further IGC planned for 2004. There are discussion forums online, and the website also gathers and publishes contributions to the discussion from other sources. EU politicians make regular interventions and participate in chat sessions. The *Futurum* site includes links to national governments, non-governmental organisations, universities and think-tanks expressing views on the upcoming revision of the Treaties. *Futurum* has attracted many contributions on a wide range of issues.

The Convention on the Future of Europe has established a forum where organisations can participate in the debate[iii]. The forum is made up of European and national organisations which have sent in a substantive contribution for the attention of members of the Convention, putting across their point of view and their ideas on questions relating to the future of the European Union.

[iii] http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/forum_convention

Several caveats have emerged as these initiatives have developed.

First, the intensity of the discussion varies between sites. On the Commission discussion site on bank charges, for example, only five comments were made during one month. The *Futurum* site, on the other hand, has had thousands of comments.

Second, the discussion tends to be dominated by an exclusive group of people. Interventions on the *Futurum* website, for example, do not seem to represent the population in general, given that they demand detailed knowledge of EU treaties and often make references to political science textbooks.

Third, there has often been a lack of engagement from policy-makers, leaving people feeling that they are shooting their comments into a vacuum. In one recent comment on the *Futurum* website, a Greek visitor wrote under the heading "The citizens are here. Where are the representatives?":

> *"For the last several months now, a number of debates have been posted. Even though citizen participation is very limited (in terms of different people and not just contributions) the fact remains that the citizen, at least, has made some effort to answer the debate call.*
>
> *It is rather striking how little reaction and direct feedback has been given by the so-called representatives in the European Parliament.*
>
> *To those ladies and gentlemen I ask this: You have asked for a debate on the future of Europe You have restricted it to organised groups and avoided direct citizen input. You have provided this website for citizen debate.*
>
> *Don't you think that you ought to participate in this debate?"*

Fourth, the nature of the forum can lead to an imbalanced set of views being put forward. Especially in Commission-led discussions, economic interest groups have tended to dominate over citizens and NGOs. This is particularly acute on issues such as telecommunications or the waste disposal of electric equipment. Industry views are an important part of decision-making, but measures are needed to encourage contributions from other groups affected by policy proposals. There is also a need to check for misleading lobby campaigns via the internet, where an interest group or company uses different senders to give an impression of a stronger opinion on a policy issue.

Sometimes this industry dominance is even made an active priority: the Interactive Policy Making initiative is focused directly on private sector initiatives. The aim is "to improve governance by using the internet for collecting and analysing reactions in the marketplace for use in the European Union's policy-making process".

Finally, there is often no clear link between online consultation and off-line involvement. There is a danger that e-debates become balkanised in electronic territory. In fact, these consultation mechanisms are no substitute for other forms of consultation and debate, rather, they complement them.

Making better links to real decision-making

In order for online discussions to be taken seriously, participants need to see a direct link to the forums where decisions are made.

Your Voice should be developed further, and electronic consultations be made standard practice for all Commission DGs. New proposals should come with a summary of the results of these consultations. In doing this, the Commission should co-ordinate with efforts at member state level to make sure that the new norms developing in this field are taken into consideration. Participants should also be free to propose new initiatives, and not be limited to reacting to existing legislative projects.

A cultural shift needs to be fostered towards viewing these contributions as an asset in the development of policies. Citizens are often experts in some way, either due to their professional background, their experiences or simply due to being 'users' of policy proposals. For a civil servant drowned in papers from colleagues and lobby groups, that might not always be so easy to appreciate. It is worth investing extra resources to develop more effective mechanisms for participation.

There must be feedback links between participants and policy-makers. Policy-makers should be encouraged to take part in discussion forums they have initiated, not only in question and answer sessions, but with regular interventions in on-going discussions as well. Such commitment could increase participation significantly. Good moderators of the discussion can play an important role in doing this, especially if they are felt to be reasonably independent from the decision-makers concerned.

New initiatives are to a large extent shaped in Commission expert groups. This existing structure would benefit from additional, electronic dialogue. When these groups meet to discuss strategy, policy initiatives or implementation, many of the documents and proceedings can be published

on the web. The general public and interest groups not participating in the expert group can then comment, and these comments can be used as part of the background for the next expert meeting. This would provide a clearer link between experts and citizens, and possibly valuable contributions to the new proposals. On implementation of environmental legislation, for example, it would stimulate a discussion based both on the views of implementing agencies in the member states and on those of the citizens concerned.

Even if much remains to be done, the European Commission has come further than the Council of Ministers in fostering new methods for participation. Clearly, the circumstances are somewhat different, since national governments are the key players in the Council. Still, there is scope for more transparency and a clearer link to national discussions in the deliberations of ministers meeting in the Justus Lipsius building. The Council secretariat should make proposals to this end in the on-going reform of the Council working methods.

Electronic discussions could be made more visible in the run-up to Council decisions. Often, contributions are available on the website only, as full-text documents are often difficult to read. Why not produce summaries of the debates as a part of the information to national parliaments and the media before Council debates, with links to the full debate? The difficult task of summarising can be given to independent moderators or a group of participants in the discussion.

Similar initiatives have been successful in the past. The consultation before the launch of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme was presented on the DG Environment website, with exactly this kind of short summary of comments received, both electronically and by usual consultation procedures. Such summaries can also be used as one part of the background material for open debates in the Council on new legislative proposals. Another part of the background could be an overview of the national debates on the issue to be discussed, published on the Council website.

A start for such efforts could be pilot projects on high-profile political discussions, including meetings of the European Council. This could have been done, for example, before the Laeken Summit, using the contributions on the *Futurum* website to produce a more visible summary of citizens' comments. Even if the people making comments on the *Futurum* site do not represent the citizens in general, it would give direct incentives for participating online and bring another perspective to the public debate before the summits.

A specific theme could be chosen to underpin a coherent effort by all the institutions to use ICT for public participation. One possibility would be the Spring European Councils, where employment, the economy and social policies are discussed. These are issues of considerable importance to citizens and the EU has already set targets on these as part of the so-called Lisbon process. All relevant EU institutions could use a single site to provide user-friendly information on progress and for the participation of citizens and NGOs. Member states could do the same with their national reports on progress made, perhaps publishing the scoreboards that are produced as part of the process. As the information society is one of the themes for these Spring summits, there would also be a clear link to technology policy issues, such as the open networks and access for all which will be discussed later.

The European Parliament already plays a decisive role in opening the EU legislative process to public scrutiny. Open committee meetings, public hearings and contacts with national members of parliament are important factors in EP decision-making. In a proposal for an EP resolution, Marco Cappato and 56 other parliamentarians launched three initiatives on e-democracy:

1. Broadcast all public meetings of the Union's institutions and file them in archives on the internet. Change the treaties so that every citizen has access to their rights of European citizenship through the internet.
2. Put European Parliament meetings online, as well as activities by individual members such as the tabling of documents.
3. Launch a campaign for an e-election to the European Parliament in 2004.

MEPs can also be encouraged to set up consultations on EU policies in their constituencies, as proposed by Agnès Hubert and Bénédicte Caremier in *Democracy and the Information Society in Europe*.

Broadening participation

To avoid online forums being dominated by a cyber-elite, the Commission and national governments must work together with organisations, schools and the media and reach a wider group of people in an EU-wide debate on policy issues. The Tampere-based project *Mansefoorumi* combines contributions from citizens with interviews and articles written by journalists on relevant themes. In Sweden, more than 90,000 school pupils showed their preferences for political parties through an electronic referendum, *Ungt Val* (Young elections)[iv]. The project was a co-operation between schools, civil society, all political parties and the largest Swedish daily newspaper

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[iv] http://www.ungtval.nu

Aftonbladet. It included discussion sites around ten themes chosen by the pupils, meetings with politicians, and a number of other activities.

Many citizens use the internet in their daily work and studies and see it as a natural tool. For younger people, the internet also forms part of their social lives. Participation in policy discussions can increase through co-operation with such 'attention gateways', by creating deliberative forums within existing popular sites. The EU institutions should also co-operate with local, regional and national e-democracy initiatives.

The EU institutions have an important role to play in supporting NGOs that may not by themselves be strong enough to get their voices heard in the multimedia society. Such support should involve financial incentives, especially as a larger part of pre-accession support for the candidate countries. There should also be a specific programme within the revised structural funds. But support can also take the shape of opening arenas for smaller NGOs to participate. The Futurum site gives the possibility for everybody to comment on the future of Europe. But the EU institutions could help NGOs from smaller countries participate more efficiently, for example by providing translation services.

The Commission simplifies contacts with and between NGOs through the directory CONECCS (Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society). The Commission could also include fact sheets on consultations with NGOs on all the relevant DGs' home pages, giving links to organisations that have given comments in the development of a new proposal. CONECCS was supposed to include a list of consultative bodies, but that part of the directory did not work in May 2002. The Commission offices in the member states could facilitate participation by NGOs that do not have a strong representation in Brussels, acting as a fast-track point of entry to the specific DG developing a proposal.

The Commission is already supporting the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe[v], which is connecting environmental NGOs in the candidate countries and other parts of Eastern Europe.

Digital contact should not replace meetings between social movements and decision-makers in the EU. On the contrary, both elements should be intensified. They can be used together, for example in the preparation of European Councils.

In preparing the Spring Summits, the social partners, the Commission and the EU Presidency could engage in an online dialogue on the evaluation of

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[v] http://www.rec.org

policies and development of new proposals. Doing this in a transparent fashion would make this part of the dialogue open and understandable to all. Thereafter, meetings with the social partners prior to a Summit could concentrate on the most salient issues, and also attract more attention from the general public. On the day before a Summit, open debates could be arranged between the European political parties, taking the social dialogue as well as other opinions on the web as a starting point. The same methods could be used in other areas of political decision-making.

Wider participation requires that ICT tools are available for all, and that the electronic arenas work as digital commons. These issues are discussed in Section Three of this paper.

Developing methods for electronic deliberation further

Existing tools for electronic consultations must be improved. Some methods that have been effective at local and regional levels should be tried more widely at the European level.

The possibility of developing electronic surveys as an input to EU policies should be explored. The internet makes it possible for the public to express immediate opinions. Electronic referendums as a way of direct EU democracy are a distant prospect, and are problematic both in theory and in practice. Policy driven by frequent referendums faces many problems, particularly in reference to the coherence between policy areas and to respecting long-term international commitments. It is also difficult to formulate the right questions and to respect the rights of minorities. In the EU, it also raises issues such as the balance between small and large EU countries.

However, electronic surveys, linked to more deliberative methods, can play an important role in the decision-making process. One useful method could be to get citizens' opinions on the most pressing areas for EU action when the Commission is preparing the annual work programme (or in the future when, as many are proposing, the European Council is discussing a yearly programme for the Union). Home PCs, schools, public libraries and other official institutions in member states could be used as 'polling stations'. Responses are necessarily biased by the selection of visitors to websites, and their motivation to answer questions on the net. The key condition for using surveys is to make participation possible and attractive for all citizens, whether they have their own internet access or not.

Another way of collecting views and encouraging dialogue is to use citizen panels, where a group of people is chosen and asked for their opinions on policies under development. The method is not new, but ICT makes it easier

and faster to use such panels on an EU-wide scale. For example, in the development of work programmes, citizen panels with participants from all member states can discuss new proposals for EU action. Participants can react to each other and provide feedback to the responsible institution in a way that is not possible through traditional opinion surveys.

The European Union has a specific task in encouraging cross-border debates, not only across the whole Union, but also across regions. A large number of information society projects have been promoted through the structural funds. For example, 28 regions participated in the Regional Information Society Initiatives, RISI[vi]. The European Regional Information Society Association, eris@, has received financial support from the Commission. But few of the projects have public participation in policy-making as their purpose. For many cross-border regions, however, such democracy projects can be important. One example is the Baltic Sea, where the development of an action plan for sustainable development took place largely on a common website (Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea). The regional funds could be used to promote such web-based cross-border debates on common areas of interest.

The Commission could also take more steps to facilitate exchanges of best practice between member states. The on-going best-practice exercise on e-government mainly considers the public services offered by national authorities. In the future, it should place more focus on initiatives to encourage deliberative democracy. A report for the Commission on e-government recently examined 7,400 public websites. The purpose was to survey the availability of public services on the web. A similar exercise could be performed to investigate the use of electronic tools in democratic governance, and also in order to disseminate useful experiences by non-governmental in using deliberative democracy using ICT.

Using existing programmes and initiatives

Many of the proposals in this paper would require additional resources. At present, substantial amounts are devoted to policy instruments such as the structural funds for regional development and the (albeit smaller) audio-visual programmes. The e-Europe initiative aims to build an information society for all. Measures to encourage deliberative democracy can be built more effectively into these policies.

One way of finding the money for a concerted effort to create digital public arenas is to include a democracy and participation target in the revised structural funds. As pointed out by Swedish professor Daniel Tarschys,

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[vi] http://www.europa.eu.int/ispo/risi

cohesion is not only about physical infrastructure. In today's society, it is about common values and political spaces where people from different backgrounds and regions can meet. In his paper, 'Promoting Cohesion: The Role of the European Union', Tarschys argues that making investments in a European public space should be part of cohesion policy. He proposes EU support for common European TV channels, supplementing the present Euronews, and for translation services, among other things.

In addition to a revised approach to cohesion, support for deliberative democracy should play a more important role in the Union's programmes for culture, media and the information society. The current e-Content and Media plus programmes should be expanded and better co-ordinated to include more money for digital content and open networks, with the aim of encouraging European debate and public participation in decision-making.

To start with, this can be done as pilot programmes using existing funds. For example, the website euractiv.com, which provides European news and links to civil society and think-tanks, is supported by the e-Content programme. Other initiatives, such as OpenDemocracy.net and www.network-europe.net are making important contributions to a European political debate, and could pave the way for a much wider range of public forums.

Another important task is connecting European and national politics. Each member state should make efforts to stimulate public participation by using new technologies. Targets for deliberative democracy could be included in the revised e-Europe initiative, along with the targets already set in earlier versions of the e-Government programme. The new e-Europe 2005 document does not go far enough in this direction. Indicators could, for example, include the number of government proposals whose preparations have involved online consultations, and the number of people participating in debates on European policy on official websites. The Commission could, together with Member States, encourage links between national and European websites on different policy subjects, following the model already used for the Future of Europe debate.

Paying attention to the genuine problems of transparency within European structures

Measures should also be taken to reduce the barrier of incomprehension that prevents many people from getting involved in European debates.

Currently, decision-making in the EU is opaque. To a certain extent this is built into the treaties themselves. The co-decision principle of the first pillar, for example, is not easy for ordinary citizens to understand and follow. But there is also a lack of transparency in the day-to-day work of the institutions,

not helped by the limited resources devoted to making policies easy to follow and understand.

For citizens to be able to influence decisions, access to information is a prerequisite. However, this is more than just access to documents. Much remains to be done to make transparency a basic principle of EU working methods. In an effort to attain this, ICT can make it easier for citizens to access information.

The websites of the different EU institutions vary in terms of the amount of information provided, and in how user-friendly they are. Joint action should be taken to increase transparency from a user-oriented perspective. In a governance report due this autumn, the Commission should support this.

It could be based on a panel of citizens from different member states, and use their comments the need to improve openness and make the present sites more accessible. Similar exercises could be conducted with national parliamentarians and with journalists. A benchmarking study of member states and EU institutions would serve as another element in improving transparency.

The provisions in the Amsterdam Treaty on access to EU documents have been put into practice through the new regulation 1049/2001, which entered into force on the 3rd December 2001. The regulation makes documents available to the public with some specified exemptions, and stipulates how citizens can get quick and cheap access to them.

But it is still difficult to access documents in time for citizens and organisations to have a real influence on decision-making. Citizens' rights to follow decision-making should be stated more clearly, and their access to information expanded.

The Council decision on making certain categories of Council documents available to the public (2001/320/EC) calls for as many documents as possible to be made available via the internet. This includes reports on the state of discussions in the Council or its preparatory bodies (with the exception of individual member states' positions). It has already resulted in improvement in the transparency of the Council, but more can be done to increase openness. All agendas for working party meetings should, for example, be published on the web.

The EU Summit in Seville in June 2002 decided to open legislative debates in the Council to the public in the first and last phase of negotiations. So far, there is no requirement to make the debates available on the internet, only at the Council building. It would not be too difficult to broadcast the discussions

on the web. Archives with audio-visual information on Council and Parliament meetings should be initiated and easily accessible to citizens. As Marco Cappato MEP put it in a recent resolution, "access to raw material is a prerequisite for democracy".

Taking advantage of set-piece opportunities for debate, notably the 2004 European election

The direct election of representatives to assemblies is a fundamental component of the national concept of democracy. In the European Union, given its current form, power is not exerted by directly elected representatives of the people. The exception is the European Parliament and its powers of co-decision, including internal market legislation and the EU budget.

The elections to the European Parliament are one of the few occasions on which a European-wide political debate occurs. Even though participation in the elections is low - and decreasing - in many member states, elections still provide an opportunity to encourage discussions on the priorities of the Union.

In the next elections to the European Parliament, a pilot project could give the possibility of voting on the internet in one region per country. Each member state could chose a region with 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants for the project, and the EU would then list them as 'internet-voting regions'. Of course, voters would also have the right to use conventional voting methods.

Such projects build on rather extensive national experience. As pointed out by Marco Cappato MEP, there have been pilot projects in France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands. In Belgium, e-voting involved 49% of the population in the 1999 elections, while in the Netherlands, the government has set aside funds for voting via the internet in the 2006 general elections.

The EU and the member states could share the costs of promoting technology, public access points and open debate on the web in election campaigns. It would give European political parties the possibility to present both their pan-European and their national candidates on the internet. It could also provide citizens with a broader possibility for influencing candidates, if there were discussion forums linked to the election sites. Such a project would supplement existing election procedures, not replace them. It would give valuable experience in using e-democracy tools in a European context, and could also promote debates across borders.

Allowing criticism as well as praise

Implementation of policies is another important area. One possible reform is to allow citizens to express their formal opinions on the actions of national governments and EU institutions in the implementation of EU policies. These comments should be easily accessible by others, and used as a tool to improve the service to the citizens.

The current *Your Voice* website offers information on complaint procedures, but does not invite other comments or proposals for improvements in the daily work of the institutions or the implementation of EU policies by governments. On the other hand, *Europe Direct* offers any citizen in Europe the opportunity to call or e-mail the Commission with questions about Europe. However, these questions and comments are not integrated sufficiently into deliberations on new proposals from the Commission.

One example on the national level, highlighted in the e-government exercise, is the Central Complaint Management in Vienna[vii]. Citizens can send complaints and other comments by email. A well-managed similar system for EU institutions, where citizens receive feedback and the comments are used for real improvements, could have positive effects. The EU Ombudsman[viii] offers an electronic form for complaints about mal-administration on its website, but, unlike the city of Vienna, does not allow the possibility to propose improvements. The revised Europa website could include forms where user could suggest improvements to the working methods of the institutions. One result of the governance exercise could be to devote resources to follow-up and feedback on such suggestions.

[vii] http://www.magwien.gv.at
[viii] http://www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int

SECTION THREE: THE DANGERS

DIGITAL DIVIDE OR ACCESS FOR ALL?

The new technologies are not used by everybody. There is a clear digital divide between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in the information society.

A key objective for the e-Europe initiative, adopted in Lisbon in March 2000, is to bring every citizen into the 'digital age' and online. But access to the internet is fragmented across member states and different parts of the population. In June 2002, the number of households connected to the internet ranged from 65% in the Netherlands to less than 10% in Greece. Even if some use the internet in places other than their home, only half the EU population was using the net. Furthermore, the growth in internet usage seems to be slowing down from earlier years. On average, Central and Eastern Europe lags behind Western Europe in internet access and usage (even if there are exceptions, such as Estonia).

There are other differences as well: 40% of women in the EU use the internet, in comparison to 56% of men. internet usage is particularly high amongst young people, those with higher education and those living in cities.

These differences are a major obstacles to ICT tools for deliberative democracy. If information technology is to be a useful tool for democracy, it has to be available to all - and everybody must have the competence to use it. In the context of this paper, it is necessary to sketch some of the important ways of achieving this.

Education about ICTs

The e-Europe initiative correctly identifies education as a crucial factor. Better use of ICT in schools, and lifelong learning, does not only place citizens in a better position on the labour market. It is also a prerequisite for using ICTs for democratic purposes. Education mainly falls under the competence of member states. So far, ambitions and achievements differ, and more effort is needed.

For example, connecting all schools to the internet by the end of 2001 was one of the first e-Europe targets. In March 2002, the target had almost been reached. 93% of EU schools were online. However, that did not mean that all students had access to the internet in their daily learning. On average, there were 17 pupils per PC connected to the internet. In Greece, the figure was 40 pupils per connected PC, in Denmark only 4 pupils. "Efficient usage in schools is still at the beginning", the Commission wrote in its progress report

on e-Europe. "Member States need to upgrade internet connection to broadband, increase the number of internet connected computers available to pupils, and place greater emphasis on the internet for educational purposes."

Leaving too much in the hands of the market

One of the problems is that policymakers have largely left it to the market to ensure internet access for all. However, this has failed to deliver. Broadband and mobile internet are even further from becoming an everyday tool for the ordinary citizen. There is a need for a stronger political commitment to ensure access for all. Member states must do more to meet the targets set by the e-Europe programme.

Universal access is the subject of a recently revised EC directive. Member states are obliged to ensure that citizens have access to basic telecom services. But broadband services are not covered, and it is still unclear who will pay the bill. A revision of the directive on universal access should include broadband and mobile communication, and place more responsibility on the operators, even though they are presently facing economic difficulties. At the same time member states should themselves take more responsibility for building the digital networks, such as broadband, where the market does not create enough incentives. Such investment in the 'digital motorways' should take place both on a national level and as a part of trans-European networks.

Governments also have an important role to play in promoting the use of new technologies, such as broadband, for example by using applications in education and health systems. Border regions and trans-European co-operation should be supported in parallel to the trans-European networks for railways and roads. Joint European initiatives, such as the present e-TEN programme, should be expanded and given more resources.

Excluded groups

Particular measures must be taken for specific groups such as disabled people. It is also important to use a gender perspective, and avoid the prospect of new technology creating obstacles to gender equality. Targets and proposed action in these fields are part of the e-Europe initiative. But progress is too slow.

Access for all must include the citizens of the candidate countries. It has been agreed to involve these countries in e-Europe, thereby creating e-Europe Plus 2003. Governments in the candidate countries should not only adopt legislation to create a deregulated EU market, but also encompass the social aims of e-Europe. In a recent study by the Centre for Democracy and

Technology, it was suggested that telecoms policy in most of Central and Eastern Europe is focused on privatisation and competition, due to the influence of the EU, and concludes that countries seeking accession to the EU must commit to universal service. This would be expensive, but has to be made a political priority, playing an important part in the revised structural funds.

DIGITAL COMMONS OR PRIVATE NETWORKS?

The internet is changing and this has to be taken into account in a strategy that promotes information technology as a tool for good governance.

Service provision

In Europe, discussion on how the internet will develop is limited (although important contributions have been made by, inter alia, Ingrid Hamm and Marcel Machill of the Bertelsmann Foundation, and the French Conseil d'Etat). On the other side of the Atlantic, the debate is much more intense. Lawrence Lessig, law professor at Stanford, is one of the important thinkers on the future of the internet. He claims (in *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*, Random House 2001) that the internet is changing from an open network to a number of privately-owned networks, with fences around them. The effects are disastrous for creativity and democracy, according to Lessig. People are divided into different segments by cable TV and broadband companies. They do not meet and exchange views in the same forum, the universal internet, as before.

With the development of 'open source' culture, there used to be a culture of openness and sharing of ideas on the internet. Now, extended copyright rules make such an exchange of creativity much more difficult. In an earlier book, *Code and other laws of cyberspace,* Lessig described how computer software and other technological applications for the internet set informal, yet considerable, limits to the degree to which the net can be an open access environment.

Lessig's arguments are also valid for Europe and for the discussion on e-democracy. Many of the arguments regarding the internet and governance start from the assumption that the net is open for all. But what if Lessig is right and the digital commons are being replaced by private networks with different sets of rules than the early, "democratic", internet? If all citizens cannot communicate with each other, how can true European political spaces be created in the multimedia age?

One threat is the power of the broadband companies. Cable and digital TV providers, as well as broadband operators, demand protection for their

investments. As many of them also own content such as television programmes and films, they might create obstacles to accessing information from other providers. At the moment a political debate can be put on the web, free for all to download. A public service television programme on the EU can be seen by most television owners in the country concerned. In the future, however, access might be much more limited. The so-called 'carry-all' provisions in national legislations, which demand that operators carry the main terrestrial television channels, will form a battleground between those who protect the digital commons and those who look to the economic interest of the individual operators.

Internet governance

The governance of the internet is an important issue for the preservation of the digital commons. Without such a commons, many of the arguments for e-democracy become much weaker. The rules for the internet are in practice set in the US. For example, the global body for domain names, ICANN, falls under the jurisdiction of Californian courts. The Internet Engineering Task Force, which sets important standards for the net, is also in essence a US body.

European demands for influence on the development of the internet have been relatively unsuccessful so far. This is not surprising: the most important parts of the net are in the US. In *The Internet Galaxy*, Manuel Castells describes the digital geography: the main internet servers and most of the websites are situated in the US.

In 1998, the French Conseil d'Etat proposed an international agreement on the internet. The European Commission attempted to convince the US that rules for the internet should be set in international collaboration. However, the EU had to step back and agree to the domain name system for the internet being subject to American law.

However, although the IT sector has suffered a backlash, digital communications are an important part of the global economy. This makes e-commerce and other internet issues part of the horizontal relationship between the US and the EU, and co-operation is intense. As the Europeans increase their share of internet content, and start developing new markets such as the mobile internet, the balance between the EU and the US will become more even. This should mean that the EU also engages more strongly on issues concerning the governance of the internet.

The current situation, where decisions on the governance of the internet are taken under American law, is not satisfactory. The EU should follow earlier proposals and take the initiative for an international agreement on internet

governance. One important aim should be to preserve the open-for-all principle of the internet, and to develop a charter of citizens' rights on the net, including the possibility to participate in policy-making. The EU should also make the digital commons and access for all a priority in the WTO negotiations on the audio-visual sector.

Multimedia: e-commerce or public service?

The internet and the mass media are rapidly changing and converging as a result of technological development, deregulation and changes in ownership. In the multimedia society, it will be difficult to separate discussion forums on the internet from similar tools on interactive digital TV. The convergence of technologies will mean that media policy will also be important for the deliberative processes discussed in Section Two. One important task is to secure multimedia commons, where everybody can participate.

The number of television and radio channels has increased tremendously during the last two decades. Digital TV and radio will result in even more choices, and convergence with the internet will make broadcasting difficult to distinguish from simply making content accessible on the net. This multitude of alternatives can be a democratic asset, but also raises the question of where citizens can find common sets of references. The dominance of private interest and market-driven journalism can also be negative for an open and democratic debate on policy issues.

The speed in communications and publishing brought about by the ICT revolution also leads to a convergence in frames – that is to say that international news tends to be reported in similar ways in all media. Almost immediate publishing on the internet leads to a "synchronisation of editorial decision-making between news services in different countries", (as formulated by Stig Hjervard at the University of Copenhagen.)

But even if the same international events are reported in different countries, there is often a national connection made in the reporting. The Danish researcher Claes de Vreese says that more issues are European, but that there is also a 'domestication' of European news. Mass media does not yet provide a common European public space, but there is a tendency for the same agenda to be discussed in all European countries.

For specific groups, new media technologies have made it possible to select the content that they find most interesting. One example is how immigrants can watch the news broadcast in their home country through satellite television – or watch dissident stations with a specific message. When something occurs in Turkey, for example, Kurds in all European countries

can have the information quickly and demonstrate a few hours later– even if the issue has not been covered in the other countries' mainstream media.

The internet will make this tendency even clearer and extend it to more groups. To some extent, as with the growth in the number of TV channels, this will imply a defragmentation of public opinion and the destruction of common political spaces. But it also brings the benefits of pluralism. Citizens will develop a good knowledge of world events within their spheres of interest – but with rather convergent pictures of other events, given to them by mainstream media with the same pictures and conclusions.

Media and politics interact. The changing media landscape also changes politics. The effects are different in different time frames. Media coverage often has a large effect on political decisions in shorter time frames. In European politics, this has been the case with issues such as petrol prices and mad cow disease. But long-term projects such as EU enlargement, the euro and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) are driven by many other forces. Here, media coverage tends to affect the timing of decisions and the temporary ups and downs of developments, more than the general trend. But interest groups with long-term strategies try to use the media to make these developments favourable to them.

In many ways, the media have a positive influence on European governance. Decision-makers must justify their decisions. Plans can be revealed and discussed in public. New issues can emerge. Fraud and insufficiencies can be revealed. Trans-national campaigning that engages public opinions in many member states can have a large influence on European decisions. It becomes more difficult for national politicians to make their own 'spin' on EU politics, when so much information is coming from news sources other than the national media.

But the almost immediate news coverage also forces decision-makers to react quickly to problems that might need reflection and critical debate. With so many different media hunting for a reaction to development in the Balkans in all capitals, it becomes very difficult for a national politician to say that he needs more time for reflection.

The shorter time frames might lead to unwise decisions, and to a centralisation of power. In an hour or so, policy can be made on the phone between the most important actors, in order to answer CNN; the BBC, ARD and FR1 in similar ways before their deadlines. This global market for political information has some similarities to the global financial market. Quick policy decisions are sometimes generated in ways similar to quick flows of capital.

Public service radio and television is still a common point of reference for politics and for citizens meeting in a pub or during a coffee break at work. In its best moments, it provides quality programmes giving a deeper understanding of society. But, already challenged by competition cases pending in the European Commission, public service companies face an uphill battle when viewers move to digital technologies on the internet and cable networks.

Thus, to create European political arenas is also to preserve and develop the role of public service broadcasting in the new multimedia environment. There is a need to encourage pan-European public service in the multimedia age.

The experience from earlier initiatives is mixed. A stronger commitment from public service broadcasters is needed to enter into European co-operation in multimedia outlets.

Support for public service content on the internet is an important task for governments and for EU institutions. One step is to develop a European framework for public service in the new environment. It could build on outputs from public service companies in member states, like Euronews, but use new technology to improve links to local content.

Another important step is to state clearly that public service is in the general interest of the EU and allow this to be taken as a basis for competition policy decisions, especially in terms of allowable state aid payments. The protocol on public service in the Amsterdam Treaty could be made a legally binding article in the next Treaty.

SECTION FOUR: TWENTY ACTIONS FOR A MORE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT EUROPEAN UNION

Even though there are already important initiatives to develop websites and other electronic tools to improve European democracy, there is certainly more to be done. As part of the governance exercise, the EU could take a number of new actions. Twenty proposals emerge from Sections Two and Three.

1. Use electronic consultations as a standard measure for new Commission proposals.

2. Make sure policy-makers themselves take part in discussion forums they have initiated, not only in question and answer sessions, but with regular interventions in on-going discussions as well. Use good and reasonably independent moderators to encourage an open and constructive dialogue.

3. Devote additional resources in the EU institutions to the analysis of views from the citizens and to giving feedback.

4. Try out citizen panels in setting priorities for action and preparing new proposals. Work together with non-governmental organisations, schools and the media to reach a wider group of people in consultations.

5. Develop *Your Voice* into a highly visible site, common to the EU institutions, where the public can debate different areas of European policy. Link it to existing initiatives and give incentives for developing it further. Co-operate with other actors, such as electronic newsletters and NGOs' sites.

6. Link electronic consultations close to the actual decision-making process, for example by providing summaries as a part of the information to national parliaments and the media before Council debates, and by linking to the existing working group structure.

7. Use electronic surveys to get citizens' opinions on the most pressing areas for EU actions, when the annual work programme is being prepared.

8. Make the annual Spring Councils the subject of a coherent effort by all the institutions to use ICT for public participation.

9. Promote web-based cross-border debates on common areas of interest, for example through the INTERREG initiative.

10. Commission a study on best practice in the use of electronic tools in democratic governance. Encourage the exchange of best practice through a clearing-house linked to the Commission.

11. Include a democracy and participation target in the revised structural funds.

12. Expand and co-ordinate the current e-Content and Media plus programmes to include more support for digital content and open networks.

13. Include targets for deliberative democracy in the next revision of the e-Europe initiative.

14. Publish more documents, including Council working party agendas, on the web. Broadcast Council and Parliament discussions on the web and make archives with audio-visual information on meetings easily accessible to citizens.

15. Invite citizens to express their opinion on the action by national governments and EU institutions in the implementation of EU policies, and set up a feedback process with sufficient resources, reporting what action has been taken.

16. Set up a pilot project in the next elections to the European Parliament, giving the possibility for voting on the internet in one region per country as a supplement to existing procedures. Include electronic tools for deliberative democracy in the run-up to elections.

17. Devote more political energy, mainly in member states, to implementing the e-Europe proposals on access for all to digital technologies.

18. Take an EU initiative for an international agreement on internet governance. One important aim should be to preserve the open-for-all principle of the internet, and to develop a charter of citizens' rights on the net, including the right to participate in policy-making.

19. Develop a European framework for public service content on the internet and an improved, multimedia Euronews, building on public service companies in member states.

20. Make the protocol on public service in the Amsterdam Treaty a legally binding article in the next treaty.

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City of Kalix: http://www.kalix.se
Minnesota: http://www.e-democracy.org
Eurocities: http://www.eurocities.org

APPENDIX ONE: SOME LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL EXAMPLES

There are quite a few local examples of e-democracy in action in Europe.

In Vienna, a discussion forum for city development and transport has been developed (http://forum.wien.at). The forum includes information on policy developments and possibilities for citizens to debate the issues at stake. It is part of the site http://www.wien.at, which has been labelled one of the best European examples of e-government.

Tampere in Finland has developed an advanced site for democratic deliberation (http://mansefoorumi.uta.fi). It is composed of three parts: Manse Communities for local neighbourhoods, Manse Forum for public debate on policy issues, and Manse Media, which offers news and stories from the Tampere region. The project has also used web-based city planning games to get citizens' views on the way the town should look in the future

Residentie.net aims to be a meeting place for citizens of The Hague. Part of the site is made by the editors, providing news about local developments. Citizens can also take part in discussions and chat with other visitors. The subjects are wide-ranging, giving opportunities for debates on sport as well as on politics. Another example from the Netherlands is the city of Amsterdam.

The Italian municipality of Bologna set up *Iperbole* in 1995 (http://www.comune.bologna.it). The aims are to promote the use of ICT, and use them for a dialogue between the citizens and the administration. The project encourages interactive services and provides electronic information to the general public.

A regional example comes from Denmark where the County of North Jutland used electronic methods to achieve a dialogue among citizens and participants in the run-up to the County elections in November 2001. The project was discussed in focus group meetings with citizens and politicians, placing a particular emphasis on first-time voters. On the site http://www.nordpol.dk, a number of methods were used, including: a forum for debates; a chat room; a quiz with prizes to win; a page with information on the elections and the public sector; news sites; and candidate presentations. During the two-month period of the project, the site had 23,000 visitors and 440 contributions to the debate.

In Sweden, the cities of Bollnäs, Kalix, and Nyköping are at the forefront. An instructive example of how electronics and democracy interact comes from the Swedish city of Kalix.

A consultation on the tax level was organised in October 2001. The city council wanted to build a debate among citizens about how council taxes are used. In Sweden council taxes are used to fund all social costs within the council region e.g. schools, elderly care etc.

All eligible voters received, by post, a personal code word with which they could vote via the internet. Voting by post was also allowed. For people who did not have computer or internet access the city supplied computers with internet connections at libraries, village centres and at the council chambers. There was also a telephone support system for people that had system difficulties or operational questions.

Activities associated with the referendum included the publishing of a special info magazine, which was delivered to every household in Kalix and a traditional debate open for all citizens with all political parties was held at the town community centre. During the debate the floor was open for questions from all comers. Visitors could come and ask questions directly to the economy chief of the City Council, politicians, and council department chiefs in a more private and relaxed atmosphere than that of an open debate.

Voting participation was way over expectation. 7,199, or 51 percent of 14,150 eligible voters participated - more than voted in the European Union membership referendum of 1999. 58 percent wished to maintain the present taxation level in Kalix. 29 percent wished to reduce taxation in Kalix and 13 percent wished to increase taxation. Total eligible votes on this single subject was 7,146.

If there should be a budget surplus then 63 percent want the council to increase spending on present operations. The most important area to increase spending in according to referendum participants was Elderly care, Primary school education and Commerce development.

Four key guidance points for electronic debates are highlighted by the success of the Kalix example in raising interest, and having citizens develop a relatively sophisticated response to their debates:

1. the link to the current debate in city policies.
2. the dual approach to use both the internet and traditional means of political discussion.

3. The availability of different ways of participating – from a computer at home, from places with many visitors such as public libraries, and by regular mail.
4. Local politicians also supported the project and were sensitive to the results.

One national example in the European Union is the *Uspeak* initiative of the UK Parliament (http://www.uspeak.org.uk). Citizens were invited to make contributions on welfare and work, as an input to the Parliament's Social Security Select Committee. The initiative was managed by the Hansard Society, Its e-democracy programme has also been running other online consultations for the Parliament (http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk).

Another example is the *TOM* site of the Estonian government (http://tom.riik.ee). *TOM* is an abbreviation for *Today I Decide* in Estonian. The project, launched in June 2001, aims to enhance citizens' participation in the public decision-making process. Citizens can make comments on policy in general and on new proposals, as well as participate in discussions. They can also send letters by regular mail, if they do not have access to the internet or do not want to use electronic communication. Proposals for legislation can be submitted by citizens, and after an electronic debate, a vote is taken. Proposals receiving more than 50% of the voters must be considered by government departments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE WAY AHEAD

The 'Next Generation Democracy' project explores the theme of legitimacy in an enlarging Europe, organised around five themes: Matching Policies to Public Priorities, Accountability, Political Competition, Participation and Representation. *Rebooting Europe* is the first output in the Participation theme.

The initial output of each theme will be a policy brief, which will aim to direct the thoughts of the next generation of policymakers towards solving key problems thrown up by debates about democracy, legitimacy and accountability in Europe. Policy briefs will engage key stakeholders throughout Europe, who may be from the political, academic, public, private or voluntary sectors, at local and national level.

Each publication will be published on the www.network-europe.net, which will be publicly available, and which aims to bring together these ideas and responses to them.

The policy briefs will be collected together, along with the best of the contributions from the online 'workshops' in a publication, entitled 'Next Generation Democracy: Legitimacy in Network Europe.' This will be launched at the end of the project in spring 2003. The issues will also be discussed at Next Generation Europe, the first in a series of yearly conferences bringing together the successor generation from across Europe, which will take place in Taormina in November 2002.

We are looking to publish responses to this series on our website, www.network-europe.net. If you would like to make a response, please contact networkeurope@fpc.org.uk.

PREVIOUS POLICY BRIEFS IN THE 'NEXT GENERATION DEMOCRACY' SERIES

Can Brussels Earn the Right to Act?

By Mark Leonard and Jonathan White

Many argue that the problem of the European institutions is not that they are unelected and remote. Leonard and White take a different view: the problem is a delivery deficit. EU institutions must earn their powers by proving their ability to execute them effectively. Ultimately this is the only EU that can count on the sympathy of its citizens.

"Provides interesting ideas for my work at the Convention." *Gisela Stuart MP.*

Linking National Politics to Europe

By Simon Hix, March 2002

The European institutions are increasingly disconnected from the citizens they are meant to serve. Part of this results from the divorce between national politics, which tend to be the focus of popular and media attention, and European policies. In this policy brief, Hix explores how the election of the Commission President by national MPs could rectify this.

"Very interesting document", *Ana Palacio, Foreign Minister, Spain*

The Convention may choose not to endorse [Hix'] ideas, but it should at least give them serious consideration." *European Voice*

Next Generation Democracy: Legitimacy in Network Europe

By Mark Leonard and Tom Arbuthnott, November 2001

The framework document for the *Next Generation Democracy* programme.

"A most important policy brief… It is good to see new and clear thinking on the future of the EU." *Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne MEP*

"It certainly is an intriguing project, which I shall follow with interest." *Sir John Kerr, Secretary General, The European Convention.*