

Beat: Politics

## Future of Europe debate: Pan-European Dialogue in Brussels

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**USPA NEWS** - Future of Europe debate: Pan-European Dialogue in Brussels brings together citizens from all EU countries. The Commission will also publish a report on the experiences from the over 50 Citizens' Dialogues.

After 50 dialogues held in cities in every one of the EU's 28 Member States, the European Commission is inviting over 150 citizens to Brussels for a pan-European debate on Thursday 27 March, in the Commission's Charlemagne Building in Brussels. President José Manuel Barroso will lead a Citizens' Dialogue in the afternoon whilst 10 other Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament will debate with citizens in parallel events held throughout the day.

"In the debate that is ongoing all across Europe, the bottom-line is: do we want to improve Europe or give it up? My answer is clear: let's get involved! If you don't like Europe as it is, improve it!" said European Commission President Barroso. "With important European elections on the horizon, I want to see a real debate on how the European Union should evolve in the years to come, both economically and politically. A debate which engages every citizen. That is why the Commission will organise a Citizens Dialogue in Brussels next week and why we have been in every EU country debating Europe this and last year."

said Vice-President Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. "For 18 months now, Commissioners have been travelling to every corner of our continent to talk to citizens and listen to their views. What I have seen has been heartening "" people are enthusiastic about Europe. Either side of the political divide, people just want Europe to fix their problems. I have every reason to believe that this enthusiasm will manifest itself in a high turnout in the European elections in May 2014."

The European Commission has invited three participants from each of the previous 50 Dialogues to attend, making this the culmination of the Dialogues undertaken since September 2012. The final Citizens' Dialogue with President Barroso will take place from 16:00 "" 17:00 CET and can be watched live via webstream. Citizens can get involved in the debate on Facebook and Twitter by using the hashtag #EUdeb8.

A number of theme-oriented Dialogues will take place earlier in the day where 10 members of the European Commission (Vice-Presidents Reding and Rehn and Commissioners Potořnik, Vassiliou, De Gucht, Damanaki, Hahn, Hedegaard, Andor and Mimica) will discuss with smaller groups of citizens (see programme in annex).

The Commission will also publish a report on the experiences from the over 50 Citizens' Dialogues.

### Background

What are the Citizens' Dialogues about?

In 2013 the European Commission launched the European Year of Citizens (IP/13/2). From late 2012, throughout the year 2013 and into 2014, the year of the European Parliament elections, members of the European Parliament, the President and 21 members of the Commission have debated with citizens from all over Europe about their expectations for the future.

In over 50 different Dialogues, citizens from all walks of life have discussed with Commissioners, MEPs, national and regional politicians about their views on Europe's role in the future. Find out more here: <http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe>.

The Dialogues are being undertaken in the framework of the European Year of Citizens (IP/13/2), an initiative aiming to make people more familiar with their rights as EU citizens. Some of the activities associated with this year are continuing into 2014.

Why is the Commission doing this now?

Europe is at a crossroads. The months and years to come will be decisive for the future of the European Union, with many voices offering differing opinions on which direction it should take. Giving citizens a direct voice in this debate is essential. European integration should go hand in hand with reinforcing the Union's democratic legitimacy. Listening to the voices of citizens is therefore more important than ever.

What will be the outcome of the Citizens' Dialogue?

Citizens' reactions will help guide the Commission in the preparation of plans for future reform of the EU. One of the main objectives of these Dialogues is to prepare the ground for the 2014 European elections.

May 2013 the European Commission published its second Report on EU citizenship, which presents 12 new concrete measures to solve citizens' problems (IP/13/410 and MEMO/13/409). The Report on EU citizenship is the Commission's answer to a major online consultation held from May 2012 (IP/12/461) and to questions raised and suggestions made in the Citizens' Dialogues on EU citizens' rights and their future.

(Source: European Commission)

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