

## **How the EU consults its citizens**

### **Opinion polls**

The European Union has its own polling agency which carries out regular surveys of public opinion across the 25 Member States.

These ‘Eurobarometer’ polls provide key information about general attitudes towards the EU (for example, whether people think membership has been good or bad for their country, what issues matter most to ordinary citizens and so on).

Such surveys not only provide a ‘snapshot’ of how the public views the EU at a particular moment, but can also be used to track changes in public opinion over time.

### **Europe Direct**

The European Commission also runs a hotline, known as Europe Direct, which members of the public can call for information on any aspect of the EU’s activities.

The Commission publishes monthly statistics on the questions raised by callers, which provide more useful information about what issues are causing the greatest public concern.

### **Consulting the public**

The European Commission consults widely on all new proposals for EU laws to ensure that all those who might be affected by the legislation are given an opportunity to comment on the plans before they are finalised.

EU Member States and members of the European Parliament also listen carefully to the views of all interested parties when considering whether to approve planned new laws and deciding what changes, if any, are needed to the Commission’s draft proposals to address public concerns.

### **Plan D for Dialogue, Debate and Democracy**

Following the votes against the EU’s Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the European Commission launched an initiative known as Plan D – where D stands for Dialogue, Debate and Democracy – to try to engage the public in the debate about Europe’s future.

As part of this, it now has a ‘Debate Europe’ website where people are invited to give their views, and discuss their ideas, hopes and worries as Europeans.

The discussions are grouped around three broad themes:

- Europe’s economic and social development;
- Feelings towards Europe and the EU’s tasks;
- Europe’s borders and its role in the world.

### **European Citizens’ Consultation**

This project – the biggest-ever pan-European debate involving EU citizens from all 25 Member States – has been launched as part of the Plan D initiative to find out what the public wants from Europe.

It aims to inspire policy-makers at European and national level as they prepare to take decisions on the next phase of the EU's development – and provide a model for involving European citizens in further large-scale public dialogues in future.