Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Risiko- und Nachhaltigkeitsforschung

European Citizens’ Panel

Final Report of the External Evaluation

Piet Sellke, Ortwin Renn, Corinne Cornelisse
In cooperation with Anne Windaus

No. 7 / November 2007
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Summary

Objectives of evaluation

The European Citizens’ Panel (ECP) initiative was evaluated by a team of external specialists who were asked to assess whether ECP meets its self-chosen goals and keeps up with the established standards of process evaluation outlined in the respective literature. The external evaluation focused on the quality of the process: What was successful, what needed improvement and how satisfied were the participants with the procedures of their involvement? The evaluation focused especially on the European component of the process.

How was the evaluation performed?

The external evaluation used different inter-related methods (see section 2 of the report) which enabled the researchers to validate results obtained with one method with results from another method (triangulation). The methods used for this evaluation included interviews with participants, European and regional organizers, facilitators and key-stakeholders, a standardized survey directed to all participants during and after the deliberations, systematic observations of the evaluation team made during the pan-European panel, the self-evaluation of the regional panels as well as an analysis of ECP’s website.

The good news

After processing and interpreting the data from the evaluation the evidence was overwhelming that the two main objectives of the project, which are to “encourage a bottom-up contribution from citizens to the discussion on the future of European policies affecting rural areas” and “composing substantive recommendations for improving the rural situation in Europe” were accomplished. This positive result
was mainly due to the fact that the agenda of the European Citizens’ Panel was successfully organised within the narrow time-frame of the deliberations, that the effort and dedication of facilitators and organizers in shaping this bottom-up process paid off as intended, that the organisers succeeded to involve important decision makers in the process, and that the process promoted and fostered a high degree of enthusiasm of the citizens in designing recommendations to policy makers. This positive impression is also echoed in the subjective judgments of the participants. A majority of participants saw their own expectations fulfilled. 6 out of 10 citizens assigned positive evaluation values to the process as such\textsuperscript{1}. The bi-lingual working-groups during the pan-European panel were also evaluated as a positive element of the process by most citizens and facilitators, a result that was confirmed by the observations of the evaluation team. About 50\% of the citizens stated that the process design was appropriate for a productive dialogue, another 23\% was indifferent in this regard. Further, every second citizens felt “more European” after participating in the panel. The process raised citizens’ interest in European policies.

With respect to the established criteria for evaluating public participation, the project was also successful in meeting at least the most crucial standards on each criterion. The four criteria are: fairness, transparency, efficiency and competence. With respect to fairness, the evaluation team considered it highly positive that the ECP initiative was, compared to other pan-European participatory processes, marked by a high degree of flexibility and freedom for the regional panels to conduct their own business. This design left room for cultural particularities, which was judged appropriate for a process that was simultaneously conducted in 10 highly diverse European regions. In spite of this flexibility, the national panels provided almost equal opportunities and equally fair conditions to the participating

\textsuperscript{1} To question whether the ECP initiative met most of the personal expectations participants had 13.5\% strongly agreed, 45.9\% agreed, 29.7\% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 6.8\% disagreed. 0\% strongly disagreed.
citizens. This is what citizens stated in the interviews, with almost 70% saying they found fair conditions\(^2\) and almost 80% stating that all citizens were treated equally\(^3\), and what the protocols of the systematic observations revealed. Another positive aspect of fairness was that regional coordinators and facilitators were treated as partners of the process and were involved in the planning of the methods and procedures of the European process.

In terms of efficiency the process also received positive remarks. The European Citizens’ Panel might be a future reference for other projects in terms of funding, because all regional panels basically were responsible for their own funding. The costs of a project of the size of ECP could be shared on different shoulders, and additionally regional authorities and sponsors took on a more active role in the process through co-funding and promised to discuss the results intensively. European policy-makers have been much in favour of the ECP initiative and showed considerable interest in the outcome and in discussing the results.

The problems

The main shortcomings of the process, as observed by the evaluation team and independently confirmed by the results from the standardized questionnaires as well as the interviews with facilitators, (European) organizers, and participants, included a lack of clear responsibilities and a lack of definite leadership within the process. Unclear decisions left many facilitators in the dark and opened too much lee-

\(^2\) To the question whether all rules and procedures appeared fair to the participants, 25.7% strongly agreed, 41.9% agreed, 27.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4.1% disagreed. 0% strongly disagreed.

\(^3\) To the question whether all citizens were treated equally in gaining the process results, 47.3% strongly agreed, 31.1% agreed, 13.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, 5.4% disagreed and 1.4% strongly disagreed.
way in the interpretation of the working group tasks. Due to these shortcomings, the process suffered mostly in terms of the evaluation criteria transparency and competence but it also had some negative repercussions on fairness and efficiency. Due to these organizational shortcomings on the process, the results from the different regions and/or working groups could not be systematically compared.

Mixed results

Fairness: A fair representation of nations, social and economic status, and cultural beliefs is essential for a pan-European participation project. Hence it is of crucial importance how participants had been selected for the panels. Unfortunately the selection of panellists did not follow one consistent rule. This inconsistency was partially due to national regulations in the regions, specific requirements of sponsors in the regions, or was chosen deliberately to include specific subgroups. More specifically, six regions performed a random selection of citizens (Hungary, Netherlands, Slovakia, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium), whereas 2 regions faced major technical and legal obstacles by implementing a random selection approach (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), another region had to fulfil requirements by regional sponsors (Rhônes-Alpes), and one region deliberately chose a different approach of including subgroups traditionally not listened to (Cumbria and Durham). On the positive side, the selection process produced a high variability and diversity of social and economic background and succeeded in a broad representation of viewpoints and positions. On the negative side, each panel had its own special features in terms of composition and this impeded a comparative review. Under these circumstances it is difficult to interpret differences between some panels as they could be attributed to the different national cultures or to the different composition rule in each panel.

Another aspect of fairness refers to the process of articulating recommendations. How were decisions made in the panels and how were they legitimised? The design of the process included voting
procedures which are always problematic because it is unclear what a majority or minority means in terms of representation. Since the participants of the panels were not a true representation of the European public, any voting mechanism is difficult to defend yet pragmatically also required if a consensus cannot be accomplished. The organisers had hardly any other choice but relying on voting mechanisms in order to reach some closure of the deliberations. Yet it would have been appropriate under these circumstances to be more explicit about the problems of voting in general and the voting procedure used specifically. For the voting on the final recommendations each citizens had 8 votes, which he/she could exercise through placing a glue dot to a proposed recommendation, which were presented on flip charts. This voting procedure enabled citizens to make more complex choices (as opposed to a simple yes/no decision), however lacked anonymity. Although the empirical data does not indicate that there were severe problems regarding the non-anonymity of the voting procedure, it should be left to the citizens’ decision whether they demand anonymity in their voting or not. The evaluators recommended having a special dedicated session about the voting procedures that should be employed during the process.

Competence refers to background knowledge (Did the participants receive all the information necessary to make an informed choice?) and communicative skills (were all participants enabled or empowered to be actively involved in all phases of the process?). Input from experts can provide a solid basis for gaining more issue-specific knowledge. The input from experts to the European Citizens’ Panel comprised mainly two components: a European info-pack sent out to the regions and input from invited experts who delivered papers during the deliberations of the European panel. The panellists appreciated the European info-pack and gave it highly positive evaluations. In addition, the information was judged well-balanced and appropriate. The validation procedure of the info-pack through a scientific board served the function of legitimisation well. For some
citizens and facilitators, the connection to the regional level was underemphasized in the info-pack, as they stated in the qualitative interviews. The main problem (unrelated to the material and its content), however, was that the info-pack was not available to all regional panels at the start of their regional process.

During the pan-European panel three experts gave plenary talks and two of them attended working group sessions with the citizens. As much as this opportunity to discuss crucial issues with top experts was appreciated, there was also the problem that not all participants were able to share this experience because the two experts were not able to visit all 8 working groups. Thus, there was some imbalance in exposure to relevant knowledge, which is reflected in the survey with 27% of the citizens being ambivalent regarding the usefulness of the expert input, however 60% assessing the expert input as positive or very positive.

There was agreement among participants as well as facilitators that the communicative opportunities to voice opinions and to be part of the deliberation were fostered throughout the process. Citizens never felt intimidated or under pressure to withhold their assessments or judgments, as 78% stated that they were able to communicate intensively and another 65% agreed that they were able to communicate with ease. However, several facilitators, coming from different regions and backgrounds, did not receive a coherent and common training on their role, function, and duties as facilitators. So some of them were rather directive during their moderation and pushed the participants to one or the other direction in form and content, while

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4 To the question whether participants were able to communicate intensively 23.0% strongly agreed, 54.1% agreed, 13.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, 6.8% disagreed and 1.4% strongly disagreed.

5 To the question whether participants were able to communicate with ease 24.3% strongly agreed, 35.1% agreed, 24.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 6.8% disagreed. 0% strongly disagreed.
others were extremely lenient in moderation and left the deliberation process develop by itself. Furthermore, there were shortcomings in the reporting from the working groups to the plenary sessions.

(3) Transparency refers to the degree of openness and visibility of all procedural rules and structure to the participants themselves and the outside world. The organisers made any attempt to explain the procedures to the participants and familiarise them with all the rules and procedures. This strong effort was also appreciated by the participants and 85% of the surveyed citizens gave positive remarks in the questionnaires when evaluating transparency⁶. They stated that all rules and procedures have been always clear to them. However, due to a lack of coordination between organisers, facilitators and rapporteurs, the participants were sometimes lost and irritated about the actual stage in the process which led to confusion and unnecessary delays. The organisers were able to overcome these situations of confusion within reasonable times so that they did not compromise the session results. However, they could have been avoided if properly handled from the beginning. Some problems also occurred with the transparency of the content, as citizens stated it was not always clear to them which result was coming from what process.

(4) Efficiency: Although the process itself was highly efficient as stated above there was also room for improvement in this area. In particular preparing facilitators, student assistants, rapporteurs and other staff members turned out to be cumbersome and time-consuming. Often the objectives of the briefings were not accomplished because it took way to long to treat each agenda point. The evaluation team recommends installing smaller task forces that could work out suggestions to be presented later on to the larger organizational team.

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⁶ To the question whether all rules and procedures have been understood completely by participants, 41.9% strongly agreed, 43.2% agreed, 9.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4.1% disagreed. 0% strongly disagreed.
In terms of organisational efficiency, the citizens as well as the facilitators were in general satisfied with the logistical performance of the organisational team. As usual, there were technical problems that are not uncommon for a process of that size. These problems were resolved in due time and did not have any major negative impact on process or output. However, the organisational performance suffered under the main problem that there was no clear assignment of responsibilities and duties and hence a confusion about who has to do what at which time. This also led to a perceived inequality among the organisational team, the facilitators respectively, as seen in the results of the semi-structured interviews with the organisers and facilitators in spite of the fact that all members of the organising teams had equal positions.

Conclusions
The evaluation of the European Citizens’ Panel confirmed that the main objectives of the project had been accomplished. Furthermore, the project demonstrated the feasibility of organising citizen participation at the European level and provided sufficient evidence that such a process can produce reliable, substantial and instructive results. Furthermore, the participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with their role and function in the process. They also stated that their interest in EU-policies did increase. External stakeholders have praised the process and its outcomes as well, although it is much too early to expect any policy changes or implementations of the recommendations. Early responses by policy makers suggest that they are willing to use the regional results in the respective areas while the European policy makers were more interested in the process itself and its feasibility for European policy formation in general. Given these positive impressions and impacts, there were also problems and deficits. Notwithstanding that the process was deliberately planned as a bottom-up approach, the process lacked clear leadership and an unambiguous distribution of authority. In addition, more efficient management procedures would have been advisable (i.e. in terms of
smaller task forces). There were also minor problems with respect to fairness, transparency, and competence. These problems were never severe enough to compromise the process itself or the validity of its results. One should be careful, however, in the interpretation of the prioritized recommendations as their prioritization was developed by a voting procedure, which should and can not be taken as a representative view on the subject.

Overall, the European Citizens’ Panel proved that it is possible to initiate a dialogue on a complex issue on the European level. The methodological and organizational experiences made within this process will certainly foster and encourage the further development of a European culture of participation.
1 Objectives of the External Evaluation Process

The European Citizens’ Panel (ECP) was a process taking place with citizens from ten European regions\(^7\), all but one members of the European Community. The citizens worked on the future of rural areas in their regional panels in 2006 and 2007, and eventually sent representatives from the regional panels to the European panel, which started on March 30th and ended on April 2nd with the handing over of the citizens’ common recommendations to European policy makers\(^8\).

Parts of the ECP process have been accompanied by a team of external\(^9\) evaluators. The objective of this external evaluation was to see whether the ECP process keeps up with standards, which are seen as important for similar participatory processes. It should be reported where these standards have been met, where there could be improvements in the methodology or organization if standards haven’t been met, and suggestions derived from key-learnings of how to shape a process like the ECP next time. For this objective of the evaluation, key decisions and choices in the decision making process have to be considered. Finally, this evaluation is about whether the

\(^7\) Bavaria (DE), Cumbria-Durham (UK), Flevoland (NL), Rhone-Alpes (FR), St. Gallen (CH), Wallonia (BE), as well as two cross-border panels, each covering two border regions: Republic of Ireland (EI) / Northern Ireland (UK) and Hungaria (HU) / Slovakia (SK).

\(^8\) Further information about the European Citizens’ Panel itself can be obtained from the Final ECP report (http://www.citizenspanel.eu)

\(^9\) „External“ refers to the fact the no one of the evaluators coming from DIalogik gGmbH was affiliated to the process in any other way than for the evaluation itself.
ECP initiative has accomplished its objectives. Important to note is that there is not one objective, but different actors involved in such a process can have quite different – and sometimes even conflicting – objectives. Thus, these different objectives have to be considered when assessing whether the initiative has accomplished them. The different objectives of actors as well as whether these objectives have been met are assessed within the qualitative and quantitative interviews by the interviewees themselves. This evaluation is not on the impact of the issued recommendations into the policy arena. Usually it is not possible to measure the political impact in the short run. In terms of implementing decisions in the policy arena based on recommendations from citizens’ panels, a time-scale from 5 to 10 years has to be considered.

After laying out the evaluation procedure and methods in section 2, the evaluation criteria will be presented in section 3. The collection of empirical data was designed to serve the evaluation criteria outlined in section 3, the results of this process will be displayed in section 4. In section 5 conclusions from the view of the external evaluation are drawn. Finally, Annex A and B show the empirical results of the evaluation in greater detail.
2 External Evaluation: the Methods

The following section will describe the methods used for the external evaluation in more detail. As said before, the selection of the methods followed a multi-method approach (triangulation), which enables the researcher to validate the results from one method with results from another. The information collected with these methods was analyzed according to the evaluation criteria (section 3). Some detailed results are shown in the Annex.

2.1 Evaluation procedure

The external evaluation enfolded different methods. Coming from the principle of triangulation, these methods are designed to measure the same dimensions with different tools, that way increasing reliability and validity of the measurement procedure in general.

At the core of these different methods were standardized questionnaires for all participants, qualitative semi-structured interviews with participants, facilitators, organizers, and key-stakeholders, as well as observations of the citizens’ panel taking place from March 30th until April 2nd. These three main methods are used to survey the indicators described in the section below, enriched by an analysis of ECP’s website.

The main focus of this external evaluation has been on the European level. This is mainly due to the fact that the external evaluation team joined the ECP process after most of the regional panel were already or almost done with the work in the regional panels. The procedure developed for this external evaluation, however, tried to encompass the regional level as far as possible. The regional level was included
in the semi-structured interviews with facilitators in order to get a more complete picture about the experiences made on that level. Fur-
ther, in one region where the panellists met shortly before and after the common weekend in Louvain-la-Neuve, an evaluation team member was present and observed these meetings. Finally, every region had the possibility to issue a (pre-structured) regional report to the evaluation team, explaining more deeply the experiences made during the process.

The methods used in this evaluation are generally twofold: Subjective judgements of the people involved in this process, which bring depth and richness to the description of the process, were surveyed as well as enriching these results with other methods providing an objective tool for benchmarking the process in general. Both approaches have been used in the evaluation of ECP and are synthesized in this report.

**Table 1: Processes and Methods of the External Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Evaluation Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 6th</td>
<td>Preparatory meeting of facilitation team</td>
<td>Observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1st</td>
<td>Preparatory meeting of facilitation team</td>
<td>Observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2nd</td>
<td>Preparatory meeting of rapporteurs</td>
<td>Observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 30th – April 2nd</td>
<td>European Panel</td>
<td>Observation of working groups and plenary sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1st</td>
<td>European Panel</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with participants</td>
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<td>April 1st</td>
<td>European Panel</td>
<td>Standardized 1st Survey with all participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2nd</td>
<td>European Panel – Delivery of recommendations</td>
<td>Standardized 2nd Survey with all participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4th – Mai 15th</td>
<td>Data Collection, Data Analysis, Reporting phase</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, participants, facilitators and organizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1st</td>
<td>Draft Report of the External Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1st</td>
<td>Final Report of the External Evaluation</td>
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2.2 Overview on the evaluation procedure

Whereas the European Citizens’ Panel process had already started on the regional level, the evaluation team joined the process in February 2007. The evaluation process started with attending preparatory meetings of the facilitation team and the rapporteurs team in February and March 2007. From March 30th until April 1st, the pan-European Panel in Louvain-la-Neuve near Brussels as well as in Brussels took place, where the selected panellists from the regions gathered and issued recommendations, which were handed over to policy-makers on April 2nd in Brussels.

During the preparatory meetings the evaluation team was present as observer of the process of planning the pan-European process and its methods, intended outcomes, and objectives. During the pan-European panel in Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels, the evaluation team was present with three team members on Friday, Sunday and Monday, on Saturday four team members were present. The main task of the evaluation team was the observation of the process as described in section 2. Additionally, on Sunday afternoon semi-structured interviews were conducted with some interviewees. Further, on Sunday afternoon the main structured survey was disseminated to the citizens. On Monday, April 2nd, the handing over of the citizens’ recommendations was observed and the follow-up survey, aiming on the experiences of the same day, was disseminated and collected. The phase following the pan-European panel in Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels was dedicated to conduct semi-structured interviews with facilitators, stakeholders, participants and organizers. The following table lists the different processes and methods in an overview.
2.3 Analysis of ECP’s website

The Website of the European Citizens’ Panel is analyzed because means like that have increased importance especially in a European setting with regions from distant places. The website should be seen as one major tool for the indirect communication with the participating citizens, but also with the interested public through blogs, forums, and other means. Further, it is one of the main sources for the interested public to get information on the project. In this sense today a website is of major importance for the internal and external communication and presentation.

2.4 Observations

During the European panel in Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels, the evaluation team was present with up to 4 team members to observe the process. The observation was conducted in the plenary and especially in eight parallel running working groups on Saturday, March 30th and Sunday, April 1st. The observers were trained to focus on the interaction between participants with each other as well as with facilitators and other persons involved.

The observers were split up between the eight working groups in order to visit every group at least once, in most cases working groups were observed by two different observers at different times. Observing the interactions and the process between participants and facilitators in smaller groups, enables one to get a picture of e.g. underlying problems of the process, alliances, or other specialities of the interaction process. To assure comparability between the observations, they used a pre-structured observation sheet for their notes. In this way the observation sheet also pre-defined the main dimensions to look at in the interaction, whereas flexibility still was assured. The main di-
dimensions were split up in several sub-dimensions, and eventually the dimensions were being used as indicators for the evaluation criteria described below. The main dimensions were

- **Atmosphere**
  This dimension focuses on the general conditions of the discussion. For instance, the mood of citizens plays a major role for how the discussion is running in general. Whether discussants are tired, relaxed, friendly or hostile against each other shapes the process differently.

- **Interaction**
  Interaction describes the style of communication and interaction of the citizens. Citizens may form alliances to achieve a specific goal, they may be focused on mutual understanding and exchange, sometimes the volume of the dialogue can contribute to an understanding of this dimension.

- **Discussion**
  The citizens’ participation in the discussion is documented with this dimension. Whether an engaged and interested discussion took place, whether citizens’ were bored and busy with other activities are important aspects here. Especially in bi- and multi-lingual groups special problems can arise within the discussion, e.g. complicated interpretation etc.

- **Roles**
  Who took which role in the discussions? In some cases citizens take on a special role either overt or hidden. This can be due to the knowledge of a citizen, but also to his or her eloquence. If roles like that are observable, how is that role legitimised, if at all? Is that role accepted by everybody in the group?

- **Argumentation**
  This dimension is not about opinions itself, however about the types of arguments used to express opinions. In exchanging opinions, people can use normative, evaluative or cogni-
tive arguments, for example. Which one is used and whether it fits to the structure of argumentation of other participants is important here.

- **Language, Communication**
  Language refers to two aspects: firstly, whether the citizens used e.g. professional language, lay language, or scientific language and whether they encountered problems articulating themselves within the discussions. Secondly, aspects of bi- and multi-language settings are considered, for example the “mother-tongue-bias”, which means that participants having the same mother tongue as the facilitator speak up more frequently than participants with a different mother tongue and interpretation.

- **Structure**
  The dimension structure captured external influences on the discussion process. Important to note here was whether citizens had the opportunity to influence the process (methodological or content-related), how transparent the process was for the citizens, the general support of the working groups with background materials, information and logistical material.
2.5 Semi-structured Interviews

The objective of the semi-structured interviews was to gain insights into different perspectives on the ECP process. That is, besides that there is supposed to be a common objective, facilitators, citizens, organizers, and other stakeholders may have very different objectives individually, thus it is important whether these different objectives have been fulfilled. The evaluation team conducted 19 semi-structured interviews\(^{10}\) with facilitators, citizens, organizers, and stakeholders. An important point was to get an outside and an inside view\(^{11}\) on the process, because these different perspectives can bring a lot of clarity to the process. Sponsors of the process may be interested in how efficient their money was used, citizens in the direct outcome in terms of policy making, and facilitators in the functioning of the applied methods. These different angles provide a rich picture of what was good and what should be improved.

The content of the interviews differed slightly according to the role of the interviewee. Sample questions were related to

- the own history of involvement in the ECP process
- the definition of the own role within the process
- expectations, objectives and the fulfilment of them
- an assessment of specific methods used for facilitating the pan-European panel

\(^{10}\) Eight interviews with facilitators, five with participants, one with a member of the steering committee, 3 organizers, two external stakeholders.

\(^{11}\) With “outside view” it is referred to actors not being involved in the process itself, as for example sponsors. With “inside view” it is referred to actors being involved in the process itself, i.e. participants, facilitators, organizers etc.
• an assessment of the working groups in terms of the dimensions used in section 2.2
• an assessment of the provided expert input and the knowledge base of the citizens
• an evaluation of the preparatory phase of the pan-European panel (meetings of facilitators and rapporteurs)
• logistics
• the delivery of the recommendations to policy makers on April 2nd
• the lessons learned and experiences made individually

The interviews were conducted in English, German, Dutch or French. They were recorded, transcribed and analysed by two different coders to ensure inter-coder reliability. For the selection of citizens an interview plan was set up in order to provide an equal share in terms of age, gender, and country.

2.6 Standardized Survey for Citizens

Semi-structured interviews, as described in section 2.3, provide the evaluation team with valuable insights and a dense description of the process. However, due to time and money constraints, these interviews could only be conducted with a selection of citizens. In order to collect the view of all participating citizens, two standardized surveys were conducted. The first survey was an exhaustive questionnaire about citizens’ experiences with the process, their objectives and their assessment of what has been achieved. All the questions included into this questionnaire served again as indicators of the evaluation criteria outlined in section 3. This first questionnaire was disseminated on Sunday afternoon at the European panel, thus after the main work was done, and in a moment were citizens were able to reflect on
the past days. The second questionnaire was disseminated on Monday after the citizens delivered their recommendation in the Committee of the Regions to policy makers. It was intended to measure the differences between the assessment of the process before and after the delivery of the recommendations, and whether the experiences made on Monday changed any substantial evaluation of the whole process. Therefore the second questionnaire contained questions to the meeting of the citizens with policy makers (e.g. speaking opportunities, voice being heard etc.), as well as a replication of questions from the first questionnaire. Both questionnaires were translated into all six languages present at the European Panel.

2.7 Self-evaluation by regional panels

The evaluation team visited one region with still ongoing panel meetings. However, most regional panels could not be visited due to the fact that the meetings were already closed. Instead, the regional panellists, their facilitators and coordinators, respectively, were encouraged to work on a regional self-evaluation report. The evaluation team proposed a common structure of these reports to the regional facilitators / coordinators, which assured comparability between the panels. Besides working on these dimensions, the regional panel members were free to add themes or comments of importance to them. An example report was used to set a standard in terms of length and details.
3 Evaluation Criteria

The external evaluation of the European Citizens’ Panel was guided by a set of evaluation criteria (Renn 2004; Renn/Webler 1995; Renn et al. 1999). These evaluation criteria were derived theoretically and tested empirically in case studies earlier on. They were used to structure the process of evaluation and to set up a common standard for the evaluation. They include aspects most important for participatory processes, answering questions as for example who participates, who decides what, how decisions are made etc. The setting of standards for evaluative processes like this is of course normative. However, the criteria used in this evaluation have a history of being applied to several participatory processes and reflect most important requirements for participatory processes. A detailed discussion and exploration of these criteria can be found in Renn 2004, Renn/Webler 1995 and Renn et al. 1999.

Participatory processes are shaped by two major components: Inclusion and closure. Inclusion refers to issues such as the composition of participants and stakeholders, the selection of themes and issues as well as the time frame of the project. Closure refers to the applied methods for decision making, that is to say the quality of the procedures of the process. Further, the climate of the discourse, the management of disagreement and the opportunity to raise and test arguments can be subsumed under closure. Inclusion and closure can be seen as the general dimensions, whereas out of these two major dimensions the main evaluation criteria as sub-dimensions can be derived: fairness, competence, transparency, and efficiency.

- Fairness can be divided into procedural (internal) fairness and structural (external) fairness. Procedural fairness re-
quests that participants are offered fair conditions during the process, as for example knowing the rules and provisions of the process beforehand, being treated equally etc. The rules applied in a participatory process should not only be decided upon before the process starts, but also consensually by the participants (Webler 1995: 62f). Further, structural (external) fairness refers to the fact that all relevant and affected actor groups had an equal opportunity to take part in the process.

- Competence refers to the fact that participatory processes without issue-related and communicative competence will be hollow. Issue-related competence is necessary for participants in order to assess the consequences of their decisions within a process. Issue-related competence is not to be confused with pure objective knowledge, although it might be partially set up by that. Rather, issue-related competence refers to the minimization of post-decisional regrets by trying to incorporate all relevant knowledge. Communicative competence is necessary to exchange norms, values, emotional expressions and being able to communicate with each other (Habermas 1992: 260).

- The criterion of transparency requests that all rules, procedures, and methods are transparent to all persons involved in the process. Important to note is that ‘all persons involved’ does not only refer to citizens participating, rather includes all facilitators, organizers, stakeholders etc. Further, not only the process itself, but also the product of the process should be transparent to all actors.

- Efficiency does not only refer to monetary issues, but to the efficient use of all resources in the process. For example, the efficient use of the time of participants is crucial for their subjective satisfaction with the process. Basically it applies to an efficient use of resources for the outcome achieved.
The application of these criteria, derived from the major components, was undertaken consistently through all applied methods. That is to say, every methodological step served these criteria.

4 Results of the Evaluation

The methods outlined in section 2 were used to measure the evaluation criteria outlined in section 3. Each evaluation criterion has been operationalized with several indicators within the methodological steps. The empirical results of this measurement are displayed in Annex A and B. In the following section, these empirical results and conclusions drawn from them are presented.

4.1 Structural Fairness

Structural fairness refers to the fact that every affected citizen or stakeholder should have the same opportunity to participate in the process. Further, the basic design of the participatory process should be structured in a way that enables participants to be part of the process under equal conditions. The following sections evaluate the selection of the participants (4.1.1) and the basic design of the process (4.1.2).

4.1.1 Selection of participants

The criterion of structural (external) fairness demands equal opportunities to participate for all relevant actors and stakeholders, or in other words an appropriate representation of affected actors. The selection of citizens asked to participate is of major importance in this regard. Generally, one can differentiate between three basic selection
modes: participants can be voted (political legitimation), specific groups can be selected with the legitimation of the affected actors (e.g. unions, environmental groups), and thirdly through formal means of providing equal chances, e.g. a random selection. Regardless what method is chosen, consistency in the methods is of importance, thus ideally in the case of ECP all regions should apply the same methodology to select participants. However, in a European context one has to consider different national laws and regional particularities.

In the case of ECP, generally all citizens are affected by the issue to be discussed. Therefore, it is one criterion to select citizens randomly, which means in a statistical sense that all citizens have the same calculable chance of being asked to participate. Citizens in a randomly drawn population will not have a systematic bias regarding any socio-demographic variables. Usually only a small percentage of citizens who were asked to participate after a random selection will actually agree to take part, and the citizens who agree mostly will be biased again in terms of these sociodemographic variables. The question whether one should make an attempt to balance this bias is a point of ongoing discussions with arguments for both sides.

The pan-European panel in Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels was established with citizens coming from the regional panels of the ten regions. Thus, the composition of citizens in the European panel was dependent on the method of selection of the regional panels. Leaving aside the criterion of random selection in a first step, it can be stated that the citizens working together at the European panel were a well-balanced mix in terms of gender, age, and education. For example, the age group between 35 and 55 years old was strongest with ca.

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12 The percentage of citizens agreeing to participate will also be dependent on the region / country, considering for example the different participatory cultures in Switzerland compared to Germany. In Germany, most studies calculate with a 5% response rate for these kinds of processes.
40%, the age groups above (56 – 75) and below (14 – 34) were almost equally represented with ca. 29% each. The composition of the European panel ensured a diverse social background and mixed life-experiences coming together.

The selection of participants on the regional level was different from region to region and not always according to the self-stated objective of (statistical) randomness. Most panels wanted a random selection, in some regions that was achieved very well. One region tried to draw a random sample, however regional authorities – who were the sponsor of the regional process – demanded that a sample is drawn out of a specific subgroup of politically involved citizens. Some regional panels approached possible panel attendees through local (political, social, youth etc.) organizations, public libraries, and word-of-mouth or personal acquaintances (see next paragraph below). One can summarize that the selection of participants for the regional panels – and hence for the European panel – did not always hold on to the self-stated standards and objectives of the process. One important reason for these discrepancies is the fact that in different regions different legal obligations are imposed on a random selection of citizens, in some regions this random selection out of official registration documents is even not allowed because of privacy issues. Panel organizers had to develop alternatives, and this process of developing alternatives was in a number of cases restrained by a lack of money and a lack of time.

Some regional panels did make an attempt to engage especially young people in the process. For the regional process, this endeavour seems to really have worked out well, also because of the flexibility of the facilitators and their ability to incorporate the needs of different

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13 Additionally of being a requirement for the scope of the project generally, the objective of statistical randomness is stated in the Methodological Charta issued by ECP.
age groups. However, within the European process some of these very young people were overburdened. They detached from the work within the groups, because the process design was not appropriate to serve these different age groups. This statement is based on the observations of the evaluation team as well as on interview material with facilitators working with them in the working groups. However, in terms of detachment from the work of the group there were opposite views by other facilitators, stating that this age groups was highly motivated and eager to participate. Although there have been different experiences concerning the specific work with this age group in the working groups, it still is recommended to have either separate processes for cohorts below 16 and adults or to have an appropriate process design to serve the needs of both groups. There are better methods for participatory processes for age groups below 16 than applied at the ECP, and these methods could not be applied because this young cohort made up only about 10% of the participants, thus they had to work with methods and procedures designed for adults. Secondly, if the age group below 16 is to be involved, this should happen throughout all panels, not only in one, to ensure the comparability and similarity between the panels and working groups. Further processes like ECP should be aware of these difficulties and not mix these age groups of children under 16 with adults without important and appropriate adjustments on the process design.

A clear suggestion on this point is to plan the process of participant selection in advance centrally, rather than leaving this process to the regions alone. There are many possibilities to shape such a central planning process for this issue, certainly a smaller body involving European organisers and regional organisers / coordinators would be helpful for that issue. A central European planning of the selection of participants in the regions could have foreseen the problems and worked out alternatives that are reasonably coherent with each other, with each region, respectively. Specific problems in the selection pro-
process of each region could have been identified and thus resources provided dependent on an assessment of severity of the selection problems. This process would probably work best with regional and European coordinators working closely together on these questions. This recommendation of coherency in the selection process is not impeding the bottom-up process structure; bottom-up processes can be understood as having a decentralized decision-making, however these processes still can have core groups with mandates for shaping and planning procedures and processes.

### 4.1.2 Basic design of the process

The European Citizens’ Panel initiative was designed to be a process taking place in ten European\(^\text{14}\) regions as well as on the European level collectively. To provide a comparable level of competence, a common European Infopack was provided for the regions. Objective of the regional panels was to work on the question of the future of rural areas and to issue recommendations to regional policy makers. Out of the regional panels, citizens were chosen to participate in the European panel. The regional panels took place mostly in 2006, one panel had its main process in 2007.\(^\text{15}\)

The design of the European panel was fitted to four subsequent days from March 30th until April 2nd. At the first day of the panel, the citizens gathered at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in Brussels. The citizens presented their respective regions in a regional exhibition, followed by a plenary session with welcoming addresses from policy-makers (DG Education and Culture). The citizens presented

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\(^{14}\) European does not mean European Union, as the St. Gallen region is part of Switzerland.

\(^{15}\) A detailed calendar of the regional meetings is available on [http://www.citizenspanel.eu](http://www.citizenspanel.eu)
orally the work of their regions shortly in a plenary session. This was followed by presentations of Mr. Murray (Queens University of Belfast) and Mr. Bryden (University of Aberdeen), which were asked to synthesize the work of the citizens and to provide thematic input. The Friday ended in the CoR with the voting of citizens on the importance of each of 18 themes. The themes were a result of the regional panels, and the importance of each theme could be displayed by the citizens placing a coloured sticky dot on a flip-chart with the respective theme.

On the second day, Saturday the 31st of March, the citizens were divided into 8 bi-lingual working groups. The first half of the day was dedicated working on concerns regarding the identified themes. The citizens identified in each working group three themes which they thought have importance for the panel as a whole and which they wanted to focus on in the following working group sessions. The second half of the day was working on visions regarding the priority-themes identified before. These visions were presented in the plenary orally and written on cards on the wall, and citizens were invited to write comments to the visions of other groups.

The third day, Sunday the 1st of April, started with a review of the work done on the day before in a plenary session. This section was followed by the introduction of two experts who were connected to the DG Regio and DG Agriculture of the European Commission, respectively. The two experts received a list with questions from citizens, which they worked through. The Sunday went on with citizens working again in their working groups on formulating recommendations regarding the themes they selected before. The two experts could be called into the working groups in this phase to provide more expert input on specific questions the citizens had while formulating the recommendations. The recommendations were again presented in the plenary, and the same voting procedure with sticky dots was used to prioritize these recommendations. Finally, a group of citizens was selected to present the recommendations at the Commit-
tee of the Regions on the next day, and a sub-group of facilitators met with these citizens to prepare this handing-over of recommendations.

As an overall conclusion from the empirical data and its interpretation by the authors, the basic design of the European process can be assessed as positive. The welcoming of the citizens in the Committee of the Regions on Friday was an important symbolic appreciation of the citizens’ work. The regional exhibitions in the Atrium of the Committee of the Regions were an appropriate and enjoyable warming-up for all people involved in the process, especially for the citizens. Walking around through the exhibition provided with cultural impressions of the respective regions as well as with an idea of the regional topics discussed.

The structuring of the working groups on Saturday and Sunday as bi-lingual working groups, which means that sometimes even four countries were working together, is a real positive outcome. Citizens really got the feeling of the challenge working on a European level, that is working together with different languages and different cultures. Of course this procedure also caused problems. The headphones and microphones for the interpretation in the working groups didn’t work properly all the time. Some working groups had difficulties with interpreters being not flexible enough in adjusting to the style of the working group. The speed of the working groups could have been accelerated with mono-lingual groups, and the costs of the project could have been decreased by that. Further, an observation of the evaluation team was that interactions in working groups were mostly biased to the language of the facilitator: citizens with the same mother-tongue as the facilitator of the group tended to speak up considerably more often than the citizens speaking a different language, despite the simultaneous interpretation. In cases where facilitators were bi-lingual as well, this effect decreased. However, the setting of transnational working groups still is not only justifiable, but can be suggested from the authors for future projects as well. In planning these working groups one has to be aware that they will need more time than mono-lingual groups, thus the workload has to be adjusted
to that fact – which actually has been done in the European Citizens’ Panel. However, the merit of citizens’ working together despite language barriers outweighs the problems noted above, which is clearly indicated by the results of qualitative interviews with citizens, facilitators, and organizers.

The voting procedure used throughout the three days with placing sticky dots on flip-charts has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that due to the complexity of the issues to vote on as well as the pure number of choices, citizens can browse around and take the time needed for themselves to make their choice. Further, the results of the voting are easily displayed. A severe disadvantage is that the citizens cannot vote anonymously, that is to say social pressure can be exerted. Anonymity cannot be underemphasized regarding a voting procedure. Further, citizens mentioned in the interviews with the evaluation team their own confusion in opting in the described manner, because the overview of alternatives easily gets lost. There are alternative voting procedures, using for example an electronic key-pad, which have been tested successfully in plenaries of other processes as well. However, most other voting procedures offer a dichotomous choice, something that would not have been appropriate for prioritizing different themes, where each citizen had eight votes. Thus, in light of the voting task of the European panel this voting procedure can be justified in the view of the evaluation team, however it would be helpful to reduce the complexity of the task. In terms of the process this can be achieved for example through grouping themes together collectively (i.e., in the plenary).

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16 This is underlined by an incident reported to the evaluation team, where a whole working group apparently decided to vote only on their own recommendations – a procedure that exerts clearly a great deal of social pressure to all working group members to vote as agreed upon, besides all other problematic aspects of such a procedure. This incident was not directly observed by the evaluation team and not mentioned in the interviews, however was reported “off-record” to the evaluation team.
The basic design in terms of connecting the regional panels to the European process shows advantages and disadvantages. The objective of the organizers was to give space to the cultural differences of the regions, which has been the case and has brought up wonderful results. The regional panels in itself were of incredible value for the citizens of the regions and stakeholders of the regions, as they stated in the interviews. However, the re-integration of the regional panels to the European panel stayed unclear in some ways. The tension between leaving the process to cultural differences and shaping a common European event with contributions from the regional panels remained unsolved. The citizens coming to Brussels were not coming as representatives of their regions, but as European citizens. The good idea behind that was to prevent the citizens of playing out only their regional / national interest and losing the common European perspective. On the other side, the regions gave input to the European process, however it wasn’t completely clear and overt what input from what region and so on. To sum up, the relationship between the regional process and the European process was not definite enough. It would have been possible to leave room for cultural differences of the regions and still showing a common input of the regions to the European panel. This issue became obvious during the presentation of the regional work by the citizens in the CoR on Friday: some citizens were prepared with presentations about their regions, others about their work in the regional panels, again others didn’t know that they have to present anything at this point because they were not informed by the regional facilitator on this. Citizens mentioned this event as an example of their own difficulties in this regard.
4.2 Procedural Fairness

In general, the European Citizens’ Panel offered indeed fair conditions for all participants to raise their voice, to test and to defend arguments. The facilitators were eager to provide equal speaking opportunities in their working groups between men and women, different nations or old and young participants, as observed by the evaluation team. The basic design of the process, as described above, ensured the equality of the participants throughout the process. This judgement is supported by the empirical data collected and presented in Annex A and B.

Besides this general remark, however, there was sometimes a lack of fairness observed by the evaluation team and also displayed in the empirical data because of organizational shortcomings. During the European process, the organizational decisions where not clear sometimes, thus facilitators used the room left open for their interpretation. However, if some working groups decide to expand their working time and to not stick to the rules of the process – for example through using double the space for drawings agreed on – other citizens feel cheated if they stayed within the rules agreed upon before. There were several occasions were incidents like the example above could be observed and have been reported by citizens and facilitators in the interviews, and the main reason for these shortcomings were unclear responsibilities, duties and decisions in the organisation (see Efficiency in 4.5).

The three main tasks of the citizens – to formulate concerns, visions, and finally recommendations – were to close together analytically. Although these were logical steps, some citizens felt like working on the same thing a couple of times. Further, several citizens raised their wish to work more thematically, i.e. to abandon the bilingual table design in order to work together with all citizens interested in one
particular area. Indeed this would have been a wonderful and productive way to work together in the view of the authors, however there were severe organizational constraints that impeded this procedure. For example, the costs for interpreters would have been raised because there would be a need for more of them. Further, the organizers of the process wanted to avoid a specialisation of citizens towards one subject matter, thus enabling them to express themselves on a large set of issues. Both possible decisions can be justified. One has to be aware, however, of the tension between citizens becoming ‘generalists’ as opposed to ‘specialists’: The former is more inclusive, the latter might be more efficient.

Having facilitators coming from different regions / countries working together and bringing in their specific knowledge into a process like ECP can foster a fruitful exchange and a mutual learning process. This could be observed at the European panel as well. However, it would have been helpful if the facilitators would have had a common session before the European panel in order to assure a coherent style of facilitating the working groups. The differences between facilitation styles are less important for the work in the regional panels, as long as comparable outputs can be achieved. However, at the European panel these differences observed by the evaluation team influenced the process in terms of procedural fairness: which methods have been used to collect visions, concerns, and recommendations and to foster discussions did make a difference considering the output of the working groups, for example comparing the level of abstraction with some really general and some really tangible results. Besides the point of using a common methodology to ensure equality between the working groups, a coherent training of facilitators would

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17 The facilitation methodology is not to be confused with the process methodology: the latter is about the rules and expected results of the whole process (e.g. to produce visions on a theme), the former is about the way the expected results are worked out within the working groups.
have ensured a common quality as well, as there were observable differences in this regard. This issue is not only important for procedural fairness but also for the validity and particularly reliability of the results. The comparative nature of the results is endangered with different ways of reaching the results. Thus, the clear suggestion on this issue is to enable the facilitation team in a common process to display their cultural and technical differences and to channel these to a common understanding of a facilitator’s task and role in facilitating the process.

The working groups were accompanied by plenary sessions with simultaneous interpretation into six languages. The main task of the plenary sessions were to inform the citizens on the next steps of the program, to display the results of the working groups and to vote on these results, and to enable an exchange of all citizens together. However, because of the organizational shortcomings mentioned above (and below, see Efficiency 4.5) the plenary sessions were not used to the full extent that would have been possible in the view of the authors. Often the information flow from the working groups and / or between the people involved with organization and planning to the chair of the plenary didn’t work as intended. As a result, the plenary sessions were sometimes confusing, announcing wrong information (e.g. wrong names of people presenting the recommendations to the policy makers), and a considerable amount of time had to be used for coping with these drawbacks. This observation is supported by the results of the empirical data, i.e. stated in interviews with facilitators as well as citizens.

The results from the working groups were mostly displayed on flip-charts in the plenary. This procedure has advantages and disadvantages: A clear advantage is that people can walk around after the plenary session and read again and more closely what have been the results from the other working groups. However, the disadvantage is that during the plenary, the content of what the other working groups did is hard to understand because it is only read to the ple-
nary. An alternative would have been here to use the flip-chart together with e.g. PowerPoint presentations (or other more visualizing computer programmes) of the working group results. This is not as easy as in monolingual environments, there might often be a trade-off involved. The point is to have some kind of visualisation to the plenary, if not it is hard to follow the results from eight working groups. This might be one reason why no plenary discussion could be observed.

The plenary sessions could have been the place of a more lively discussion between participants. A clear suggestion is to include longer plenary sessions in the process and to foster the discussions in there. The experience of other processes shows that citizens get rid of any shyness to speak up in a larger group quite quickly, and in the end the plenary is the place where a common dialogue between all countries can emerge.

4.3 Competence

The European panel used different information sources to build a sound basis for citizens they could discuss and judge on. First of all, a common European information package was sent to all regional panels. The information package was structured with fourteen factsheets, every one going into detail of one issue, e.g. the diversity of rural areas, the functions of rural areas, urban-rural relations, rural economy, demography etc. The regional panels provided additional information for example through hearing experts on specific issues. At the European panel, the citizens firstly heard a presentation of Prof. John Bryden on European rural areas. Secondly, on Sunday, the last day of the deliberations, two experts visited the panel to answer questions of the citizens and to give more direct expert input.
In the view of the evaluation team and resulting from the empirical data, the evaluation of the provision of knowledge for the citizens has to differentiate between the different modes of providing input. The common European information package sent out to the regional panels certainly provided useful information about the issues rural areas are facing today. The structuring as fact sheets has been a good way of keeping the information as dense as possible while trying not to overwhelm the reader. The selection of issues presented in the information package is in fact relevant to rural areas and is a well-balanced mix. Some issues are missing, for example how men and women take on different roles in rural areas. Overall the information package can be seen as useful input for the regional panels that had to be deepened in the regional panels. This is confirmed mostly by statements of facilitators and citizens, however there are views on it from an opposite angle, stating that the information provided was not useful for the regional work because it was too European. The information package has been developed through expert input and had been validated by a sounding board, consisting out of experts.

A significant drawback is that the information package was not available to all panels when they started their regional work. At least two panels had almost finished the process when the information package came out. Another critical remark has to be made about the fact that the organizers did not know whether the information package had been used, and if yes, in what ways. The possibility for important feedback about how the information package got used and was perceived in the regions got lost this way. This information should have been collected at the very moment of experiencing and using the information package, for example through observers present in the regional panels or smaller units of surveying with other means during the regional panels. This information cannot be obtained in the same way through a retrospective questioning.

The expert input during the European panel comprised a presentation given by John Bryden as well as two experts visiting the panel on
Sunday to answer questions from the citizens. The presentation of John Bryden, being very informative to the issues, was given on Friday in the Committee of the Regions. Besides that important issues were raised in the presentation, the format of presenting should be thought about, since citizens stated that their concentration dropped quickly due to the format and the complexity of the presentation.

The experts visiting the panel on Sunday were overwhelmed by questions, which were only partially in their subject area. After answering several questions in the plenary, the plenary was closed and the two experts walked through the working groups and stayed in the groups if they were asked to. The impressions from this expert input is again twofold: the plenary session was without any discussion or direct question-and-answer sequence between citizens and experts, which would have been a good possibility to really get into a discussion between all citizens. On the other side, the walking around by the experts was appreciated by the citizens, they majority of citizens valued this input in the working groups a lot. The results of the survey (see Annex A for details) conducted with the citizens confirms these impressions: almost 60% of the citizens think the expert input on Sunday was helpful, however 37% thought it was irrelevant or even not helpful at all.

To summarize the evaluation of the input of knowledge, as being a part of the indicator competence, the authors see that there have been really good documents as an input for the regional panels, as long as they have been there in time. For the panels which had already started this information was obviously of less use. Further, a feedback mechanism from the regional panels to the European organizers about how this information package was used would have been helpful to assess the future relevance of information like the one provided. The expert input on Sunday was evaluated by the citizens as

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18 Information on response rates and descriptive statistics can be found in Annex A.
useful, despite the fact that more than a third of the citizens thought it was irrelevant or not useful at all. The plenary session with experts could have been used to initiate a debate between all participating citizens. Further, the procedure of visiting working groups was appreciated by many citizens, however two experts were not able to visit all eight working groups with the same intensity. Thus, some working groups became less expert input than others, which is again a matter of procedural fairness.

The second component of competence is communicative competence, which means that participants of such a process should be able and have the opportunity to exchange values, norms, arguments in an appropriate manner. The facilitators did a great job to encourage citizens in their communication, and mostly they managed really well to separate e.g. emotional expressions from arguments and values from norms etc. Thus, the communicative competence was fostered by the facilitators as observed by the evaluators. Further, the citizens presented themselves as reliable partners during the whole process. They were eager to work on the issues and to explore the views from citizens coming from other countries. The majority of them emphasized the value of the bi-lingual working group design, despite the difficulties attached to that design in terms of interpretation. The citizens definitely were able and wanted to participate as equal partners in this process.

Another positive result is the fact that many citizens reported to the evaluation team that they felt “more European”. Citizens got a feeling of what the challenges and the merits of working together on a European scale are, and they seemed to really enjoy both. Most citizens could cope with the situation of being translated simultaneously, which often stops the flow of interaction. The translation team was given credit for their work, even despite the differences between individual interpreters in their flexibility within the working groups.
4.4 Transparency

The European panel was transparent regarding the rules applied and the proceedings of the panel, although sometimes the citizens questioned the use of some proceedings (as for example the mentioned differentiation between concerns, visions, and recommendations). In some cases, a lack of rules was criticized, especially in the working groups. In some groups decisions were made with voting on the issue, in other groups despite a voting procedure issues were discussed over and over again. The different style of facilitation comes into play, as mentioned above already. Overall, however, transparency regarding the rules and the proceedings was achieved according to the collected data.

Citizens stated a lack of transparency regarding the content of the panel, which can be confirmed by the evaluation team. The visualization of the results was ineffective on flip-charts. During the plenary sessions, there could be no discussion about the results from the working groups because citizens did not see the results, they only listened to the results being read. The advantage of flip-charts for citizens to walk around and read them closely is given, however this is only possible after a plenary session is closed, thus again there will be no discussion about it. The statements of citizens in the evaluation show that overall they were able to follow the content, however at some points there did not really know where a specific result came from, who brought up the result and what is the context of it. Besides the presentation method in the plenary, this lack of transparency may also be due to the amount of themes discussed.

A lack of procedural transparency can be seen in the interaction of facilitators, rapporteurs, the reporting group and technical assistants.
A working group was led by one facilitator and one rapporteur, and these two groups were separated in the preparation process of the European panel as well. In most cases, the rapporteurs have been facilitators as well as of the regional panels. The separation of tasks was intended the way that rapporteurs assist the facilitator and record what has been agreed on in the working groups. To achieve comparability between the outputs of the group, each rapporteur should be assisted by a student recording the working group results in a special computer program (Outil-Carto). Tasks of the technical assistance were to ensure the functioning of the technical translation devices, such as headphones and microphones. The student team and other persons assigned (rapporteurs, professional interpreters) were also responsible for the translation of the written material from the working groups. A specialized computer program was used to collect, order and store the results coming from the working groups (Outil-Carto).

Leaving aside the group of students responsible for the technical assistance, the interviews with facilitators as well as the observations of the evaluation team suggest that the groups of rapporteurs, facilitators, and reporting students did not work as intended and lacked a coordinating person or, more general, element. Rapporteurs and facilitators in most groups worked out their understanding of their respective roles on an individual basis, which worked best for most of them considering the fact that in most cases both had been facilitators before. In other working groups this distinction had been kept up, however the sharing of work with the reporting students was not clear. As a result of this uncleanness, it was blurry how the results of the working groups were merged together in the plenary, although it was eventually traceable through a coding system, indicating which statement had been made in which group. During the presentation of the recommendations in the plenary on Sunday of the European panel, some citizens claimed that they did not see their working group results appropriately represented in the recommendations.
Although these issues were resolved bilaterally with the citizens, it did not become transparent to other citizens what the conflicts were and how they were resolved. No objection can be made to clarify these issues with citizens bilaterally, however the result of that clarification should be brought back and approved if necessary.

4.5 Efficiency

The indicator efficiency can be differentiated between internal and external efficiency. Whereas internal efficiency describes the outcome compared to the objectives within the process, external efficiency is more about the repercussions of the results outside of the process.

The citizens taking part in the European Citizens’ Panel developed common recommendations to the policy makers on European level. Thus, the major internal objective of the project has been successfully accomplished. The ECP project enabled citizens from 10 regions to discuss issues of major importance in Europe and to synthesize the discussions within the issued recommendations. Further, the citizens experienced the process of delivering these recommendations to policy makers, including the difficulties attached to that process.

The dialogue in itself is a major accomplishment of the ECP process. Despite the increasing costs of additional interpreters for the working groups, the bi-lingual table design proved as the right choice for a European dialogue. In this regard the ECP has been more innovative than other European participatory initiatives.

The external efficiency, i.e. the repercussions of the ECP project, is hard to assess at this point of time. Certainly, the citizens were eager and proud to present their recommendations to European policy
makers in the Committee of the Regions on April 2nd. At the same time, citizens were not naïve at all regarding what will happen in the CoR or afterwards, knowing that the attending policy makers could not confirm direct or even indirect implementation of the recommendations on the spot. Nevertheless the citizens tried to nail down the policy makers to stay in contact and feed-back on the recommendations to the citizens. It will be important to observe how this process of interaction between policy makers and citizens regarding the ECP initiative will process.

The external stakeholders the evaluation team interviewed did all give very positive evaluations. Some of them were more interested in the results in the long run, thus these stakeholders were hesitant to give a final evaluation of the process. Others, however, saw the process itself as a success. They emphasized the importance to learn from European participatory processes like the ECP to develop and establish new modes of having people decide on a European scale. In some regions, namely Flevoland (NL) and St.Gallen (CH), the policy makers were not only interested in the results of the regional and European panel, but really saw the regional panel as “citizens consultants” who gave their input to the policy arena.
4.6 Organization of the ECP process

The organization of a process taking place in ten different regions and finally on a European level is quite an organizational challenge. From a citizens’ point of perspective, as the results of the interviews and questionnaires indicate, the logistical organization worked out really well overall. Most of the citizens have been satisfied with accommodation and other issues around the logistics, as for example travel arrangements. Critical remarks from participants mainly focused on only two issues: the arrival of citizens on Friday at the Committee of the Regions and the excursion for citizens to a castle nearby. The latter was just badly organized considering the food (the participating citizens went out for dinner afterwards because only sandwiches were provided at the castle) and the content of the program (a guided tour through a castle was perceived from most participating citizens as not really relaxing). Regarding the arrival on Friday at the Committee of the Regions, some citizens did not know when they actually had to be at the CoR, with the result that they had to wait in front of the building for a couple of hours because of entrance restrictions. From the citizens that arrived in Brussels on Thursday evening, the accommodation was criticized as not appropriate at all. Although these points were not a general theme of the logistical work done, it is important to look at what went wrong because sometimes small events can have the power to detach people from a process.

Besides the logistical organization itself, the organization of the methodology of the event and the interplay with the logistical organization is another important point to look at for the evaluation. Usually participatory events from this size are organized top-down with a core organizational team and different regional coordinators. However, the European Citizens’ Panel is organized in a bottom-up process: the facilitators and / or coordinators of the regional panels
were planning jointly the European process. This idea serves the notion of equal partners working together, being aware of and working on cultural differences that may exist. All regional partners bring in their specific knowledge and thus a process is designed that is suitable for all actors involved.

The process of designing and organizing the European Citizens’ Panel, however, was in large parts stamped by (1) unclear responsibilities of different actors, (2) inequality of the partners due to a lack of transparency, and (3) inefficiency due to a lack of leadership. These three problems, which were observed by the evaluation team as well as identified by interviewees, are related to each other, and still can be explained as different bullet points.

The historical development of the ECP initiative did in fact ascribe different partners different roles, e.g. logistics, methodology etc. However, due to different factors the originally ascribed roles were not filled out as intended. A new definition or discussion of these changed roles was not undertaken, with the result that a lot of organizational duties changed actors implicitly. Thus, interviewees pointed out that it was not always clear which actor (or group) was responsible for what task.

Independent of the notion of equal partners within the process, as for example regional facilitators and organizers, due to a lack of transparency within the process an inequality and hierarchy of actors has been perceived. Actors from the facilitation team experienced a lack of information about the details of the project (e.g. funding, constraints of the project etc.), thus they were acting with a lack of knowledge and did not feel able to oversee the process.

Because of the notion of equality between all partners, there was no clear leadership officially assigned for the process. However, between the lines there was indeed leadership on the idea of the ECP as well as on the logistics. Further, at the beginning of 2007, a chair has been assigned to the facilitation team. The circumstances of this assign-
ment as well as the mandate of this position, however, were unclear to the facilitators. The lack of efficiency came into play when decisions had to be made without having someone guiding the group through a decision making process. Further, it became very inefficient, as decisions already being made have been abandoned without real necessity.

These problems are, as said above, interrelated with each other. During the preparation of the process the evaluation team often could observe frustration on the side of facilitators with the process because of discussing the same issues over and over again and not having a clear structure for the preparation of the European panel. During the European panel, these problems accumulated through incidents described in the above sections (e.g. unfair working conditions between the working groups because of facilitators individually re-defining the tasks), and finally some facilitators felt detached from the process and frustrated. A major problem attached to the three points named above were the missing coordination of the three groups of facilitators, rapporteurs, and students. Because there was no sufficient coordination, some work has been done twice, other work was not done at all. Additionally, citizens usually have a fine sense for dissonance within the facilitation team, which did not have any larger influence in this process, but could have easily had in a different setting (e.g. under less time pressure).

These organizational shortcomings could have been avoided. Having a clear organizational structure before and during the European panel would not have been an obstacle to equality, rather a boost of equality. Additionally, it would have made the process more efficient and would have avoided a lot of frustration.

The involvement of the external evaluation team, as a suggestion, should happen right in the beginning of the process. That was in-
tended from the organizers, however did not work out for several reasons. Further, the use of an independent consultant is advisable to receive feedback on specific questions and to make changes as long as it is possible.
5 Conclusions

The European Citizens’ Panel initiative was one of three major participatory initiatives on European level. Compared to other initiatives, the regional panels of the ECP initiative had much more flexibility and freedom in their decision making process. There have been attempts to ensure comparability between the regions and at the same time maintaining the autonomy and cultural specialities of the regions. This conflict of interests has not been resolved properly at all times. To ensure a common methodological grounding of the regional panels, a methodological charter has been issued – however it is unclear if and how this charter has been implemented by the regional panels. The regional panels display a diverse picture in the participation process regarding the settings of the process, e.g. when they met, how often they met, what has been accomplished and how these accomplishments have been fed back to the regional authorities. It is commendable that all regional panels found regional funding sources, thus underlining their role as partners in the ECP initiative as opposed to being simply a contractor and especially to get a commitment from regional authorities to the process. However, equality of partners should not be misunderstood as the absence of definite responsibilities and leadership. These two issues have been real obstacles in the ECP process that should be avoided through a clear-cut organizational structure. The roles of the facilitators coming from different regions next to the Foundation for Future Generation (FFG) and the European Association for Information on Local Development (AEIDL) was unclear. Because actors in the ECP process took on different roles, it would have been a possibility to have an external contractor taking on the leadership and coordination role. This way the

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19 Meeting of Minds (see Goldschmidt/Renn 2006) and European Citizens’ Deliberation are the two others referred to.
involved actors could have concentrated on logistics, content management, and procedural design. These organizational shortcomings fundamentally influenced the whole process, which is why it is really important to get a clear structure on that, besides the decision whether it is a top-down or bottom-up process.

The mentioned organizational problems had, as described in section 4, repercussions on the process during the European panel. These repercussions came into play as:

- A lack of transparency (how results were displayed in the plenary; interaction between organizational staff)
- A lack of efficiency (especially in the preparation phase of the European panel)
- A lack of competence (regarding the late dissemination of the information package and the unequal opportunities for working groups at the European panel to question the experts)
- A lack of procedural fairness (inequality in the working styles and the application of rules within the working groups at the European panel)
- A lack of structural fairness (especially regarding the selection of participants).

Although the ECP initiative was not aiming at being representative in their conclusions, the organizers still wanted to have identical settings of the working groups and regions. In this regard, however, one should be careful in comparing the results between regions or groups. According to the shortcomings mentioned above it is not always clear whether differences in the results are due to different input variables. Rather, these differences can also be due to different
process variables, and thus impede the comparative interpretation of the results.

This criticism can also be interpreted in the way that if the organisational problems would have been resolved, most of the shortcomings in terms of the evaluation criteria would have decreased as well. That is to say, the method of European participatory projects in general works quite well, and it also did in this case; however the organisation is more difficult and needs to consider more dimensions than smaller national / regional projects. Clear rules of decision making are just as important in the preparation as in the participatory project itself, here smaller tasks forces working on assigned tasks might have helped in the view of the evaluation team - without derogating the equality of the partners.

The ECP initiative achieved to incorporate diverse regional partners in a common project, which is clearly an innovative angle to shape a process like the ECP. Considered that often it is easier to find funding for smaller amounts of money, which taken together shape a huge project, ECP might be a future reference on that, because, as mentioned before, all regional partners were responsible for their own funding (with assistance from the foundations’ network).

The basic objectives of the European Citizens’ Panel have been achieved. Citizens from 10 regions worked together in 6 languages and issued recommendations on the future of rural areas in Europe to key policy makers. The recommendations, although some of them are quite general, point out the synthesis of the regional work and the European panel. The citizens have been overall very satisfied with the process, as the interviews and the survey indicate (see Annex A and B). They have been fascinated by the European dimension of the project, they felt “more like Europeans” in their own words. The design of the process, besides the obstacles mentioned above, was
working for the objectives of this project. Although citizens realized that there were organizational difficulties and discrepancies between the facilitators, they felt only in parts affected by that. Generally, they thought that even without looking at the results it is worth to undertake a process like ECP. Further, citizens stated that their personal objectives and expectations have been met by the project, whereas their most important objective to take part in the ECP has been the future of rural areas, followed by the method of participatory projects itself. The survey also indicated that citizens’ understanding and interest in European policies has increased. However, after the delivery of the recommendations in the Committee of the Regions, citizens’ belief that the recommendations will have repercussions on the EU level dropped from 40.5% to 28.8 %. Almost half of the citizens felt that the policymakers present during the delivery of the recommendations was interested in what the citizens had to say. The logistical work done was appreciated by the citizens, whether that was accommodation or simultaneous interpretation. Thus, besides some critical remarks and irritations considering the points above, the citizens overall appreciated being part of this European process and felt that they have a say. The delivery of the recommendations on April 2nd in the Committee of the Regions did not change the citizens’ opinions substantially considering the impact assessment of their recommendations.

The long-term impact of the project cannot be assessed at this point. Citizens articulated their hope that the project will be carried on in some format, and especially that they will receive some feedback from the policy-makers on the recommendations and their implementation. The project team of the European Citizens’ Panel can contribute to that with intense communication and dissemination of the project results.

The European Citizens’ Panel as one of the three major European participatory projects has shown that it is possible to initiate and
conduct a dialogue with a respectable outcome on a European level. The methodological and organisational experiences made within the project will help to foster the development of a European culture of participation.
References


Annex A: Summary Analysis of the Standardized Questionnaires

The citizens were asked to fill out two questionnaires: a “long” version on Sunday late afternoon, and a short version on Monday after the delivery of the recommendations in the Committee of the Regions. The short version was intended to measure whether the experience of delivering the recommendations to the policy makers would produce any change in the evaluation of the ECP by the citizens.

Out of 87 citizens, 72 answered the survey of Sunday afternoon, thus almost 83% of the participating citizens turned it the filled out questionnaire on Sunday afternoon. These 83% have been almost evenly split in terms of gender with 51,4% being male and 48,6% female. The response rates regarding to the country of origin have been differently:
Table 1: Response by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13,9</td>
<td>13,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Germany&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13,5</td>
<td>13,9</td>
<td>13,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Switzerland&quot;</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12,2</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>26,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Belgium&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,5</td>
<td>9,7</td>
<td>36,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Netherlands&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13,5</td>
<td>13,9</td>
<td>50,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;United Kingdom&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,4</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>55,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ireland&quot;</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16,2</td>
<td>16,7</td>
<td>72,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Slovenia&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8,1</td>
<td>8,3</td>
<td>80,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hungary&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8,1</td>
<td>8,3</td>
<td>88,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10,8</td>
<td>11,1</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesamt</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>97,3</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the age of the respondents of the survey, one can observe all age categories\(^{21}\) being comparable to their representation within the basic population of the European panel. Only the youngest age category (below 20 years old) drops back from having a share in the European panel of 10\%, but responding to the survey with 4\% (three persons in absolute numbers).

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\(^{20}\) The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are grouped together.

\(^{21}\) Age categories are being built in decades.
The shorter survey on April 2nd, after the delivery of the recommendations in the Committee of the Regions, had a response rate of 67% (59 citizens). The drop in the response rate might be due to the situation within the CoR, where it was more difficult to get a hold of respondents.

Overall, the citizens show a very positive attitude and evaluation of the European Citizens’ Panel. The participation in this initiative made them more interested in European policy making in general, which is an important result in terms of empowerment.

It is important to know whether the objectives of the citizens taking part in this process have been met. Even before that, one has to realize that citizens might have very different reasons to participate in such a process, and thus it means something very different whether their expectations have been met. The results of the survey show that the main reason for citizens to participate was the issue of rural areas. This objective was followed by the objective to participate together with other citizens in a process, the participatory process itself, to have fun and to travel, and finally because one was asked and didn’t want to refuse. Bearing in mind these stated objectives, it is a nice outcome considering the question whether the individual objective has been met (see figure 1).
Almost 60% agreed or strongly agreed to the question whether their personal objectives have been met. However, it is still a large proportion of almost 30% of citizens who say “neither-nor”. Again a majority of citizens stated that they were able to communicate intensively and with ease (77% and 59% agreement), and if they could not this was largely due to translation problems, but not to unequal speaking opportunities or an uncomfortable atmosphere. Some open remarks to that question mentioned the dissonance of the organizers as a problem for the citizens’ communication.

22 Categories not selected are not displayed (here: strongly disagree).
Only half of the citizens believed that the process design of the European panel was appropriate to foster a productive dialogue. The second half splits up almost equally with 24% indecisive on that question and 23% stating that the design was not appropriate. 67% of the citizens said that the process appeared fair to them (25% strongly agree, 42% agree), however again 27% were not able to decide. That citizens were treated equally believed more than 78%, only a minority of 14% could not decide or did not agree on that item (ca. 7%).

The citizens did know what they had to do and they understood the rules and procedures in the majority. Again a percentage of about 15% could not decide to agree or disagree on these items, but the majority of more than 80% did agree. Further, only about 10% of the citizens did not feel well prepared for the European Panel by their regional facilitators, another 10% was ambivalent about that. The majority of almost 78% felt well prepared. Despite that, 55.4% of the citizens felt the need to stress their own countries issues and interests.

Another important issue is whether the citizens themselves feel competent enough to come to conclusions and to decide on the themes in question. Regarding to their own assessment, 68% agreed with the statement that ordinary citizens have the competence to judge on complex issues.

Regarding the value of the expert input at the European Panel the figure show the following results:
Figure 2: The expert input at the European Citizens’ Panel was really helpful to understand and clarify the issue.

These numbers were interpreted in the section above already. They display that a large proportion (37%) did not see the expert input as helpful, a majority of almost 60% however did. This result might be due to experiences made within the working groups: some of them had enough time with the experts, others did not.

Looking on the produced outcomes of the European panel, half of the citizens judge on Sunday afternoon that they were satisfied with the outcome. A large proportion of the citizens could not decide whether they were satisfied or not (37%), and almost 10% clearly were not satisfied. However, a majority of citizens thought that the results still were worth the effort of the ECP.
Another important aspect mentioned in the context of the European Citizens’ Panel is the growth of a European identity, or at least that European citizens get to know each other better and their cultures.

Figure 3: As a result of the European Citizens’ Panel I feel more like a European than I did before.
Figure 4: I feel I have learned a lot about the other participating countries during the process of the European Citizens’ Panel.

The impression from figures 3 and 4, that is that citizens felt more „European“ after the ECP and got to know the other countries better, can be confirmed from the semi-structured interviews conducted with participants (see Annex B).

As mentioned above already, over 70% of the citizens stated that the participatory process increased their interest in European policy making in general. More than half of the citizens ascribe greater credibility to the European Commission because of their financial support for
the ECP initiative, and almost 80% said that the ECP broadened their perspective on rural issues. Some issues, however, were not sufficiently covered in the process, especially demographic issues.

Regarding the short questionnaire disseminated on Monday after the delivery of the recommendations to policy-makers, the evaluation team was interested to see whether the opinions of citizens had changed. After working a whole weekend intensely on the recommendations, it might have been possible that the session together with policy makers would frustrate the citizens, especially since it was known to the citizens that the EU-Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development will not respond directly to the recommendations but only give general statements.

First of all, in the view of the citizens they had the same speaking opportunities as policy makers; a large majority of 83.1% stated this. Only 8.5% couldn’t decide, and another 8.5% did not agree to that item.

The repercussions of the recommendations were seen mostly on decisions at the national / regional level (30.5%), however closely followed by the conviction that there will be repercussions on the decisions at EU level (28.8%). 25% of the citizens believed that the recommendations will have repercussions on the media, whereas 16% believed in repercussions on the society as a whole. That the recommendations will have no repercussions at all said on Monday afternoon 20.3%. Compared to the results of the day before the recommendations were delivered, the belief that the recommendations will have repercussions on decisions on the EU-level dropped from 40.5% to 28.8%. The difference is smaller regarding the repercussions expected on decisions on national / regional level, which dropped from 32.4% to 30.5%. However, the belief that there will be no repercussions at all also dropped slightly from 23% to 20%. Apparently the Monday meeting with policy makers made the citizens first of all more sensitive to the difficulties of decision making processes on the EU-level.
The numbers regarding the believe of repercussions, however, cannot be used to state that the citizens believed policy-makers were not interested in what they have to say. The contrary is true:

![Diagram showing percentages of agreement]

**Figure 5**: The policy makers have been really interested in what we citizens had to say.

More citizens agree or strongly agree to the item (47.5%) as disagree or strongly disagree (18.6%), however with a almost 34% pendant on this question.

Often there is a focus on the implementation of recommendations as the real success of a participatory process. However, there are many other reasons why citizens could evaluate a participatory process as good. Thus, the evaluation team asked whether it would be worth to conduct a process like the ECP if nothing of the results were imple-
mented at all. There is strong support for that statement, as can be seen in figure 6.

\[\text{if no implementation, still worth holding ECP}\]

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{Supposed the policy makers will not implement the Citizens’ report it would be still worth it to conduct a process as the European Citizens’ Panel.}
\end{figure}

Finally, in both surveys was asked whether the European Citizens’ Panel met the expectations citizens had for this process. Before the delivery of the recommendations, i.e. on Sunday afternoon, 13,5% strongly agreed to that item, 45,9% agreed opposed to 6,8% disagreement. Almost 30% could not decide whether their expectations have been met or not. After the presentation and delivery of the recommendations in the Committee of the Regions on Monday, more citizens strongly agreed (18,6%), a bit less than the day before agreed
(44.1%), and little more (8.5%) disagreed. The number of citizens who could not decide on that item dropped to 22%. Thus, after the delivery of the recommendations on Monday we find more citizens on both sides, saying that their expectations have been met and that they haven’t met.
Annex B: Results of the semi-structured interviews

The evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews with participants, stakeholders, organizers, and facilitators. The results of these interviews per group are summarized in the following.

B1: Interviews with Participants

The semi-structured interviews confirmed overall the results of the standardized survey. The interviewed citizens have been overall very satisfied with the European Citizens’ Panel on both, the regional and European level. The topic of the debate, i.e. rural areas, was a good choice in their view, although some of the citizens did not know exactly what it meant to them. The citizens were curious about what will happen in the European Panel. They also had no overdrawn expectations about how European policy makers will deal with the recommendations, in fact they have been very realistic on this issue. However, almost all of them expect that participatory processes like the ECP will conducted more often on a European level than up to now. They feel that it is important for the citizens, because they get involved more deeply into a specific issue. Further, the citizens see this method also as important for policy makers, because the input provided can be much more every-day relevant. Thus, the interaction between policy makers and citizens was mentioned as one important objective of the European Citizens’ Panel.

Regarding the process design, citizens found working groups working best, although some said that the work within the working
groups was very ineffective. The citizens referred to the different conditions regarding on the facilitator of the group, which has been something they did not appreciate. Further, some facilitators have been described as really pushy towards their agenda. The plenary sessions were assessed as mostly ineffective and chaotic. In their view, it was hard to follow the presentations in the plenary because there was no visualization of what has been said besides the flip charts, which were inappropriate. Considering the working groups it was suggested to build interest groups rather than language groups. Further, some citizens said that the process overall was not effective, i.e. there was time-pressure on one side and a waste of time on points they judge as less important.

The expert input was evaluated ambivalent by the citizens. They appreciated and valued the presentation of the regional results on Friday by Michael Murray as understandable and a good starting point. However, the feedback on the presentation of John Bryden is that most citizens were not able to follow anymore, partly because they were tired (most of them arrived that day in Brussels), partly it was too complicated. The expert input on Sunday during the European panel became also ambivalent comments, with some citizens saying this input did not help at all and others who said it did help.

The translation within the working groups and the plenary was appreciated by all citizens. The interpreters did a good job overall and were flexible enough for the working groups in most cases, citizens said. Further, the logistical work done was evaluated as very good, which comprises for the citizens accommodation and the work behind the scene to run the process. Only two major criticisms were raised, first the trip to the castle on Sunday evening (bad idea and bad food), and the missing information for citizens travelling individually to Brussels. Regarding the latter, citizens did not know when they were supposed to come to the Committee of the Regions, with the result that they had to wait for hours in front of the building (they
could not go in because of security reasons). Further, the proposed accommodation for the citizens arriving a day before the panel started has been not appropriate at all in their view.

The citizens felt that all of them had the same opportunities to raise their voice, to make statements and that all of them were treated equally. Although they always knew what their task was, they did not see the value of the task at some times. The working together of the citizens, however, was characterized as being strongly committed to the process and the common task. It was emphasized by the citizens that they do feel more European after this process, that they really developed something like a European identity. This was of great value for the citizens, especially because some of them have been really European-critical before the process according to their own assessment.

Overall, the citizens valued the process in itself, which is debating the issue with other citizens, working together on a common outcome, getting involved in a specific topic, a lot. They raised some disagreement and criticism on the organisational side, which too often made a chaotic impression on them. The logistical organization was overall assessed positively.
B2: Interviews with Facilitators

The interviews with facilitators showed that they were mostly concerned with the assessment of their own work in terms of the organization and preparation of the regional panel as well as the European panel and with their performance within the process. What they valued was the possibility to be part of the organizational process, which had been of course kind of a natural development in this process because most of the facilitators were approached through personal networks.

On the regional level, the facilitators were mostly satisfied. They did see problems, for example the lack of funding and as a result a process design that was not fully appropriate in their view, for example regarding the selection of participants. Overall, they enjoyed the work a lot in the regions and received positive feedback from citizens and stakeholders. Problems of the regional processes were, in their view, mainly due to an incoherent organizational process of the ECP in general.

Regarding the preparation of the European panel, the facilitators were torn between two different positions. Besides that all of them wanted to have a common process, how the procedure of gaining results and decision making should look like was quite different. Some of the facilitators emphasized the value of different cultures coming together and eventually finding a procedure that is suitable for all of them. Other facilitators were not denying that value, however asked for a much more structured proceeding in gaining results. They complained about lengthy discussions without decisions during the whole process.
Besides these different notions of how to work together, the facilitators had a common view that the transparency of the organizational process was low and that this caused major conflicts. In their view, they were not able to say who really was in charge of this process. They did not have the feeling that they themselves were guiding the process, however neither that any other person or organization did. Thus, there was a problem of to where to address issues, who in the end is responsible for what etc. These problems in the preparation were the same in the European panel itself, where a lot of decisions were changed and some facilitators had no idea why that happened and who made the decision on that. When the process became more complicated at the European level, these issues culminated in a clash between the facilitators and organizers (logistically and regarding the content). This clash, which took place more or less in front of the eyes of the citizens, would not have been necessary according to the facilitators. Clear responsibilities and more transparency in the whole process could have prevented this to happen. The issue of unclear responsibilities especially was emphasized according to the roles of FFG and AEIDL: the interviewed facilitators had no clear picture of who really was the leader of the process.

In terms of transparency, the facilitators complained that they always lacked behind with their knowledge on the process, and thus made decisions without sufficient knowledge. For example, the European budget was unclear to them, and thus they were unsure whether the European foundations did not want to give more money for the regional panels, or whether they were not able to do that. They would have appreciated a clear picture on these issues. Further, some decisions were just made without any collective decision making, e.g. the appointment of the chair of the facilitation team. None of the facilitators interviewed had objectives against having a chair, however they wanted to be part of that decision.

Besides these critical remarks, which relate mainly to the organizational process itself, the facilitators were fascinated by the outcome of
the European panel, although some were emphasizing that this panel was unfortunately less empowerment for the citizens as they thought it should be. Most of the methods applied and the basic procedural design was positively assessed, if some methods did not work out as intended it was in their view due to organizational problems.

The evaluation of the logistical work done was quite different between facilitators. Whereas all of them acknowledge the tremendous work that had to be done, some of them thought this task was solved really well whereas others were not satisfied. These assessments were on the translation, the accommodation and all the technical input.

Overall one can summarize the standpoint of the facilitators with highly positive to the process and the outcome, however very critical on the organization and preparation of the process. The bottom line for the latter point is the wish for leadership and a clear structure within the process. In their view, that would not be opposed to a bottom-up process.
B3: Interviews with Organizers

Some organizations involved with the organization of the ECP and the original idea of the process were overall very satisfied with the process and what has been achieved. There were a lot of problems they had to cope with, e.g. very late confirmations of the amount of funding. Especially this last point made a lot of things more complicated. Further, in their view they had to change their own role due to shortcomings of other partners: initially they saw themselves as supervisors of the process and contact persons to the European Community and other foundations, however they felt the need to be more involved with the methodological preparation of the process as well. The partner who was supposed to supervise the methodological work was not able to fulfil that task, in their view.

Despite of the problems, which are problems to learn from, they saw the outcome of the process as a real success. The citizens were really satisfied according to the feedback they received, and the acceptance of what has been done from the policy makers has been really positive. On all sides there is interest to proceed with what has been achieved. Things to change are basically on the organizational side beforehand, especially funding issues and clear agreements with partners.

Other organizations, however, were more critical of the process. The outcome of the process in terms of the recommendations was seen as too general, and also most likely not receiving any further attention in the policy arena. A major issue was again unclear responsibilities and a lack of leadership for the whole process, which certainly would have to change in order to conduct a process like that again.
B4: Interviews with Stakeholders

For the semi-structured interviews stakeholders were interviewed coming from the administrative or policy arena in the regions as well as on the European level.

On the regional level, actors were really satisfied with the results of the process. They were able to give a full appraisal of the work done, because the regional processes were finalized already. Additionally, these regional stakeholders were in closer contact to the regional panels.

The regional stakeholders emphasized the tremendous value of the regional reports to their work on rural issues in the regions. They felt responsible for the panels in the sense that they feedback if and how they will work with the recommendations issued by the regional panels. They did not promise the implementation of all recommendations, but they did promise an ongoing exchange process about what can and what cannot be implemented. These regional stakeholders had questions raised to the citizens, and they wanted the regional panels to work on these questions to provide input. Overall, the regional stakeholders accepted the regional panels as legitimate instrument for local decision making, however they were more interested in the topical results than in the method.

The European stakeholders instead were more interested in the method itself, also of course rural issues also plays a major role in their policies. However, they supported the project because of their wish to test new methods of citizen participation. For them it was too early to provide a final assessment of the initiative, they observe the process in the long run. However, they were very open to the method
and gained very positive impressions from the work the citizens have done and presented to the policy makers.
Annex C: Analysis of ECP’s Website

The website of the European Citizens’ Panel is analyzed because it is nowadays a major tool to provide information and to enable communication between citizens and other actors, especially in distant places. The website of the European Citizens Panel offers a lot of information about the project. The initiative is introduced, its aims and objectives are given, and the multi-layered approach is explained. The topic and the methodology are described. The topic Rural Europe is elaborated on by an extensive infopack that is available in each of the languages. The regional panels are introduced on the website, and a calendar gives an overview of what has happened in each of the regional panels. The regional reports are also available for download and it is possible to see pictures from some of the regional panels. Most core elements of the website are available in all six participating languages, switching to another language is done by clicking on a small menu. The most recently updated elements like the Presentation of the European Citizens Report are only available in English. The summary report and the recommendation can be downloaded from the site in six languages. Other key documents available include the speeches given by John Bryden and Pierre Calame in the Committee of the Regions, which are only available in English. The full program of the event is available as well as a series of photos from the weekend. Newsletters have been published on the website and have been e-mailed to interested parties. The first came out in September 2006, the last in May 2007. They brought news on what was happening in the regional panel; further, in every newsletter a regional panel of the month was highlighted. These newsletters are only available in English. The Link menu gives access to definitions of deliberative democracy, explanations of participatory methods and examples of practices of citizen’s juries and panels. The European coordinator of the project, the methodological advisors and
the supporting foundations and authorities are mentioned and links are placed on the site. The extranet function of the website is only available for members. The regional partners and the participating foundations could log on to post their own documents and logo’s here and to download these from the other parties. This feature has not been used much, the members section is currently empty. The Press menu gives access to press releases and newspaper articles and radio recordings that have been releases in relation to the regional and the European panels. The website offers no possibility for citizens to give feedback on the process.

In short, the ECP-website provides all necessary information about the project, its context and its implementation to the public in an understandable and attractive manner. However, what it doesn’t provide is any means of interaction for the citizens, as for example a web-log, forum, discussion board and so on. Especially for projects with citizens from many different countries this would have been advisable. Although communication tools based on internet solutions still have a user-bias in terms of age, and additionally language constraints pose further problems for the communication between countries, it still would have been a possibility to collect important feedback to the organizers as well as for the mutual understanding and communication of the citizens. Further projects comparable to ECP in size and scope should be encouraged to experiment on these matters and to implement a solution.

In general the website lacks clarity in some regard. For example, documents are fragmented over the site, instead of having one specific section for all documents. Further, the linking of the regional panels is indirect and sometimes not easy to find. Users have to search for what they are looking for, instead of an easy access to the necessary information. The readability of the website generally is quite low, due to the use of small fonts and columns, where users have to scroll a lot.
Annex D: Standardized Questionnaire

D1: Standardized Questionnaire before delivery of recommendations

Evaluation of the

EUROPEAN CITIZENS’ Panel

GENDER

I am: □ Male □ Female

COUNTRY:

YEAR OF BIRTH: 19
1. What was your primary interest for participating in the European Citizens’ Panel (ECP) initiative? Please rank the following answers with writing numbers from 1 to 6 into the appropriate box, being 1 the most important interest and 6 the least important interest.

a. □ The issue (future of the rural areas in the European Union)
b. □ The process (participatory debate, learning more about group processes)
c. □ Participating in an project together with citizens from all over Europe
d. □ Have fun / I want to travel
e. □ I was asked to participate and did not want to refuse
f. □ Other, namely: ____________________________

2. What do you perceive to be the key objective/s of the ECP initiative?
(Multiple answers are possible)

a. □ Encourage public debate on the issue of rural areas
b. □ Contribute to resolving the current problems of the European Union
c. □ Encourage communication between citizens and policy-makers
d. □ Empower citizens to influence European policies
e. □ Strengthen national goals against a unified European policy
f. □ Other, namely: ____________________________
Please, indicate whether you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following statements!

3. The European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels met most of my personal expectations I had for this process.

a. [ ] Strongly agree
b. [ ] Agree
c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
d. [ ] Disagree
e. [ ] Strongly disagree
f. [ ] Didn’t have any expectations at all

4. During the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels, I was able to communicate intensively with other citizens.

a. [ ] Strongly agree
b. [ ] Agree
c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree => please answer also question 4.2
d. [ ] Disagree => please answer also question 4.2
e. [ ] Strongly disagree => please answer also question 4.2
4.1 During the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels, I was able to communicate with ease with other citizens.

a. □ Strongly agree => please go to question 5
b. □ Agree => please go to question 5
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree => please go to question 4.2
d. □ Disagree => please go to question 4.2
e. □ Strongly disagree => please go to question 4.2

=> 4.2 If you were not able to communicate effectively or with ease, please explain the reason/s for that.

(Multiple answers possible)

a. □ Time problems (not enough time for the discussions, …)

b. □ Facilitators did not succeed to provide equal speaking opportunities for all participants (including myself)
c. □ Uncomfortable atmosphere (loudness, …)
d. □ Inappropriate setting (topic table groups, re-composed tables, …)
e. □ Not enough knowledge about the topic
f. □ Insufficient information provided
g. □ High complexity of the process
h. □ Discussion and process were too much structured by rules
i. □ The necessity of the translation back and forth
j.  □ Other, namely:  ________________________________

5.  I found the process design (that is, the method of presentation, such as table format, cards on wall, etc.) of the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels not appropriate for developing a productive dialogue.

   a.  □ Strongly agree
   b.  □ Agree
   c.  □ Neither agree nor disagree
   d.  □ Disagree
   e.  □ Strongly disagree

6.  During the process of the European Citizens’ Panel all rules and procedures proposed by the organizers appeared fair to me.

   a.  □ Strongly agree
   b.  □ Agree
   c.  □ Neither agree nor disagree
   d.  □ Disagree
   e.  □ Strongly disagree

7.  During the process of the European Citizens’ Panel I felt that all citizens were treated equally in the process of gaining results.

   a.  □ Strongly agree
   b.  □ Agree
   c.  □ Neither agree nor disagree
   d.  □ Disagree
8. During the process of the European Citizens’ Panel I understood all procedures and rules completely.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. During the process of the European Citizens’ Panel I knew my tasks during every process step.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. I felt well prepared for the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels by the moderators of my country panel.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. During the European Citizens’ Panel I felt it was important to stress my country’s own issues and interests.
12. I felt that the other panel members were pushing their national and/or regional interests during the deliberation process.

a. □ Strongly agree  
b. □ Agree  
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree  
d. □ Disagree  
e. □ Strongly disagree

13. The European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels demonstrates that ordinary citizens have sufficient competence to judge complex issues and topics.

a. □ Strongly agree  
b. □ Agree  
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree  
d. □ Disagree  
e. □ Strongly disagree

14. The expert input at the European Citizens’ Panel was really helpful to understand and clarify the issue.

a. □ Strongly agree  
b. □ Agree
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree
d. □ Disagree
e. □ Strongly disagree

15. The themes that were discussed in the pan-European panel in Brussels were.....:

a. □ The same themes that are important in my own country
b. □ Very specific European themes
c. □ A combination of all the themes that were discussed in the regional panels
d. □ A combination of national, regional and European themes

16. I am very satisfied with the outcomes of the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels.

a. □ Strongly agree
b. □ Agree
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree
d. □ Disagree
e. □ Strongly disagree

19. I feel I have learned a lot about the other participating countries during the process of the European Citizens’ Panel.

a. □ Strongly agree
b. □ Agree
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree
d. □ Disagree
20. The results achieved in the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels were not worth the effort invested in this project.

a. [ ] Strongly agree
b. [ ] Agree
c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
d. [ ] Disagree
e. [ ] Strongly disagree

20. As a result of the European Citizens’ Panel I feel more like a European than I did before.

a. [ ] Strongly agree
b. [ ] Agree
c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
d. [ ] Disagree
e. [ ] Strongly disagree

21. Do you expect that the European Citizens’ Panel will have significant repercussions on...

a. [ ] … the media
   => please go to 21
b. [ ] … the society
   => please go to 21
c. [ ] … political decisions and decision makers in member countries
   => please go to 21
d. [ ] … political decisions and decision makers on the European level
   => please go to 21
e. □ ... nothing, there will be no significant repercussions.  
   => please go to 20.1

=> 21.1 If you think it will have NO repercussions, could you briefly tell us why?

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

22. Participating in the European Citizens’ Panel has made me more interested in the policies of the European Union in general.

a. □ Strongly agree
b. □ Agree
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree
d. □ Disagree
e. □ Strongly disagree

23. The fact that the European Commission participates in the funding for the European Citizens’ Panel gives the European Commission greater credibility.

a. □ Strongly agree
b. □ Agree
c. □ Neither agree nor disagree
d. □ Disagree
e. □ Strongly disagree
24. The topics discussed during the European Citizens’ Panel broadened my perspective on rural issues in Europe.

a. [ ] Strongly agree  
b. [ ] Agree  
c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree  
d. [ ] Disagree  
e. [ ] Strongly disagree

25. I feel that all important issues were sufficiently covered at the European Citizen’s Panel.

a. [ ] Strongly agree  
b. [ ] Agree  
c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree => please go to question 24.1  
d. [ ] Disagree => please go to question 24.1  
e. [ ] Strongly disagree => please go to question 24.1

=> 25.1 If you feel that important issues were not sufficiently covered at the European Citizen’s Panel, can you indicate which issues were absent?

a. [ ] Economical issues  
b. [ ] Environmental issues  
c. [ ] Social issues  
d. [ ] Transportation issues  
e. [ ] Demographic issues
26. How satisfied are you with the logistical work done for the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels (for example accommodation, logistical information, meals)?

a. [ ] Extremely satisfied
b. [ ] Satisfied
c. [ ] Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d. [ ] Dissatisfied
e. [ ] Extremely dissatisfied
27. Which aspects do you consider relevant vice versa not relevant when evaluating an event such as the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels? (What discriminates a “good event” from a “bad event”?).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very relevant</th>
<th>Rather relevant</th>
<th>Neither / Nor</th>
<th>Rather irrelevant</th>
<th>Totally irrelevant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Assuring a fair representation of all countries, age classes and income classes and regarding gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Assuring high quality of facilitators and moderators</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Placing more emphasis on discussion than on reaching results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Making sure that the outcomes are in line with the state of art in Science</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Showing high sensitivity for minority opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>Making the process transparent and open for all participants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>Assuring effective procedures for reaching clear results</td>
<td></td>
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<td>8)</td>
<td>Giving each participant the same rights to</td>
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voice opinions and
to judge alternatives
9) Assuring that the outcomes are factually correct/of high quality
10) Providing access to information and knowledge to all participants
11) Making sure that the outcomes are articulated in a way that the message is attractive for politicians and other decision makers
12) Making sure that every citizen in Europe understands the Outcomes
13) Provide an engaged plan for communication/impact of the results
14) Assuring that a high rate of participants is satisfied with the results
15) Keeping costs as low as possible
16) Others:

28. Taking it all together, what would you criticise the most considering all that you have experienced at the European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels?
29. Taking it all together, what did you like most of all during the European Citizens’ Panel?

30. If you have any suggestions or comments, you can add them here. Feel free to comment what is important to you, whether this is the process in Brussels, the survey you just filled out etc.

We thank you very much for your support and the time you spent on this survey!
D2: Standardized Questionnaire after delivery of recommendations

Evaluation of the

EUROPEAN CITIZENS’ Panel

Dear participants of the European Citizens’ Panel,

Last night we asked you about your opinion and assessment of the ECP process you took part in over the last weekend, what you liked and what should be improved. Today we kindly ask you to give us an understanding of how you think on the delivering of the final report to policy makers in the Committee of the Regions that you just attended.

Your answers will be strictly confidential, there is no possibility to track back opinions made in this questionnaire to a specific person.
1. There has been a balanced mix between citizens’ and policy makers’ opportunities to speak up in the joint sessions today.
   a. [ ] Strongly agree
   b. [ ] Agree
   c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   d. [ ] Disagree
   e. [ ] Strongly disagree

2. Do you expect that the European Citizens’ Panel will have significant repercussions on...
   a. [ ] ... the media
   b. [ ] ... the society
   c. [ ] ... political decisions and decision makers in member countries
   d. [ ] ... political decisions and decision makers on the European level
   e. [ ] ... nothing, there will be no significant repercussions.

3. Suppose the policy-makers will not implement the Citizens’ report it would still be worth it to conduct a process as the European Citizens’ Panel.
   a. [ ] Strongly agree
   b. [ ] Agree
   c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   d. [ ] Disagree
4. The policy makers have been really interested in what we citizens had to say.

   a. [ ] Strongly agree
   b. [ ] Agree
   c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   d. [ ] Disagree
   e. [ ] Strongly disagree

5. The European Citizens’ Panel in Brussels met most of my personal expectations I had for this process.

   a. [ ] Strongly agree
   b. [ ] Agree
   c. [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   d. [ ] Disagree
   e. [ ] Strongly disagree

   [ ] Didn’t have any expectations at all

We thank you very much for your support and the time you spent on this survey!