



**EuroPCom 2015**  
**Session 16 report**  
**21.10.2015**

**R.S.V.P: the power of local EU events (bis)**

The workshop aimed to understand how to get in touch with people who do not regularly attend local EU events. The discussion focused on the problems that European citizens have with the EU, what they want to change, how to get to that point, and what we can do to achieve results.

The moderator **Horst Seele-Liebetanz**, head of EuropaPunktBremen – a Europe Direct information centre – opened the workshop by inviting the speakers and participants to talk about controversial topics, even if all politicians tend to say that the EU is looking good.

**Dejan Bogdan**, from Europe Direct Murska Sobota in Slovenia, admitted that even if he had never had a deep interest in technology, as his region had missed its opportunity to improve its digital progress, it was very important nowadays. He pointed out the importance of cooperation and organisation: "For example, will never create publications without the help of Slovenian experts and schools". Last year, two events on the local environment were held:

- An e-job fair, by drawing up a list of partners interested in cooperating and in promoting the event a great deal
- An event about "Kickstarter", the largest platform for realising projects

Success did not consist in achieving a predetermined goal but in pushing people to be creative. In any case, cooperation was the basis for the work realised. Engaging people was possible thanks to social networks and to web streaming. An event 'on screens' leads to more questions.

**Ilona Negro**, Coordinator of Citizens' Dialogues at the European Commission, asserted that it was necessary to find new ideas for Citizens' Dialogues and to create common knowledge all over the EU, so that European citizens feel like they have more ownership at the next EP elections in 2019. It is essential to know how people live, understand their expectations and listen to their experiences, and to be able to explain to them what it means to be an EU citizen. A systematic approach should be adopted, and more than one commissioner should be involved because this affects all Member States. Preparatory debates are still relevant: very often, the same issues come back and it is important to know how they evolve.

In 2015, 42 Citizens' Dialogues have been organised in 26 Member States and around 20 000 citizens have taken part in them. The same year, 18 900 tweets containing the hashtag #EUDialogues have been sent. The main objective is to understand what bothers citizens and what it is that they really want: there is still something missing, and we have to pick up on that. Citizens have to be sure that their interests are represented, but this goal still needs time and we can only achieve it if we can have shared knowledge all over the EU, which also involves communication. Using streaming and Twitter has been a success.

**Sandor Szalai** from the European Commission, working on stakeholders' relations, mentioned two events: the Digital4EU Stakeholder Forum on 24 February 2015 and the "Going Local" event of 6 May 2015. The Digital4EU Stakeholder Forum was about the new



digital strategy: the digital champions are advisers, nominated by the national governments. They do not talk about communication, but put forward local issues in a global context and try to collect feedback from citizens.

The 'Going Local' concept started this year with the objective of engaging citizens and stakeholders. **Sandor Szalai** provided two examples of this particular type of event, as it can have different formats:

- in Bulgaria: more than 1000 participants in an event about e-government on 20-21 April.
- in Sweden: with Going Local ambassador and organised by Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

In 2015, Going Local consisted of 40 events in all 28 EU Member States. They are currently being assessed, to evaluate the possibility of a second round for 2016 and to define the most relevant topics and areas. The prevailing attitude is to involve as many stakeholders as possible and to continue to be in contact with them, in order to ensure their involvement.

**Horst Seele-Liebetanz** concluded the workshop by inviting citizens to take part in the discussion.