

Meeting of the Minds: European Citizens Deliberate on Brain Science



European citizens wrestled - in nine languages - with the implications of brain science policy to develop recommendations for the European Parliament. *Meeting of the Minds* showcased a new citizen deliberation method, advancing the European Union's goal of greater public involvement in technological decision making and governance. Decision-makers saw the benefits of citizen engagement first hand and average citizens' willingness to delve deeply into complex public policy questions.



- ▶ 126 participants, speaking nine languages, deliberated on the ethical, social and legal implications of brain science policy and technology
- ▶ Featured two pan-European Town Meetings and several consultations in each participating nation, held over twelve months
- ▶ Participants presented their final assessment report to the European Parliament
- ▶ *Meeting of the Minds* pioneered a new deliberation process in Europe, inspiring the European Citizens' Consultations and the European Citizens Panel



Multinational Deliberation

Meeting of the Minds broke new ground by hosting a genuine transnational deliberation. Deliberation in nine languages was made possible through simultaneous translation at individual discussion tables, multilingual documents and broadcasted translation during presentations.



Meeting of the Minds featured a mix of large and small group sessions, groupware computers, polling key pads and accessibly written scientific discussion materials. Citizens from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom took part in this unique process. Over the year, participants met several times in their respective home countries and twice for pan-European town meetings.



At the end of the deliberations, all 126 participants agreed that they had not only been part of an intensive and substantial debate, but also an extraordinary European experience in which they felt empowered as citizens.

“We would have never dared to launch such an ambitious project without having the experience of *Meeting of the Minds*.”

Gerrit Rauws, a director of the King Baudouin Foundation, commenting on the European Citizen Consultations on the Future of the European Union

Citizens Advancing Complex Policy

Meeting of the Minds successfully demonstrated the capacity and value of citizen participation in science and technology policy development. Participants tackled complex issues surrounding brain science, and competently identified priorities for research and regulation along six themes:

- Regulation and Control
- Normalcy vs. Diversity
- Information and Communication
- Equal Access to Treatment
- Pressure from Economic Interests
- Freedom of Choice

The European Parliament received the participants' thirty-seven recommendations in January 2006. These recommendations also informed research and policy papers produced by key organizations in the European Union, including the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies.

Collaborative Convening

Meeting of the Minds was the product of a partnership among technology assessment organizations, science museums, academic institutions and public foundations, with the support of the European Commission and sponsorship from Belgium's King Baudouin Foundation.

Global Voices, the international brand of *AmericaSpeaks*, partnered with King Baudouin Foundation and Institut für Organisationskommunikation (IFOK), a German consulting group specializing in civic engagement, to design and facilitate this landmark initiative.

“ We didn't know that the European Parliament and other governments would do anything with [our recommendations]. It was afterwards... that I realized that what we did was a very good job. All the people who talked to us at the European Parliament had really read it. ”

Hai-Chay Jiang, member of Belgian Flemish Community delegation



AmericaSpeaks / Global Voices provides citizens a greater voice in local, regional, and national decision-making on the most challenging public issues of the day. Over 150,000 people have participated in *AmericaSpeaks*' meetings where participants wrestle with complex issues,

uncover shared priorities and offer recommendations to shape next steps.

Our innovative deliberative tools, such as the internationally recognized 21st Century Town Meeting® that links citizens and decision makers - have been used in all 50 states and around the world.

AmericaSpeaks / Global Voices is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington DC. Learn more at:

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