

## **Minutes of the RAISE-PLUS Citizens Event in Brussels, 8-10 November 2007**

### ***Raise Group – Participants attending the Lefkara Event***

1. Simonas
2. Anastassia
3. Hanne
4. Daniel
5. Andreas
6. Gabriella
7. Irina
8. Hana
9. Afrodit
10. Artwell
11. Matthias
12. Tanguy
13. Eduardo
14. Nuno
15. Claude
16. Linda
17. Anna Maria
18. Carlo
19. Yves
20. Maud

### **First Day: Thursday 8 November 2007 – Brussels (Afternoon Session)**

#### **Day Topic: Assessment of the RAISE local conference in Lefkara**

#### **Goals**

Lefkara event assessment and follow-up with Andreas

#### **Performance**

Yves: practical arrangements for the dinner

Maud: présentation of Pour La Solidarité. Main goals and activities include :

- 1) Social cohesion and social inclusion; social economy (e.g. fair trade, man is more important than capital !). Silvia: this means higher taxes ! (just a provocation). These activities are related to equality issues, collective entrepreneurship
- 2) territorial sustainable development: urban policies, sustainable housing, regional policies
- 3) citizenship and participatory democracy: e.g. comparative studies of citizens dialogue across old and new member states.

Brochure included. Pour La Solidarité staff includes 6 people (1 boss + 5 women)

#### **Andreas' assessment of the Lefkara event and follow-up:**

Difficult to involve citizens more largely than it was. How could we attract more people ?

However, the people that came was very positively impressed and spread positive rumours. We had a meeting last week to discuss how to continue, how to manage the group of participants, how to share with more people.

We decided to have a monthly meeting. This is a burden for the municipality. We will take minutes of the meetings, but I will not be present being the major.

More people now ask sustainability questions, we are creating in this way a community spirit. We are starting also an experience of participation on town planning issues.

Collective opinions are much better than individual opinions. Raise has given a good example for the community of Lefkara of this process.

**Nuno:** so far we triggered only discussions of citizens. How can you go ahead in involving them in the “real” decision making process ?

**Andreas:** people listening the discussions will vote at the election based on a better understanding of policy matters and not only on relationships (kinships, party, etc.). They should not vote directly the issues, but raise their awareness and collective consciousness of these issues, and decide better when they vote.

**Nuno:** people should understand better the bureaucratic, legal etc. implications of issues.

**Andreas:** we can create small groups (committees) to help citizens to follow our policy and administration work.

**Claude:** the work of citizens “clubs” risk to exclude lay people at the end.

**Andreas:** there is no way to discuss issues in large groups (100). The only way to have open discussion is to build small “thematic” groups to let people really participate.

**Artwell:** 3 questions:

- 1) what sort of groups you want: formal or informal ?
- 2) who will facilitate these groups: top down or bottom-up ?
- 3) what are the consequences of formal vs informal groups

**Andreas answers:**

- To the first question start informal but then is better for decision to become formal.
- To the second question is a combination of top-down and bottom up: the latter shall be started by some top-down group (as the RAISE group).
- There are 15 small informal groups working, of about 8-10 people each. There is a great opportunity for local government to be involved (but also the other layers of government in Cyprus).

**Yves and Andreas:** Discussion on triggering the community spirit, as the main change pursued by the process. Andreas has still 4 years from now to do this. How could the RAISE group help in this (ask Yves) ?

Main question to the citizens group: what you recommend to Andreas to continue the RAISE process in Lefkara ?

Small groups work and reporting:

First sub-group (Eduardo):

- Create an “umbrella group” to facilitate coordination between groups
- This group should set up goals/results for short term and long term
- Try to show any possible feedback of the process in terms of some visible consequences/results or give alternatives
- Ensure adequate recognition and persistency of the citizens participation process

**Andreas:** it is important not to mix the need of visible “results” with policy programmes (as a kind of business action)

Second sub-group (Linda):

- The citizens discussion should look to framework issues, not solutions
- Do not forget to offer methods and tools, showing examples of small groups work, and a continuous stimulus
- The work with the citizens groups could generate issues that could go for referenda
- It is important to provide neutral places where people can meet
- As a policy maker in charge of local decisions only, be clear and honest about possibilities

Third sub-group (Nuno):

- Focus the citizens work on three or four issues and then streamline them in one issue that can be achieved
- It is important to discuss with the citizens the role of Lefkara against the rest of the world. Lefkara is competing in the global market, and Lefkara people need to understand how to make a difference

Fourth sub-group (Claude):

- Starting from the minutes and the conclusions of the citizens groups, the city can organise a kind of consultation, to identify the most important things, so you give the possibility to a large number of citizens to participate
- It could be good if the small city of Lefkara can invest in training of 4 or 5 facilitators for the process
- Produce a bulletin informing people about the work of the citizens groups, and with the possibility for all citizens to submit their feedbacks, so we can have a global participation

## **Second Day: Friday 9 November 2007 - Brussels**

### **Day Topic: Presentation and discussion of the RAISE-PLUS communication tools (protocol and web-site) and new RAISE based initiatives (MOVE TOGETHER project)**

#### **Goals**

To discuss with the citizens group the requirements for the RAISE-PLUS communication tools: web-site and protocol/guidelines

To discuss a new RAISE based initiative in which the citizens group may be involved in the year 2008 to assess EU Research on urban sustainable transport (MOVE TOGETHER project)

#### **Performance**

##### ***Morning session:***

Introductory discussion of climate change, Al Gore etc. and how the raise group could contribute concretely taking a compensatory action with some money of the citizens. An exercise of conflict resolution on this matter is decided for the end of the afternoon session.

Presentation of Carlo on RAISE-PLUS communication tools: RAISE protocol and RAISE web-site

#### **Questions to the citizens related to the RAISE protocol and web-site formats and content development:**

What are the objectives ?

- ✓ How this will be useful for me, my association, my city, my school.
- ✓ Practically, it will be a success if ...

What is the content ?

- ✓ What are the 5 things we want to see in that document/web site ?
- ✓ Form

Resources to be used in the RAISE-PLUS project (November-December 2007)

- ✓ Who does what, how and when ?

Works in two sub-groups and reporting back::

#### **RAISE Protocol (first sub-group suggestions):**

- The main target group of this protocol are the citizens themselves: to explain what is RAISE and how they could be involved organising new projects that follow the methodology of the RAISE and RAISE-PLUS projects. We do not address specifically majors
- The objective of the RAISE protocol is to be a document which trigger interest in governance by citizens group discussion
- As it concerns the protocol's content, the RAISE process should be presented in very concrete terms, and also using DO's and DON'T's, e.g.:
  - ✓ Don't state the problem before the group work on their vision of the problem
  - ✓ Do listen to the others
  - ✓ Do accept some part of frustration
  - ✓ Etc.
- Describe the Lefkara experience as a successful story: the process was implemented, the people came, and the point have been put on the desk of the City Council. Having a story instead of a protocol could also be interesting (e.g. story of people who decided to clean a ground at the rear of a building. Every Saturday, they decided to clean their space). An idea could be to add the Lefkara success story to a list of success stories in connection with topics like agenda 21.
- As it concerns the resources, a full draft will be produced by Carlo first, using [www.googledocs.com](http://www.googledocs.com) in order to share later this draft with the RAISE citizens group.

- The Carlo's draft will be ready by the end of November, and used as official version for the purpose of RAISE-PLUS final reporting (which has to be done in any case by mid-December at latest). However, the document will be shared on GOOGLE Docs for at least two weeks in December, to get feedbacks from the citizens. The final version shall be ready to be posted to the RAISE-PLUS web-site (in .PDF format) and to be printed in a number of copies in January 2008.

**RAISE-PLUS web-site (second sub-group suggestions):**

- The main target groups are municipalities and stakeholders. It would be useful if offers the methodology, good information, how it can be useful for a stakeholder, a public authority.
- Build a dynamic and interactive web-site (any visitor is potential contributor). It should include a platform for groups
- Easy to reach, keywords, search engines, links with participation and participative democracy
- It should include a direct link to the RAISE Citizens Declaration in different languages (hosted on the RAISE project web-site: [www.raise-eu.org](http://www.raise-eu.org))
- It should include RAISE contact persons for each country, e.g.  
[Irina\\_romania@raise-initiative.org](mailto:Irina_romania@raise-initiative.org)  
[Tanguy\\_france@raise-initiative.org](mailto:Tanguy_france@raise-initiative.org)
- As it concerns the content, it should give news on related developments in the EU, and a lot of picture and images of the citizens' meetings, etc.
- As it concerns the resources, a first RAISE-PLUS web-site version will be produced by ISIS until mid-December 2007, when the final RAISE-PLUS products (communication tools and final report) must be ready for delivery to the European Commission.
- The web content of this first version will be reviewed by Linda, rephrasing as appropriate the static web pages (to streamline/improve the text), including pictures etc.. The dynamic pages shall include new and links that each citizen of the RAISE group (and even new citizens subscribing to the web-site) could add in the future. Sylvia and Eduardo might provide some technical support also, if needed.
- A RAISE community section of the web-site might include a web-based survey, where the people could express the local difficulties or success of existing citizens participation processes. The web questionnaire should be related to the RAISE themes, and it could be an effective way to disseminate the RAISE ideas.
- Take care of the accessibility of the site: make it easily accessible from target groups, take care of who can reach it with a search engine. It shall be an open web-site, a marketing tool to "sell" to the European citizens the RAISE approach enabling them to participate in the building of their own better city of tomorrow

***Afternoon session:***

Carlo's presentation of the MOVE TOGETHER project: what is this project about ? What is expected from the RAISE citizens group ?

Discussion of the MOVE TOGETHER goals, modalities and citizens expected participation; relationship with the overall RAISE approach.

Yves proposal of an exercise of conflict resolution debate on climate change issues and citizens work on the subject.

**Third Day: Saturday 10 November 2007 – Brussels (Morning Session)**  
**Day Topic: Prospects for implementing the RAISE approach in Europe**

**Goals**

- To trigger a discussion on a possible medium to long term strategy to implement the RAISE approach across Europe.
- To let emerge the personal dreams and wishes to be involved of the citizens

**Performance**

To provoke the citizens' strategic thinking, they are asked to read a document provided by Gabriella and issued by a group of Danish Members of the European Parliament (New Europe: [www.nyteuropa.org](http://www.nyteuropa.org)).

The document is an open letter to the European Council from an initiative labelled as "Citizens' Key to Europe: A Campaign for More Democracy". It encourages the European Council to pursue the open-door strategy and immediately invest in a stronger and better European democracy, strengthening Europe's representative democracy by fostering Europe's participatory democracy. Pilot projects, based on a true citizen-to-citizen approach could commence as early as 2009 and eventually be turned into a true "democratic infrastructure" to strengthen the cross-border network between citizens.

After individual reading of this 6 pages document, the citizens were divided in sub-groups and asked to discuss and report back their impressions.

**First group impressions:**

- We have the impression that we have read this before
- Why is it so abstract ?
- They talk of a "democratic infrastructure", but there is no mention on how to do it.
- Talk about democracy, while this exists
- It is in a "we" form, and we do not know how is "we" (they should first present themselves)
- Give the impression to be innovative, but not coherent with that message
- If they made research why don't they show it ?

**Second group impressions:**

- Too general, not specific enough
- We do not understand what it is about
- Very nice talking, but seems wishful thinking
- Could we have an association of citizens starting from Raise ? It would be open to other citizens
- How many people who really feel the need to take part to the vote for the European Parliament ? In some countries, participation to EU election is very low because the awareness is very low

**Third group impressions:**

- This is a very broad document, good for introducing the subject. Can we, as Raise, fit in the process for the reform of the European Union treaty?
- We need better communication. We could be more effective if we used internet in another manner.
- We are a group of citizens. European programmes will appreciate if we are an association, as we can not get finances only as individuals being together
- An organisation in itself would probably not work
- Some groups try to create activities to continue to act in Brussels. We should not be like that.

**Implementing the Raise declaration in Europe**

**Carlo's comments to the participatory democracy approach and its relationship with RAISE:**

- Obviously, these people try to establish a party

- We are trying to disseminate that Raise is a different approach
- For us it is important that an informal process feed the political process
- There are relatively few funds from the European Citizens programme to finance citizens-to-citizens meetings
- In comparison, there are too much funds instead to support politicians and experts meetings
- So, they are right to ask for a more concrete EU finance to have more possibility of citizens-to-citizens meetings
- FACE TO FACE MEETING ARE NECESSARY, this is what we did

**Other comments from the citizens' group:**

- There is something absent here, about the consumption society, we spend all our time in commercial activities. In the US, they create condominiums where people live in a close space. Democracy is excluded. In shopping malls, forbidden to demonstrate or express political opinion. There is a formatting of society and a part of it is getting out of public space.
- It is a bit ideological. We are ideologically neutral. Important to know that there is a method that is neutral, to feed a political process that is not neutral, by nature.
- We never discussed media issue. We didn't have media coverage. But we have Afrodidi with us working in the field.
- We have experimented a method. We have seen that it is relevant. This method should be multiplied. We can do local activities in our town as well.
- Carlo propose not to work at local level, and to continue instead an EU level process where each of us is the national counterpart in a transnational process. There are opportunities to be exploited further in the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013.
- The City of San Sebastian has joined the network of sustainable cities of Europe, and we could offer the possibility to connect lay citizens to this network.
- We created this group from a letter of invitation. Actually it is easier to create a network of European citizens than to create local network. The answers have been very interesting. This is how the group was created. Networking that is international, transnational. To create participation at local level is more difficult, as the profile of people and their interest is much different. The essence of this project is transnational.
- In Lefkara we had a credibility, because we were foreigners. The image that it is coming from Europe is very important. In Lefkara we were addressed as follows : "you are the Europeans" and we answered as follows "but you are European yourselves"
- We need to avoid the risk to become an elite group separated from the rest of the world. The strategy to have new citizens on board is also a good way to stay connected. But we should ask ourselves how can we include new citizens. If we use the internet to disseminate, and have new people, this is a possibility;
- We should accept the fact that we are citizens experts in the process, and this should be something we accept.
- This morning, we opened the window for a possible Raise strategy, giving us a kind of mission proposing practical possibility to continue; what could we do together to continue ? With tool like Googledocs, we could take an hour here and there and participate.
- We can promote replications of the local event in Lefkara elsewhere in Europe, but this need to be discussed locally.
- The objective is to launch a Raise approach, and explore how the RAISE citizens group could continue to be part of this; Carlo thinks that we have this possibility; we will try to find in 2008 new possibilities.

At the end of the meeting the group was asked to think and write on post-its their dreams about RAISE. These are the:

**RAISE Dreams**

- We make a EU Citizen Choir and perform at different occasions

- 27 citizens come together with 27 prime ministers for 27 hours and share dreams and visions for the European Union
- We write a book with 27 chapters on the same topics
- To make a theatre performance together that we can present to other people
- To visit all 27 countries and introduce citizen's involvement in 27 communities ([www.europeanchapter.eu](http://www.europeanchapter.eu) might offer a possibility next May)
- To repeat the Lefkara process in other places in other countries
- To make a difference in people's mind to show them what is possible if they want
- To make a change
- Making dreams come true (dissemination)
- Saving the planet one community at a time
- To make a start
- To open a way
- Make people move to find solutions to the real problems of the society
- Establish a sort of Raise activity in every municipality
- To forge links between Lefkara and other towns in other countries
- Sharing our experience and skills with others
- To foster participatory democracy in my own town
- Help to establish Raise communities in each local government of Europe
- Continue doing little things
- To make change, to help real people
- Anything tangible to happen (plant a forest, build a network of cycling paths)
- To change politician mentality so they can take the right decision for humanity
- To be able to travel around the world in an unexpensive manner and use pollution free means of transport
- To persuade all the main European capitals to have a shared ticketing for public transport
- In 20 years, realise that we have helped making this world better
- Help to reduce the US influence in Europe
- To live in a world where barriers are no longer needed but at the same time maintaining the characteristics of the people living in the country.
- We should be concerned for the citizens of tomorrow, not only the city of tomorrow
- Not to be great, but act with great love
- To continue learning
- To keep dreaming
- To stay in touch
- To keep the group alive and find common goals with or without a EU project
- I dream that we will be meeting as a group at least every two years and that more sustainable mode of transport will be invented to put us together in the space
- To contribute more as Raise group to sustainable development.
- Non violent communication is a must (to know other's need, and to know the origin of the problem), look at the work of Marschal Rosenberg, we should learn about it.
- To live in a world where art and creativity are some of the principal issues for people
- To launch a long lasting dynamic at local level
- To involve more people in the process
- To get a proper, clear, concise approach, methodology, method; and be more effective and efficient
- Raise plus should cover all Europe and Beyond
- To extend our European unity and to cover the globe
- Further develop the process as a tool to handle and solve conflicts on all levels

- To work as a conflict resolution group in the social area (eg problems fo national minorities in each EU member state)
- To help EU institutions to solve the democratic deficit problem, i.e. to make their decisions/actions/plans more transparent for lay people
- To make evolve the perception of democracy to a state where active participation is a natural thing for every citizens
- To help different groups of scientists to evaluate/disseminate their research on sustainable development issue
- To do a Raise plus in San Sebastian
- To show to the English people that they are part of Europe, and should embrace it
- To help Basques to solve their own conflict
- Help Brussels to improve quality of life in the city
- Help Belgian to resolve their issue before moving to more dangerous places
- To have the right to work on any issue, Raise should not become the instrument of the EC; this would not be democracy anymore.
- To create in 10 year from now in Lefkara an Open University on active citizenship and democracy for the European and Middle East countries.