The Executive Summary of the Lithuanian citizen‘s dialogues initiative

In 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania implemented a citizen’s consultations initiative „My Europe“, which was a part of a pan-European initiative aiming at bringing citizens together to discuss the future of the European Union. In the framework of this initiative, 24 citizens’ consultations took place across the country.

Citizens’ consultations were organized in a tight cooperation with a broad range of partners, such as various associations and universities, as well as local partners – municipalities, non-governmental organizations and the media. More than a 1000 people in 13 Lithuanian cities, representing diverse social backgrounds, took part in citizens’ consultations, more than 8000 people live-streamed the events. Citizens’ consultations were organized in three different formats: public debates, workshops and interactive lessons.

Main topics of public interest as identified during the consultations:

1) The future of the European Union (integration scenarios, Lithuanian role in shaping the future of the EU):
   - Citizens are in favor of a further European integration, however they wish for Lithuanian national identity to be preserved and national interests to be well represented in the EU.
   - Europe still lacks solidarity. Besides strong national identities, there should be a common, unifying EU vision.
   - Lithuanians underline unequal distribution of economic well-being across the EU and are concerned with lowering EU’s financial support. Citizens believe that bigger EU member states benefit from EU membership more than the smaller ones. They are concerned that lowering EU’s financial support, little attention to regions suffering from emigration and the effects of Brexit could negatively affect the economic well-being in the country. Citizens hope that after 2020 Lithuanian regions will continue receiving EU’s support, which will help to prevent social and economic exclusion.

2) Current challenges of the European Union (separate EU policy topics, Eastern partnership, security):
   - Citizens are worried about the emerging challenges in relation to the upcoming European Parliament elections. A vast majority of citizens expressed their concerns
regarding the growing Euroscepticism, the effects of Brexit on the European unity, the lack of attention to cybersecurity, as well as potential third party meddling into European Parliament elections.

- **Citizens are worried about migration challenges.** Citizens expressed their concerns regarding the protection of EU’s external borders and the growing immigration from non-EU countries.

3) **Lithuania's EU membership** (representation of Lithuania in the EU, the meaning, value and challenges of the EU membership, education and communication about the EU in Lithuania):

- **Citizens expect a more active role of Lithuania in the EU policymaking.** Lithuania has to play an active role as an influencer of EU policies, which is hard to achieve due to the country’s low representation in the EU institutions.

- **Citizens expect better education and information about the Lithuanian EU membership.** It appeared in the discussions that citizens face a lack of education and information about the EU. They wish to see a better communication on EU matters from governmental institutions and would like to see the EU issues covered better in the local media.

**Citizens‘ suggestions:**

- **Citizens wish to see more direct democracy elements in the implementation of the EU policies.** Lithuanians think that EU should more actively encourage citizens’ participation in decision-making process, strengthen directly elected institutions and more often consult citizens on various policy issues. Citizens believe that implementing these changes would help to better reflect their opinions and hopes in the EU’s policymaking.

- **European Union needs a common vision.** Citizens believe that a common standpoint, a common vision of the EU would help to solve many pressing issues. The EU vision should be appealing to different society groups and should respect national differences and particularities of the Member States.

- **More power to the EU in problematic policy areas.** Citizens wish to see more EU powers in the areas, where Member States are struggling. To particular attention, they bring social inequality issues.
• **Better responsiveness of the EU to the emerging threats and challenges.** Citizens suggest that more attention should be given to cyber security issues and fighting disinformation. Member states should strengthen education about the EU, because poor knowledge increases societal vulnerability to disinformation.

• **Better advocacy of Lithuanian national priorities in the EU.** Lithuanian citizens hope to see Lithuania national priorities to be better reflected in EU policies. Those include support to Georgia and Ukraine in their efforts of European integration, stricter position towards Russia, stricter position regarding the Astravets nuclear plant, increased attention to the protection of EU’s external borders and cyber security.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Lithuanian citizens put an emphasis on the importance of citizens’ consultations and consider them to be a useful tool for a society to participate in shaping the future of the EU. People see deeper integration as the future of the EU, however still underlining the importance of the respect towards national particularities. Citizens believe that further European integration is only possible with a common vision of the EU that is appealing and understandable to all EU Member States. Among the most worrying EU-related issues, Lithuanian citizens mention unequal distribution of economic well-being, lowering EU’s financial support, immigration and a protection of EU external borders. Citizens also underline challenges in the context of the upcoming European elections – Brexit, cybersecurity and the gap between the EU institutions and the citizens.

Citizens’ consultations in Lithuania were launched in April 2018 and will run until mid-2019. The National Consultations’ report will reflect opinions, suggestions and concerns expressed by the citizens in the course of consultations. The report will serve as a Lithuanian contribution to the debate on the future of the EU at the European Council.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania would like to express its gratitude to all partners, who contributed to the implementation of the consultations in Lithuania and to all citizens, who attended the consultations and expressed their opinions on the broad range of topics.


Please, contact the following email address shall you have any questions: maneurope@urm.lt
The National Report on Citizens’ Consultations on the Future of Europe in Lithuania

I. The need for a more active EU response to emerging threats and challenges

- **Large EU bureaucracy and a gap between the institutions and the citizens causes euro-skepticism.** Citizens point out the gap between the EU institutions and the citizens and express criticism towards the EU’s bureaucracy. Citizens point to the lack of information about the functions of the institutions and their importance. They advocate in favor of reducing bureaucracy and introducing more elements of direct democracy into the decision-making process;

- **Concerns over the rising threats in the light of the upcoming European elections.** Citizens are concerned about the possible third party meddling in the European elections and the rise of Euro-skepticism. They express concerns over the readiness of the EU to deal with the emerging cyber security threats;

- **Interest in the election process of a new president of the European Commission.** Citizens have expressed an interest in the upcoming appointment of a new EC president; however, they have raised concerns about potential candidates and the transparency of the election/appointment process. Citizens would like to learn more about Lithuania’s position in regards to potential candidates and Lithuania’s opportunities to delegate its own candidate;

- **Lack of attention to cyber security and disinformation threats in the EU.** Citizens ask for a better education in the areas of media literacy, cyber security and disinformation. They also indicate that the lack of resilience to disinformation among local media representatives;

- **The need for stringent sanctions towards Russia.** Citizens support stricter EU attitude towards Russia and would support stringent economic sanctions as a response to Russia’s ongoing destabilizing actions and violations of international law in the EU’s Eastern Partnership area;

- **Doubts about the need for a joint European defense force.** Citizens are positive towards the creation of a European military force and acknowledge its importance. They, however,
question a possible duplication of NATO's role. Citizens emphasize the importance of transatlantic relations and cooperation with the U.S. in the security domain;

- **The need to improve the security of the EU’s external borders.** Citizens wish for a better protection of the EU’s external borders, which would ensure better security to its citizens. They advocate further integration of the border protection and consider it as a potential area for possible EU federalization;

- **Concerns over the rule of law in Poland and Hungary.** Citizens are worried about the deconstruction of the rule of law in Poland and Hungary. They question the methods that can be put in place by the EU in response to a breach of its fundamental values;

- **Better integration of national minorities.** Representatives of ethnic minorities emphasized the importance of their integration (e.g. education, equal opportunities to participate in the labor market, etc.). Further effort is needed to improve the integration of national minorities in all EU member states.

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**II. Interest in the representation of Lithuania’s national strategic priorities**

- **Migration from Lithuania is among the most concerning issues.** Citizens are worried about Lithuania’s regions experiencing large-scale emigration and fear that decreasing EU financial assistance will increase the chances of further migration from Lithuania;

- **Decreasing EU financial assistance to Lithuania has undermined citizens’ trust in the EU.** Citizens assume that EU financial assistance can increase positive feelings and optimism about the EU. They are concerned over the expected decrease in EU financial assistance. They are worried about the likelihood of a growing mistrust in the EU because of this;

- **Concerns over the representation of Lithuania’s national strategic interests in the EU.** Citizens expressed their concerns over the passive EU’s position regarding Ostrovets Nuclear Power Plant (Belarus) being built in the proximity of Lithuania’s capital Vilnius (55 km.) and EU’s external border (20 km.). They believe the EU should take coordinated action to stop the implementation of this project;

- **Concerns over rising prices after the adoption of the euro in 2015.** There is a lack of information and knowledge about the consequences of the adoption of the euro in Lithuania, which leads to multiple misunderstandings and misconceptions about the issue;
• **Divided opinions in regards of the EU's impact on the Lithuanian economy.** There is a consensus on the benefits of the EU membership to the Lithuanian economy. The majority believes that the EU membership has a positive impact on Lithuania’s economy (business opportunities, rising living standards, stronger economic growth, the benefits of the single market for citizens and businesses). Nonetheless, some citizens believe that larger EU member states benefit more;

• **Necessity to preserve Lithuania’s national identity in the EU.** Citizens believe that the European identity and the Lithuanian national identity do not contradict, but rather complement and reinforce each other. However, they underline the importance of respecting and preserving their national identity in the European context.

### III. Active role of Lithuania in shaping the future of the EU

• **Lithuania should be at the forefront of EU integration.** Thoughts supporting further EU integration were dominant in the discussions. The majority supports further EU integration. The rest will support integration, if Lithuania maintains its national identity and ensures efficient inclusion of its interests in the European agenda;

• **Lithuanians support building EU competencies.** Citizens emphasize the need for regulation in such areas as social care, education and healthcare. They believe that national competences alone are not enough to tackle persisting challenges in these areas;

• **Values form the basis of the European Union.** Citizens worry about a decline of the fundamental EU values and underline their importance for the European solidarity;

• **Unity is a necessary condition for solving EU problems.** In order to resolve persistent problems, the EU needs to reinforce a sense of common European identity;

• **Regret over the lack of debates on the future of the EU.** Citizens are concerned over Lithuania's plans and European integration aspirations. Which areas of integration will have support? Which areas of integration are harmful to Lithuania? There is a lack of political debate on this topic;

• **Constructive criticism of the European Union: a stimulus to improve.** Citizens are worried that all the critics of the EU are accused of wanting to destroy it. Positive criticism
could allow the EU to move forward. The EU critics wish the Union to be more responsive to their national interests and anticipations. Only by taking into account expectations of all member states, the EU will be able to achieve its most ambitious goals.

IV. An increased need for education and information about Lithuania’s EU membership

- **Citizens need a higher quality of education, more information about the EU and its policies, and Lithuania’s EU membership.** Lithuania and other countries should focus more on educating their citizens about the EU, especially in the regions, in order to curb the rise in Euroscepticism and populism. Citizens currently have no strong opinions about Lithuania’s role in the EU or Lithuania's achievements in it. Citizens lack knowledge about the representation of Lithuania’s interests in the EU. There is a lack of effective communication, because our national institutions did not communicate enough information about these issues. It is a common belief that the EU does not hear the voice of Lithuania and that its interests are not sufficiently protected. In the regions, youth and seniors in particular felt the need for information;

- **Insufficient information on EU issues provided by national news organizations.** The lack of media attention to EU issues was revealed; the fact that Lithuania is the only EU member state without its permanent correspondent in Brussels was regretted;

- **Lack of events and projects aimed at promoting the EU's principles and values EU in the regions.** The general public in the regions of Lithuania wishes to be more involved in activities related to the EU, but needs more information, opportunities, events and discussions;

- **Lack of opportunities for citizens to participate in the EU decision-making process.** There is a fear that ordinary citizens are too passively involved in policy-making and their voice is not heard. Citizens hope that in the future, the EU will find ways to enhance citizens’ participation in the EU decision-making process. This would improve citizens' representation in the EU. Mostly young people expressed this idea.
CALENDAR OF PAST EVENTS

In Lithuania, the citizens’ dialogue My Europe runs from 27 April through December 17, 2018 (In total, almost 30 different events throughout Lithuania). More than 1,000 Lithuanian citizens took part in the events. Representatives of various groups participated (pupils, students, citizens of working age, seniors). The academic community, local community and media, business representatives and civil servants also took part in the events. Over 8,036 people watched online discussions; regional media advertised and/or covered the events.

List of citizen dialogues:

- **27th of April**, a public conference “Lithuania in the future Europe: values, solidarity, strategic partnership” in Vilnius (organizers: Parliament of Lithuania and Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- **12th of May**, four different discussions about EU (organizer: Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- **14th of May**, a discussion between the Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius and pupils in Vilnius (organizer: Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- **9th of June**, an open discussion “Does citizens of Birštonas create Europe?” (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with discussion festival “Exactly!” and municipality of Birštonas city);
- **5th of September**, a discussion “The European Union and Lithuania: opportunities and challenges” in Vilnius (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lithuanian Liberal Youth, European Commission Representation in Lithuania);
- **8th of September**, a discussion in the Festival of discussions BŪTENT! (“Exactly!”) "Brussels decided" - really? In Birštonas (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with discussion festival “Exactly!”);
- **13th of September**, a public debate “Europe listens to the people of Marijampolė” in Marijampolė (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe Direct information center in Marijampolė);
- **14th of September**, a community breakfast about the EU in Plungė (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and municipality of Plungė city);
- **14th – 15th of September**, the Nida forum “European migraine” (organizer: Thomas Mann Cultural Centre);
- **18th of September**, a public debate “Europe today and tomorrow: the role of Lithuania” in Kaunas (organizers: Vytautas Magnus University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe Direct information center in Kaunas);
- **19th of September**, a conference “The Fate of Europe: Integration, Sovereignty, Identity” in Vilnius (organizer: Mykolas Romeris University);
- **3rd of October**, a public debate „Current challenges for the European Union: why does it matter to us?“ in Alytus (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, municipality of Alytus city and Europe Direct information center in Alytus);
- **12th of October**, a discussion “Unbeloved European Union“and the identity of Lithuania: Does the European project really hinder the spread of national values”(organizers: Arūnas Gelūnas, a member of the Seimas, Leonidas Donskis Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- **24th of October**, a discussion with seniors from Medardas Čobotas University of the Third Age (organizers: Medardas Čobotas University of the Third Age and Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- **6th of November**, a discussion “The Future of the European Union and the role of youth in creating it” in Tauragė (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Europe Direct information center in Tauragė);
- **6th of November**, a discussion „European breakfast: from culture to security – what is important for every European?“ in Jurbarkas (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, municipality of Jurbarkas city, Jurbarkas Educational Centre);
- **12th of November**, a discussion „European Union: how to stay united?“ (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and municipality of Ukmėrgė city);
- **15th of November**, a discussion with teachers on the political rights of citizens in the EU and in Lithuania and presentation of political rights teaching materials in Vilnius (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis).
- **15th of November**, a discussion with regional media representatives "My Europe: the most important questions for Lithuania and its people" in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius (organizer Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
16th of November, a discussion „Lithuania in the EU: “the Importance of Membership and current challenges” in Kėdainiai (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis).

Citizens dialogue "My Europe" events that will take place before 2019:

- 21st of November, a seminar for teachers about the EU in Utena;
- 22nd of November, a seminar for teachers about the EU in S. Rapalionis Gymnasium, Eišiškės;
- 23rd of November, a discussion “What do we expect from Europe in 2019?” in Vilnius (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Commission Representation in Lithuania, Vilnius University);
- 17th of December, a conference "The Future of Europe: A Strategic Partnership Between Lithuania and Germany" in Presidency of the republic of Lithuania, Vilnius (organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, member of the parliament Žygimantas Pavilionis, Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis and Lithuanian-German forum.

METHODOLOGY

The whole process of citizens’ consultations My Europe in Lithuania was designed to involve as many citizens as possible in 3 different formats: public discussions, interactive lessons about the EU with pupils, and workshop about the EU for teachers. In the beginning, the public invitation to join the initiative was distributed through national and regional media outlets, as well as published on MFA's website and FB page. A broad variety of NGOs, local authorities and academic institutions were encouraged to organize citizens’ consultations by sending them directly invitations. After an official launch, all interested parties, without any limitations, had a possibility to apply to organize My Europe events by using its official logo.

A majority of events was organized by the MFA itself in cooperation with local partners (local authorities, NGOs), while the rest were implemented by NGOs with the support of the government (the MFA helped them to find speakers, venues and covered their basic costs). During the organizational process, the priority was given to events in smaller cities and communities, where such events are rare. Each consultation had a concrete topic that was formulated together with partners in accordance with the interest of the local public (some communities preferred academic and
specialized discussions, while others took interest in common EU issues), participants could ask questions, which were not related to the topic. The most common format of consultations was a public discussion, which includes 3 to 4 panelists (representatives of civil society, diplomats, politicians, civil servants, political scientists, journalists, students etc.), and a moderator, who is well known to the public.

MAIN TOPICS DISCUSSED AND/OR RAISED BY CITIZENS:

1. The main challenges faced by the European Union (migration, Brexit, disinformation, the rise of nationalism and populism, energy security threats). Root causes of emerging challenges and possible solutions;

2. Future of the European Union (the vision of the future of the EU for different groups of general public (youth, academic communities, seniors), the opportunities for enlargement of the European Union, the role of the biggest shocks, crises in European history);

3. The role of Lithuania in the European Union (The Importance of Ideas Created by Lithuania for the European Union, the ability to initiate change, the significance of Lithuania in the context of European cyber security development);

4. The benefits of the European Union to Lithuania. European Union regional policy, European Union support for regions;

5. Lithuania's Representation in the European Union. The lack of accountability, the problem of communication between the Lithuanian general public and its representatives in Brussels, the lack of Lithuanian journalists in Brussels

6. The identity of the European Union. The relationship between the European identity and national identity; National vs. European interests in Lithuania, possibilities for their harmonization. The idea of Europe: foundation of the formation, the possibilities of creating a common narrative in Europe;

7. The economy of the European Union and Lithuania (effects of the introduction of the euro; online currencies in the EU;

8. Youth in the EU;

9. Educating about the European Union. (The lack of information on EU in the regions, especially among youth and seniors);

10. Threats to security of European Union and Lithuania (cyber, energy security, an envisaged common European army, threats from the East).
MAIN CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY CITIZENS:

I. The need for a more active EU response to emerging threats and challenges
   - Insufficient attention to cybersecurity and disinformation in the EU;
   - The need for the EU to toughen stance on Russia;
   - Concerns over the upcoming European Parliament elections;
   - The evaluation of Lithuania’s preparedness in the field of cybersecurity;
   - The threat posed by growing Euroscepticism;
   - The need to reinforce the EU’s external borders and to tackle the refugee crisis;
   - Too much red tape;
   - The election of a new President of the European Commission;
   - The need for better integration of minorities.

II. Interest in the representation Lithuania’s national strategic interests
   - Concerns over migration;
   - The biggest problem of the representation of Lithuania in the EU – low numbers of Lithuanian representatives in Brussels;
   - The European identity and the national identity do not contradict, but rather complement and reinforce each other;
   - The need for a shared narrative for Europe;
   - Citizens are concerned over decreasing EU financial assistance;
   - Citizens expressed concerns over rising prices after the introduction of the euro;
   - Diverging opinions about the effects of the EU on the economy of Lithuania;
   - The EU and Lithuania should continue to actively support the European aspirations of our Eastern partners.

III. Active role of Lithuania in shaping the future of the EU
   - Lithuanians support building EU competences;
   - Unity, solidarity are necessary conditions for resolving EU problems;
   - Criticism of the European Union allows the EU to move forward;
   - Lithuania stands at the pinnacle of EU integration;
• The role of Lithuania in the European Union;
• The lack of discussions and debates on the future of EU;
• Values form the basis of the European Union.

IV. An increased need for education and information about Lithuania’s EU membership and other EU related issues

• Lack of communication between Lithuanian public authorities and the public;
• Lack of information on EU issues in the national media outlets;
• Lack of opportunities for citizens to participate in the governance process;
• General concern for the lack of information on EU issues;
• Lack of events and projects aimed at promoting the EU’s principles and values in the regions;
• Lack of cybersecurity education.

RECURRENT AND/OR INNOVATIVE CITIZENS‘ PROPOSALS:

The need for more active representation of Lithuania’s interests and better communication:

• Lithuania must reinforce its role in Brussels;
• Lithuania needs to take initiative in the decision-making process, not just wait for instructions from EU institutions;
• It is important to improve communication on EU issues. Citizens are worried about Lithuanians living in the UK after Brexit, they would like to receive clear information on its consequences for them;
• Politicians should work more closely with each other, communicate with young people, hear their voices;
• Our education system should promote the EU values; it is necessary to reach out to regional schools, to carry out various education projects related to the EU;
• Citizens would like to have Lithuanian journalists accredited to the EU institutions (there are none at the time being).
The future of the European Union and the role of Lithuania in its development

- Lithuanian citizens need discussions on the future of the EU. These discussions should set clear guidelines for Lithuanian politicians and help them understand the expectations of the people of Lithuania with regard to the EU;
- The EU should cut red tape. A large bureaucratic apparatus is the main reason for the decline in enthusiasm for the EU throughout Europe;
- Citizens hope that the EU will have more direct democracy governance components;
- The EU and Lithuania must continue to actively support Ukraine and Georgia's European aspirations.

Lithuania's Vision of European Integration

- The EU should be empowered to coordinate many more areas, especially those, in which member states have troubles dealing on their own. More effort should be made to reduce social inequality;
- The EU needs a unique European narrative, which would stress the main ideas and core European values; it is necessary to promote successful integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees.

Regions and their development

- No effort should be spared to secure Lithuania’s support for regions and business development beyond 2020;
- The EU sees Lithuania as a single territorial unit (region). Shall Lithuania be divided into two regions, comprising Vilnius and the rest of Lithuania?

Challenges to the Union

- More attention should be paid to new threats, especially cyber security threats;
- Citizens called for a stricter stance on Russia, which is best expressed as stricter economic sanctions;
- Citizens voiced the need for improving the media literacy of the society;
- Citizens proposed an idea that Lithuania should play a leading role in improving the overall cyber-security of the EU;
• Euroscepticism can be reduced by making use of the EU educational initiatives in regional schools;

• Citizens are worried about immigration flows to the EU, in particular the asylum policy. Citizens agree that solidarity is necessary, but it needs to be implemented through measures approved by all Member States.

REPRESENTATIVE VERBATIMS:

• “The EU funding to Lithuania will decline. Will Lithuania's support for the EU, along with the funding, decrease too?”

• “I would like our representatives in Brussels to hold their heads high. With that attitude, they should work to create a better future for the EU.”

• “Obviously, we have good ideas, good practices, which can serve as an example for other countries. We should not be afraid to speak up; we should stop thinking that we are of a minor importance. We should defend and bravely express our ideas, for example, at the European Parliament.”

• “There is an obvious shortage of Lithuanian representatives in Brussels. Journalists are missing too. These few MEPs cannot represent us at all.”

• “Emigration is perhaps Lithuania’s biggest problem. Young people are leaving for other countries in the European Union and are not returning. The regions are dying out.”

• “What about the elderly? The elderly people do not know much about the benefits of the European Union. There is a very negative attitude towards the EU in the regions. What measures will be taken to educate the seniors?”

• “I understand that young people in the capital and other big cities have enough information about the European Union, but what about the regions? Many young and active people will be willing to participate in various projects, initiatives, to implement interesting and innovative ideas, but they are not aware of all the opportunities offered by the EU. How are you planning to improve this situation?”
OTHER (FURTHER COMMENTS ON AND/OR EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE, e.g. best communication practices)

- The most successful format for citizen dialogues in Lithuania: a well-known person that acts as a speaker or a moderator (a political scientist, philosopher, journalist or public activist), a speaker (an academic, public servant that has experience in working with the EU) and a locally well-known person (an artist, public activist, politician etc.).
- One of the main problems is that the people who support the EU, rather than those who lack information about it or often have ungrounded negative opinions about the EU, most often choose to attend the EU events. In the future, effort should be made to involve and seek dialogue with the EU skeptics.
- Organizing discussions can be more effective when different partners are involved, for example, Europe Direct information centers, municipalities, youth or academic organizations. Various partners in different regions have specific knowledge about their regions, which helps them to involve more local residents.
- The most productive results about citizens' opinions / expectations about the EU are generated through discussions involving representatives of different groups of the society;
- There is a lack of motivation for organizing citizens' dialogues in the regions. Several cities, their municipalities or local partners have questioned whether it is worth discussing about the EU, they consider such a topic uninteresting and not relevant. In the future, we must find more interesting, innovative ways to hear voices of the local communities in the regions;
- The most difficult audience to reach is the seniors; the easiest - youth/ pupils/ students;
- The topics of citizens' dialogues have inspired more in-depth discussions in the regions about the EU when they resonated with the interests of the people in the region. The audience engages less in the debate when it comes to issues that are general (the EU's future, Euro-skepticism, challenges to the EU). Topics oriented to the local community’s EU issues (funding, various projects, benefits/ damage to the region, etc.) generate a lot more interest and citizen involvement.
- The communication plan that was used (press releases, invitations to the events, Facebook advertising, regional media and TV advertising, information on the MFA page), based on the number of people involved, proved to be successful. However, the potential of local partners
must be used even more actively in the future. Through direct communication, they can reach out to the part of the public that is most often not responding to various types of advertising.