



Dear Member,

Please find enclosed the second issue of the Qec-ERAN Flash for 2009.

As you know this year will be the 20th anniversary of QeC-ERAN and we are now busy preparing this event, which will be celebrated during our AGM and study tour taking place on 24 and 25 June in Brussels this year. It will be an excellent occasion to review 20 years of EU urban policy using Brussels as a "living laboratory" for undertaking this review. You will find more information in our [QeC-ERAN event section](#).

This year we will also be seeing the elections to the European Parliament, which is the subject of our [feature article](#). The article takes a critical look at voter turnout, which has taken a downward trend since the late 70s, and the issue of participatory democracy.

I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter and I am looking forward to seeing you all in Brussels in June.

Haroon Saad, Director



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"EU and Participatory Democracy – utopian myth or new reality?"

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MEMBER NEWS

Feature Article

EU and Participatory Democracy – utopian myth or new reality?

On the eve of the European Parliament elections, the issue of the possible failure of European democracy haunts the media and public opinion. Most Europeans are evidently discontent with, or simply disengaged from, the European Union. There seems to be a perception that the European decision-making process is in a certain way the exclusive domain of an undemocratic elite, which operates without consulting the population.



Despite the fact that the European Parliament's ability to represent Europe's citizens has improved significantly over the years, voter turnout in European elections 2004 has followed the downward trend experienced since 1979. In

2004 this represented a participation figure of 45.5% for the EU as a whole, with a participation of 47.1% in the EU-15 and 26.4% in the new Member States.

Nowadays, participation is considered as the heart of democracy. For a democracy to live, people need to be involved in the life of their society and in the decision-making networks. Hence the growing interest in the idea of Participatory Democracy. Today this term is used for the active part played by the people in the working of democracy; the willing contribution of citizens and organisations to the political and social life of their society. It enriches representative democracy by creating "horizontal" links in society, as opposed to the hierarchical or "vertical" links of representative democracy

Participatory democracy strives to broaden the range of people who have the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to decision-making. Technological development, especially that which enables community narratives and the acquisition of knowledge, may prove an important force in achieving this empowerment.

German Socialist Matthias Groote, representing the EP at the conference for [eParticipation Day](#) said that "the European institutions are accused of being very far from their citizens. This feeling



can be avoided by electronic participation via the internet" And indeed, new interactive media can provide powerful tools for strengthening government-citizen relations.

Today if we – citizens - really want to participate in the management and development of our European society, we need a real legal power to influence things and denounce incompetence, abuse, theft and bribery.



Participatory Democracy backed up by new media might be a revolutionary tool to efficiently install such a mechanism. But, as each revolutionary tool, it might be easily hijacked for less noble aims. Therefore, when promoting and implementing the interactive relations between governments and citizens, we must not forget that our democracy remains the representative one and its principles are TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Qec-ERAN is very keen on promoting active participation and it is in that spirit that we have developed the project on LOCAL FORUMS FOR DEVELOPING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY. The project is co-funded by the EU Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, which has

as its overall aim the development of innovative approaches to participatory democracy at local and regional level.

For more information please visit the [project website](#)

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Network Developments



Qec ERAN workshop: "Monitoring the Urban Dimension in EU Cohesion Policy: EU 12"

The latest Qec-ERAN workshop took place in Prague, Czech Republic, on 18-19 March 2009. The event forms part of a series of conferences on the theme of "the urban dimension in EU cohesion policy" in different member states. The objective of these events is to feed the outcomes into the EU mid-term review of the new EU Cohesion Policy programming arrangements that will take place in 2009 and 2010.



Conference delegates, Prague, 18-19 March 2009

Co-inciding with the Czech EU Presidency, the Prague workshop aimed to highlight how the EU 12 member states have addressed the "urban dimension" in their NSRFs and Operational Programmes. The conference was organised with the active involvement of DG Regio as well as the EP Intergroup on Urban Policy and Housing who are both very interested in the current programming period and have already launched a discussion about the future programming period.

The conference brought together over 60 participants working in urban development/regeneration. Speakers included representatives from DG Regional Policy, the European Parliament, the European Investment Bank, Managing Authorities for Structural Funds from Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Poland, and city representatives from Poznan (Poland), Prague

(Czech Republic), Gyor (Hungary) , Lubljana (Slovenia) and Timisoara Timisoara).

Previous events include "[Monitoring the urban dimension in cohesion policy: Spanish and Portuguese perspectives](#)" (2-3 April 2008, Madrid, Spain) and "[Monitoring the urban dimension in cohesion policy: Dutch and Belgium perspectives](#)" (19 September 2007, Antwerp, Belgium).

All presentations made during the event are available on our website and a conference report is under preparation.

Staff Developments



Janneke Draaisma, our Communications assistant and coordinator for ESIP is leaving QeC-ERAN at the end of this month. We wish her all the best for the future and professional development.

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Upcoming Events



Twenty Years of European Urban Policy: AGM and Study Tour

This year QeC-ERAN is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The organization came into existence with the support of the former DGXXVI, now DG Regional Policy, in order to help develop and implement some of the first Urban Pilot Projects. The network was instrumental in securing the URBAN programme, which, together with the territorial exchange programmes such as INTERREG and URBACT, is a key 'red thread' connecting its members.

The year 2009 also marks 20 years for the Brussels Regional Capital. Urban development in Brussels has 'shadowed' the evolution of EU Policy. A series of EU co-financed interventions have taken place alongside broader urban and community development programmes.

Qec ERAN will host a unique two and half day event on 24-26 of June 2009 to review 20 years of EU urban policy using Brussels as a "living laboratory" for undertaking the review. The event is designed to be a stock take of where we are and what is to come. We are organizing the

event in such a way that Brussels becomes a living laboratory for the review. The event has the following elements:

- Plenary sessions on 24 and 26 June as the opening and closing sessions of the event. These are open to a maximum of 120 delegates.
- Four Urban tours/peer reviews. These are only open to 40 delegates. If you wish to take part in this element you will need to complete the attached registration form and wait for a confirmation as we are looking to attract people who have had a clear involvement in Urban Policy. Each study tour will be facilitated by local guides and an expert.
- An evening of debates, music and food. This is again open to 120 delegates. this will take place on the evening of 25 June.

Participation is free for Qec ERAN members. If you have not already registered please get urgently in touch with the Qec-ERAN Secretariat

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Executive Bureau meeting



The next Executive Bureau meeting will take place on the 23rd of June from 2:30pm-4pm at the offices of the Qec ERAN secretariat in Brussels. The meeting will precede the Study Tour and Annual General Meeting (24-25 June 2009).

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Other Upcoming Events

Employment Week 2009
24 - 25 June 2009
16th Annual Conference & Exhibition



The Employment Week is an annual forum for the debate of critical issues around strong employment within the EU member states. It will take place in Brussels from the 24-25 June 2009.

Conference speakers will include Commissioner Vladimir Špidla. Topics under discussion this year are:

- The migration of labour

- Skills shortages and the development of skills and leaders
- Raising employment levels – innovation, the green economy, restructuring
- The response of governments, businesses and individuals to change – both economic and climactic

The conference organisers also provide the opportunity and space to display ESF-funded projects and initiatives at the **Market Place exhibition** and to discuss successes with people from all over the EU. For conditions and terms please follow this [link](#):

AGENDA

21-22 April: [European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009, Brussels](#)

27 April: [Czech Presidency Conference Safety and Health at Work in 21 Century – European Way \(Better Regulation and/or Good Practice\), Prague](#)

27-28 April: [Czech Presidency conference "Building migration partnerships", Prague](#)

28 April: [FEANTSA seminar on local homeless strategies, Brussels](#)



11-12 May: Regional Governance in a Global Context
14-16 May: CEV Conference: Developing employee volunteering , Prague
19-20 May: 2009 European Finance Convention , Lisbon
28 May: FEANTSA seminar on local homeless strategies , Brussels
28-30 May: Conference "Integrating difference - Human Rights, Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion in the Balkans on its Road to the EU" , Ohrid, Macedonia
22-24 June: European Social Services Conference: Quality and performance in Social Services in Europe , Prague

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PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Current Project Update

Women, Enterprise and Employment in Local Development (WEED)



The first steering group meeting of phase two took place in Brussels on the 26-27 of March. Melody Houk (Project and capitalization manager) and Paul Soto (Thematic Pole manager for the Urbact Secretariat) attended the meeting together with project partners and Qec-ERAN.

This SGM was the occasion to discuss further the Action Learning Set Methodology.

The role of the local action groups and of managing authorities was also discussed in more detail, while Lead Expert Gill Scott explained how to build a local action plan..

The 9 cities agreed to hold the first Transnational Exchange Workshop in Celje at the beginning of September 2009. The workshop's focus will be on the better



strategies to foster women entrepreneurship at local level.

For more information please contact [Annachiara Pecchini](#) or visit the [project website](#)

Building Healthy Communities



During the last BHC Steering group meeting in Brussels in February this year it was decided to hold the first Peer Review Workshop on the 7th to 10th of June in the project partner city of Lodz, Poland. The subject of the workshop will be on "Indicators and Criteria for a Healthy Sustainable Urban Development". All relevant information and documentation of this workshop will be available to interested parties on the BHC visit the project website .



For more information please contact [Isabella Haaf](#) or visit the [project website](#)

Active A.G.E.

The Urbact II project Active-AGE will hold the first Transnational Exchange Workshop in Wolverhampton from June 17th to June 19th.



The workshop will focus on the first Action Learning Set on the sub-theme "Age and the Economy". The aim is to stimulate a discussion between partners on this issue, each of them presenting their local priority and case-studies. The aim will be to benchmark partners' goals concerning the actions being planned and the ones being currently undertaken in relation to elderly people and the economy, such as re-entering the labour market and how to improve entrepreneurship.

For more information please contact [Maria Elena Bragaglia](#) or visit the [project website](#)

ESIP



ESIP took part in the third transnational Action Learning

Set of the Laps and Raps 2 project on the 12th and 13th of March in Lisbon, Portugal. The theme this time was demographic change and services for older people.

Following the workshop, members of the action learning group will participate in an online coaching and peer learning program which will support them in the development of local action plans and eventually assist them with the elaboration of specific project proposals.



Presentations from the Third Peer Review Workshop are available on the [ESIP website](#).

For more information please contact [Janneke Draaisma](#)

- The issues facing cities in managing migration and integration presented by the mayors of Venice, Amadora, Rotterdam, Komotini, Nea Alikarnassos, Sevilla, Timisoara, Torino and Vantaa.

For more information please contact [Yamina Guidoum](#) or visit the [project website](#)

MILE

The Mile project celebrated its final presentation workshop in Venice (Italy) on the 27th of February 2009.

In this workshop the nine cities involved presented their local action plans for intercultural dialogue and access to education, health and housing services to be funded under the operational programmes of the European Structural Funds.

The closing conference of the MILE project is scheduled for the 25 of May and will take place in Brussels. In this conference will be presented:

- Action plans developed by 9 cities for funding under the Operational Programmes of the European Structural Funds.
- Cities-Managing Authorities partnerships

Intercultural Youth Panels

The project started officially on the 1st of February and the first Steering Group Meeting took place in Brussels on the 23rd - 24th February.

According to the discussions and agreement held in the meeting the project has been scheduled in the following phases:

- March 2009: Establishment of Coordination Teams linked to every Intercultural Youth Panel
- April 2009: Design of 6 local Activity Programmes
- May 2009: The 6 Intercultural Youth Panels will be established
- September 2009: Transnational Exchange Workshop that will take place in Brussels



The Transnational Exchange Workshop will be the place and the moment not only to connect young participants from different places in Europe but also to connect them with the EU dimension. Therefore, we will invite some EU officials and MEPs in order to transfer to them the results of this project, which will give them an overview of what young citizens feel and think about cultural diversity, its challenges and possible alternatives to face these challenges.

For more information please contact [Tamara Hodas Garcia](#) or visit the [project website](#)

Local Forums For Developing Participatory Democracy

Local Forums for Developing Participatory Democracy project has entered its implementation phase after the first Steering Group Meeting took place in Brussels in January.

The general objective of the project - promoting Participatory Democracy - is currently being developed in the framework of the European elections 2009. Since January all the partners have been working on local strategies to increase the participation of young adults and other EU citizens in the European Parliament elections.

On the 21st and 22nd of April we will hold in Brussels the First Transnational Workshop on "Promoting Youth and EU migrant participation in the EU Parliament elections". The overall aim of this workshop will be to provide partners with thematic and strategic expertise in order to improve their local strategies, but it will also allow them to exchange their local experiences and practices. The workshop will bring together a number of people from different organisations, like the European Parliament, European Youth Forum, Action Aid UK, and projects like "THINK ABOUT IT".

All documents from the workshop will be available on our website shortly after the event.

For more information please contact [Karolina Rachwal](#) or visit the [project website](#)

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EU NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS



G20 pledges action on tax havens, but few signs of real reform

The G20 Summit approached economic crisis from all fronts: financial market regulation, economic stimulus, job security. Leaders agreed to use €5bn in unspent EU funds to upgrade energy and internet connections. And they raised the ceiling on EU aid to countries having difficulties. The credit line – which covers countries not using the euro – was lifted to €50bn. Leaders also pledged €75bn in additional support to the International Monetary Fund to help countries in trouble. Wrapping up a two-day summit, the leaders issued a joint statement saying the bloc had made “good progress” in implementing the €200bn stimulus package adopted in December. Leaders expressed confidence the measures – which include tax cuts and bank bailouts – would revive the economy but said it would take time. Read [more](#).

Meeting with social partners on economic crisis and May Summit

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Mirek Topolánek – representing the Council Presidency – met the European social partners to discuss the social impact of the crisis, and how to prepare the May summit. The Tripartite Social Summit showed a clear consensus on the urgent need for coordinated action at European level to complement and support actions at Member State level, together with a rejection of protectionist measures. The Commission and the social partners agreed on the need to modernise the European model, in order to preserve its values and to maintain the level of prosperity, social cohesion, environmental protection and the quality of life in Europe. Agreement was also reached on launching a consultation process to prepare the May Summit. It will include holding three seminars, with the participation of social partners and the relevant national authorities, between now and May in the Czech Republic, Sweden and Spain focusing on three key issues, respectively mobility, access to employment and skills. Read [more](#).



Active Inclusion, renewed social agenda and cross-border health services on the EP Agenda

31 March was a busy day for European Parliament Committees with two reports and a draft directive. The Employment and Social Affairs Committee adopted an own-initiative report on Active Inclusion ([draft 21/1/2009](#)).

European Parliament draft report recognises energy poverty as "growing problem" and encourages Member States to take action

On 30th March 2009, the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the [report on the Internal Market in Electricity](#), tabled in second reading by Rapporteur Eluned Morgan (PES). Recognizing energy poverty as a "growing problem in the Community", the text calls on Member States to develop national action plans or other appropriate frameworks to tackle energy poverty, "ensure the necessary supply for vulnerable customers", develop integrated approaches (in particular through social policy and energy efficiency measure). It also encourages Member States to define vulnerable customers and prohibit disconnection in this

context, in critical times. The text now has to be adopted by the European Parliament in plenary on 21st April. More information on the overall procedure can be found [here](#).

Strengthening structural funds' support to energy efficiency: Parliament supports Commission proposals

On 2nd April, the European Parliament supported a proposal by the European Commission to enlarge support to energy efficiency measures in all EU Member States. The rule changes would mean European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) money could co-fund national, regional or local authority schemes to install e.g. double glazing, wall insulation or solar panels in housing, or to replace old boilers with more energy efficiency ones, in all Member States. The ERDF currently funds such schemes only in the new (EU-12) Member States, and only in common parts of a building (or the entire building, if it's social housing), in deprived urban areas. While the proposal was first intended to apply only to "low-income households", it has been amended to highlight a broader purpose of "social cohesion". Yet EAPN believes the overall change can contribute to the fight against energy poverty, if it is followed by concrete



implementation and keeps a strong focus on low income households. More information can be found [here](#).

2009 EU peer review programme on social inclusion

The European Commission has launched its 2009 peer review programme on social inclusion. This year, the programme will look at 10 policies/practices related to social inclusion. Among these, there will be a peer review examining the Vienna homelessness monitoring system: "Counting the homeless – improving the basis for planning assistance". This peer review will take place on 12-13 November in Vienna and will involve the following peer countries: Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden. For more information, see the peer review programme [website](#).

8th Meeting of People experiencing poverty on the EC's website

The 8th Meeting of people experiencing poverty will take place in Brussels on 15 and 16 May 2009 and will address the topics of Housing, Financial Inclusion and Access to Basic Services. The basic purpose of this event is to

listen to people experiencing poverty, and to establish a dialogue with policy- and decision-makers in the field of fight against poverty and social exclusion at the European level and at national levels. It is organised jointly by the Czech Presidency of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Anti-Poverty Network. Read [more](#).

The European Parliament urges the European Commission to regulate micro-credit in Europe

In a new report adopted on March 24th 2009, the European Parliament urges the European Commission to regulate micro-credit in Europe. The document suggests: the creation of a central agency coordinating all micro-credit operations and initiatives in Europe, more EU financing for such initiatives, the promotion and dissemination of good practices within the sector of micro-credit and the elaboration of a new definition of micro-credit. It also points out that public's awareness should be raised on the issue. Read [more](#).



Social Platform response to the European Commission consultation on health inequalities

Social Platform welcomes the decision of the European Commission to consult civil society at EU level on its future actions to reduce health inequalities and focuses on five key messages concerning: social exclusion, gender and equality principles, the Open Method of Coordination, participation of people experiencing poverty, mainstreaming social and public health goals in all policies. Read [more](#).

European Women's Lobby: The EU anti-discrimination directive: let's stay mobilized!

On 16 March, the European Parliament's Civil liberties Committee adopted Ms Buitenweg's report on the proposal for a new anti-discrimination directive presented by the European Commission. The project constitutes a step forward in the fight against all forms of discrimination, The European Women's Lobby welcomes the inclusion of multiple-discrimination in the draft report, which recognises the existence of situations where people are discriminated on several grounds.

Yet, several issues remain problematic. [Read more](#).

ILGA-Europe launches "Be Bothered" campaign on the EP elections 2009

On 25 March, ILGA launched a campaign on the EP elections with the motto "*Be Bothered. Vote for a human rights friendly European Parliament*". The purpose of this campaign is to make sure the Parliament remains committed to human rights and equality generally and the rights of LGBT people in particular and also to energise ILGA-Europe membership, organisations and individuals across the European Union, to take active part in this year's elections. Read [more](#).

COFACE has issued a memorandum for the European Elections

COFACE (the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union) reminds that families are being hard hit by the crisis through rising unemployment, falling purchasing power, increasing debt, poverty and social exclusion. It is also seeing growing uncertainty and concern for the future among broad swathes of the population, leading many



couples to put off having children, with the all-too familiar consequences for demography and population ageing. Read the [full text version](#).

EU looks ahead to future gender equality challenges

European Commissioners were joined by other EU institutions and representatives of civil society at a special meeting on 10th March to discuss the future of gender equality policy in Europe.

The Commissioners Group on Fundamental Rights, Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunities met in the context of International Women's Day. The extraordinary session took stock of progress under the existing 2006–2010 Roadmap on gender equality and discussed future challenges for EU gender equality policy. Read [more](#).

EP adopts report on "the social situation of the Roma and improving their access to the labour market in the EU"

On 11 March 12, 2009, the European Parliament adopted the report by Magda Kósáne Kovács (PES, HU) on "*the social situation of the Roma and improving their access to the labour market in the EU*". Calling

for an overall strategy to integrate the Roma community into the European Union, the own-initiative report states: "*Educating young people should be a priority in combating poverty and social exclusion of the Roma*". [Read more](#). >> Read also [ERIO's press release](#).

European Commission consultation on health inequalities

A consultation has been launched to collect views on how the European Union can contribute to reducing health inequalities both within and between member states. Individuals and organisations wishing to respond should do so by 1 April 2009. Responses will feed into the development of a Communication tabled in the Commission Legislative and Work Programme for 2009. Read [more](#)

European Commission: Press release on pensions in the EU in a context of crisis

Most Europeans retiring today still rely heavily on public, pay-as-you-go schemes. So far the financial crisis has not had a big impact on these. But if the economic slump drags on and unemployment continues to rise, governments may need to review the plans to ensure their



long-term health. Read [more](#) and access the [Press release](#).

Eurofound launches special web page : focus on women in the European labour market

To mark the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2009, Eurofound has launched a special [website](#) which brings together its recent publications on women at work, gender and equality issues.

YFJ is collecting best practices on working with migrants and migrant issues

In order to achieve greater inclusiveness of its Member Organisations and in particular at building their capacity to reaching out more to young people with migrant background, the YFJ is currently undertaking a mapping study on existing good practices, experiences, expertise of civil society organisations on inclusion and representation of young people with migrant background or migrants from other vulnerable groups such as migrant women, migrant LGBT people, migrant people with disabilities, refugees, migrant children etc. Read [more](#).
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Publications

External evaluation of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (EYEO)

The overall aim of this evaluation was to determine whether the EYEO was a success both at the European level and at the level of the 30 Participant Countries. As part of the final evaluation report, four thematic reports were produced, three of which to focus on three grounds of discrimination, namely racial and ethnic origin, age and sexual orientation. The fourth report addresses the way in which gender was mainstreamed across the actions and activities, carried out respectively at national and EU level. The final report and its 4 thematic reports are now [available](#).

Eurofound publishes its Second European Quality of Life Survey (2EQLS)

Most Europeans report health and family life as the key elements contributing to a good quality of life, and the survey clearly shows that people's material conditions, standard of living and well-being strongly depend on income as well as the economic wealth of the country in which they live. Read [more](#).



FEANTSA European Report 2008: The role of housing in pathways into and out of homelessness

The final version of the FEANTSA European Report 2008 is now available online. With this report FEANTSA wanted to explore the importance of housing policies in the fight against homelessness. The European report presents the main findings from the national reports of 18 EU countries on this topic. It highlights the areas of substantial agreement across Europe as well as setting out areas of disagreement or difference in perception and approach between countries. Download the European Report 2008 in [English](#) and [French](#).

ENAR: Latest ENARgy on social inclusion and equality

ENAR has issued the latest edition of its newsletter ENARgy, on the theme "Social inclusion and equality". The articles in this edition of ENARgy analyse social inclusion from an equality perspective, presenting a range of views from different actors, including the European Parliament, academics, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and SOLIDAR. The newsletter also features the experiences of ENAR members in the United Kingdom and

Malta in their engagement with the National Action Plans on social inclusion and a focus on the specific exclusion that Roma communities face. Read [more](#).

Report on the economic impacts of migration on the UK labour market

The UK institute for Public Policy Research recently published a report entitled "The economic impacts of migration on the UK labour market". The impact of migration on the UK labour market has become a contentious issue in public and political debate. This paper attempts to cut through the distortions of recent debates, providing a balanced and informed assessment of the best existing evidence on the effects of migration on the labour market. Read [more](#)

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