

Europe's increasing use of Deliberative Polling

From 1994 to 2007, some 12 Deliberative Polls have been conducted in the European Union alone, in the UK, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Denmark and Bulgaria. All have received significant coverage. Two focused specifically on EU-related topics. Others are under preparation in other countries.

GREAT BRITAIN – April 1994 - Crime policies

The deliberation focused on the root causes of crime, policing, punishment, and procedural rights, covering matters such as the rights of the accused, those of victims and citizenry in general as well as juvenile matters. By the end of the event the support of the participants increased concerning sending fewer criminals to prison, relaxing sentences for juvenile offenders, and alternative sentencing models for those deemed a lesser risk to society. Those, who agreed on "The rules in court should be LESS on the side of the accused" went from 42 percent to 52 percent. Representatives of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties, including Tony Blair for Labour answered the participants' questions. Channel 4 broadcast a two-hour programme produced by Granada television.

GREAT BRITAIN - June 1995 – Great Britain's role in Europe

The deliberation focused on Britain's role in the EU. After the deliberation, the agreement with the following sentence: "Closer links with EU would make Britain stronger economically" increased from 51 percent to 67 percent. Channel 4 had a two hour broadcast about the event.

GREAT BRITAIN – June 1996 – The future of the Monarchy

The deliberation focused on the future of Britain's Monarchy. Participants who agreed on "The Monarchy makes me proud to be British" went from 48 percent to 59 percent, while those agreeing that "'The Monarchy should remain as it is'" declined from 51 to 39 percent. Channel 4 again had a two hour broadcast about the event.

GREAT BRITAIN, May 1997 - The General Election

Participants' voting changed significantly; the share of those intending to vote for the Conservative party went from 26 percent to 19 percent; those intending to vote for the Labour party went from 47 percent to 39 percent; and those intending to vote for the Liberal Democrats rose from 11 percent to 33 percent. Informed opinions developed on topics like EU membership, economic and tax policies. Channel 4 had a two hour broadcast.

GREAT BRITAIN, 5-6 July 1998 - The future of the National Health Service

Substantial majorities before and after the deliberation were in favour of increased government spending on the NHS, even if this meant paying higher taxes. The positive and protective attitudes towards the NHS as an institution increased through the deliberation. Those who agreed that "Government should pay for everyone's health care" went from 58 percent to 75 percent, while those who agreed that "Government should pay for health care of those who cannot afford to pay" went from 29 percent to 20 percent. The Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson MP and shadow spokespersons Ann Widdecome MP and Simon Hughes MP attended the event. Extensive television coverage throughout the weekend was provided by provided by Channel 4.

"The National Deliberative Poll is something brand new for Bulgarian society.

It is very important to implement this method to get public support for other crucial or divisive issues in Bulgaria. (...)

The Deliberative Poll (...) has to be applied for key decisions also in other areas such as education or health care reform because this method allows for a deeper knowledge of the essence of the issues, of possible ways to resolve these issues, and of the policies and actions which the institutions should undertake..."

Sergei Stanishev, Prime Minister of Bulgaria - April 15, 2007



DENMARK, 25-27 August, 2000 – Denmark and the Euro

The deliberation took place before Denmark's national referendum on whether to adopt the Euro. People who agreed on "yes to the Euro" rose from 45 percent to 51 percent, while those who agreed on "no to the Euro" rose from 36 percent to 40 percent. The share of undecided was significantly reduced. The percentage believing that EU membership is positive increased from 68 percent to 75 percent. Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, leader of the opposition, attended the event. National TV broadcaster DR provided 5.5 hours of national broadcast on television as well as extensive radio coverage.

BULGARIA, 12-13 October 2002 - Fighting crime

The topic of crime has ranked high on the public agenda for years in Bulgaria. The first topic was *Crime and punishment*, which focused on key issues such as arrest without bail, the death penalty, "bending the rules" by the police during investigation and the need for institutional changes. The second topic was *Crime and society*, which focused on the economic factors, drugs, and the role of the media. The opinion explicitly changed on capital punishment, the independence of the prosecutor's office, and the investigation services. The support for death penalty declined from 55 percent to 34 percent. The representatives of all four major parties committed themselves publicly to work to change the constitution to make both the prosecutor's office and the investigation service more accountable. The media coverage was provided by BTV.

HUNGARY, 16-18 September 2005 – Policies toward the Roma in Hungary

The DP was focusing attention on the problems that accompany the co-existence of Roma and non-Roma, the underlying dramatic tensions, and possible options concerning the way conflicts might be resolved. The most definite impact of the Deliberative Weekend appeared in relation to the issue of discrimination: the tendency to reject discrimination against Roma became much more pronounced. For example, when first interviewed, one quarter of respondents agreed with the view that "different" treatment of Roma by the police is justified; after deliberation, only 9 percent said the same. The event has been covered by public-service Hungarian Broadcasting Corporation MTV Rt. and Kossuth Radio, as well as Radio C. Katalin Gönczöl, Ministerial Commissioner for Criminal Policy and Bálint Magyar, Minister of Education attended the event.

GREECE, 4 June 2006 – Selection of a party's candidate for Mayor

A representative sample was invited to select a candidate for the position of mayor in Marousi (the Athens suburb where the Olympics were held) following the initiative of George A. Papandreou, the leader of PASOK. At the end of the deliberation, the official candidate of Pasok was selected. The event was covered by Mega TV.

ITALY, 8 January 2007 - Health care and financial investment ethics

The deliberation increased the participants' level of information about health care, ethical finance, environment, mobility and schools. At the end 85 percent of the sample declared having 'a clearer idea' about the issues addressed and this greater knowledge resulted in a shift of opinion. For instance, those who agreed on "converting hospital beds in resources in order to improve the efficiency of the structures" went from 45 to 62 percent. The politicians who participated, either by attending the event or announcement of the results included Piero Marrazzo, president of Regione Lazio, Luigi Nieri, Regione Lazio Council Treasurer and Giuliano Amato, Minister of the Interior.

NORTHERN IRELAND, 27 January 2007 - Education policies

Deliberation changed the sample's perceptions of both the Protestant and the Catholic communities. The participants clearly became more open to change and there were massive gains in knowledge. Support for shared education was initially substantial and generally increased. Agreement that "better relations will come about only through more mixing of the two" rose from 61 to 69 percent. Agreement that "changes in the Omagh area's education system can equally benefit both communities" increased from 40 to 51 percent. The DP was the subject of a half hour broadcast by the BBC.

THE LAST DP CONDUCTED IN EUROPE

BULGARIA, 14-15 April 2007 – Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria

The DP focused on three issues affecting the Roma: Housing, Crime and Education. Those who thought that "the Roma should live in separate Roma neighbourhoods" declined from 43 to 21 percent. The agreement on "more frequent police checks just of the Roma would be unfair" rose from 16 to 27 percent. The share of those who felt that the "Roma schools should be preserved" fell from 46 to 24 percent. Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev, and European Commissioner Meglena Kuneva attended the event. The Bulgarian National Television provided a 5 hours long coverage of the event over the weekend.