

Brussels, 25 October 2006

The celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome to focus on youth

Yesterday the European Institutions gave their green light to several projects and events to be carried out throughout the European Union in 2007, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Rome Treaties. The purpose is twofold: celebrating the freedom, peace and prosperity that the European Union has accomplished so far, and looking at the future and at what kind of Europe the citizens, and in particular the young, wish for the future. The Youth Package which includes "United Schools of Europe", "Spring Day in Europe" and a Youth Summit in Rome, was given the highest priority.

Commenting on the decision, Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström said: " I hope that the anniversary events will make people think: what kind of Europe do I want for tomorrow. Europe is more than just a market place. That is why we should use this anniversary to show that the Union is also about sustainability, citizenship, gender equality, consumer rights, security and opportunity for the people. In the times when Robert Schuman spoke of "creative reconciliation", Europe was universally considered as a good project. Nowadays we must earn this consent – to go an extra mile when it comes to transparency, democracy and dialogue."

Alejo Vidal Quadras, Vice-President of the European Parliament for Information and Communication policy, said "it is essential that the EU Institutions and Member States seize the opportunity presented by the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome to intensify the debate on the future of Europe. This is not about "celebrating for celebrating's sake". It is about grasping the opportunity presented by this very symbolic anniversary to draw conclusions on what we achieved so far and to renew the European project to match it with the needs and expectations of future generations, who in turn will take it forward. The European Parliament will make its contribution to this, in Brussels as well as in Strasbourg, and in each and every Member State".

The projects were decided by the Inter-institutional Group on Information (IGI), which gather all representatives of the European Institutions

The meeting was co-chaired by European and Parliament Vice President Vidal-Quadras Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström.,

The IGI worked on the basis of project selected earlier by a Task Force consisting of current Member States, Bulgaria and Romania, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The following projects were selected:

United schools of Europe will link schools from all parts of the European Union with each other. Schoolchildren will talk to each other and exchange views and experiences using real time web-based communication tools. It will also foster exchange, twinning and visiting schemes in the longer term.

Spring Day in Europe , which has already proved a success during the past 4 years, will in 2007 focus on the 50th Anniversary. Taking place from the end of March to the beginning of May, the Spring Day will raise awareness on Europe's achievements and encourage debate about the future of Europe among pupils aged 7-17.

A **Youth Summit in Rome** will be held parallel with the meeting between Heads of State and Government in Berlin on March 24-25th. Youth representatives from all over Europe will discuss their future, first with each other, then with the European Council in Berlin, through a live image transmission. This link will also connect the meeting with the celebrations in Brussels on March 24th, organised by the Belgian authorities. The Youth Summit will be prepared by local events in the first months of the year and will provide a large opportunity for a deep debate about Europe and its future among the young.

It will also provide an opportunity to reflect about the participation of young people in the democratic life of the Union.

A project called "50 faces of Europe" will involve 50 citizens, born in each of the years, who will talk about how the European Union have impacted on their life and whose experiences symbolise milestones in the European project. They will give interviews to the press, participate in national conferences with key political figures, give lectures and visit schools. They would also be invited to take part in other events linked to the anniversary.

Some other interesting projects will be confirmed after the first reading of the 2007 budget tomorrow by the Parliament.

A **Mini Film Festival** outdoors during the summer months in European capitals and other large cities, showing MEDIA funded films. The objectives of the MEDIA programme are to preserve and enhance European cultural diversity and its cinematographic and audiovisual heritage.

Concerts for Europe will be organised by the representations in the Member States on Europe Day May 9th. On the day of the famous 1950 Robert Schuman declaration, which paved the way to the beginning of the European project. In 1985 European leaders decided to make May 9th "Europe Day".

Europalia, an art festival taking place from October 2007 to February 2008 and highlighting the common cultural aspects as well as the diversity of the 27 different countries of the Union. Its fine arts, theatre and dance events attracted more than a million visitors in 2005. 1,5 million euros for Europalia are proposed by the EP budgets committee.