

From: Association for Community Colleges (ACC)
Subject: Readers letter
To: The Independent, Irish Times, Le Monde, Liberation, Eesti Päevaleht, Postimees, Le Nouvel Observateur, Il Sole 24 ore, Il Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, Luxemburger Wort, El Pais, La Vanguardia, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Zeit, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Der Kurier, Der Standard, Standart, Dnevnik, 24 Chasa, Lietuvos Aidas, Lietuvos zinios, Gazeta Wyborcza, The Slovak Spectator, Respekt, Vreme, Fljaka, Evenimentul Zilei, Jurnalul National, Rzeczpospolita, Polityka, The Daily Telegraph, The Economist, Ziarul Financiar, NRC Handelsblad, Volkskrant, Vrij Nederland, Naftemporiki, Europa Press, El Mundo, Berliner Zeitung, Ta Nea, Eleftherotipia, Diena, Latvijas Avize, Delo, Lidove Noviny, Politis, La Repubblica Padania, Tyzden, Hospodarske Hoviny, Il Gazzettino, Suomen Kuvalehti, Suomen Tietotoimisto Oy, Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, The Times, The Guardian, Hurriyet Gazetesi, Milliyet Gazetesi, Cumhuriyet, Kauno Diena, Jyllandsposten, De Standaard, De Morgen, Kristeligt Dagblad, Information, Público, Frankfurter Rundschau, Die Welt, Jornal Expresso, Diário de Notícias, Magyar Nemzet, Magyar Irlap, EUobserver, etc. etc.
Release: November 30th 2005

Wallström wants Euroforums for a common public sphere!

The Vice-President of the European Commission, Margot Wallström, seems increasingly decisive in her call for providing forums for European citizens to connect with each others as well as establishing links with European institutions of democracy.

EU citizens must have not only the means to communicate, but also the right for their voices to be heard, claims Wallström. And, she continues, bridging the gap between Europe and its citizens means that we must create meeting forums for civic debate. Most importantly, this is European level democracy!

We applaud the proposition of Mrs Wallström, namely that she believes the EU Commission can and should support the emergence of a chain of European people's universities (Swedish Svenska Dagbladet on June 4th to mention just one). These institutions have been referred to elsewhere as European Community Colleges, People's Academies, European Folk High Schools and/or Euroforums. This means that we are dealing with "test fields" for small-scale European public spheres, building learning communities out of mixed groups of Europeans, probably with a non-formal structure and within the residential school format.

We consider it a splendid idea to establish forums for Europeans to meet and debate issues of common interest - across borders, sectors, social classes and other dividing lines between Europeans. We strongly believe that "bridging the gap" between Europeans and their political institutions goes to the heart of European citizens meeting each other. What else would and should be on the other side of this bridge?

There is a need to urge both citizens and governments to back up this idea!

We have remarked as well that the idea of meeting forums for Europeans is, to date, only mentioned in letters and speeches from Mrs Wallström, while official EU-documents are more concerned with communication from the EU-Commission to the citizens (top-down). We would like to back up Mrs Wallström's vision of communication and dialogue between citizens as a precondition for « bridging the gap » and for European democracy to become a living truth.

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