



Information about the Meeting of Minds plenary session: European citizens' participation in science policy-making

Meeting of Minds is an ambitious new experiment in modern democracy, thought to be the largest ever public consultation on science. The Meeting of Minds project has, for the first time, allowed citizens from nine European countries to come together with experts in the field of brain science, to discuss and compare views on how developments in brain science will – and should – alter people's lives. A new methodology was developed to enable all participants to have their say and enter into in-depth dialogue with each other and with experts, all whilst speaking their own language. During 2005 and early 2006 the citizens participating in the project debated the ethical, social and legal implications of brain science, and suggested future actions. Their conclusions on the use of new brain-science technology, medicines and techniques have been passed to policy-makers at European, national and international levels.

The initiative was launched in 2004 by a consortium of 12 science museums, academic institutions, public foundations and technology assessment bodies from nine European countries, led by the King Baudouin Foundation of Belgium. In this session members of the UK citizen's panel will describe what taking part in this process has meant to them, while the lead partner will explain how the project came into existence and talk about the challenges of running a Europe-wide project. The UK partner (the Science Museum's Dana Centre) will explain how the process has taken place from a national perspective and a leading brain scientist will give his views on the relevance of the public's opinion to science policy-making. Come and join in the discussion about how this project has progressed and whether this model should be more widely used to help shape future science policy, both nationally and internationally.

Plenary Speakers:

Sue Burne, member of UK citizens' panel, Meeting of Minds

Gerrit Rauws, Director, King Baudouin Foundation (lead partner organisation of Meeting of Minds consortium)

Professor Stephen Rose, Director, Brain and Behavioural Research Group, The Open University

Robert Smith, member of UK citizens' panel, Meeting of Minds

Chair: Dr Tom Ziessen, Public Participation Projects Coordinator, the Science Museum's Dana Centre

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'Meeting of Minds' is an initiative of the partner consortium comprising King Baudouin Foundation (project coordinator and co-funder), the University of Westminster, the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment, the Danish Board of Technology, the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, the Stiftung Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, the Fondazione IDIS - Città della Scienza, the Rathenau Institute, the Science Museum, the University of Debrecen, the Eugenides Foundation and the University of Liège. With the support of the European Commission.