

THE DAY IN POLITICS

(EU) EU/EUROPE DAY: AUSTRIAN PRESIDENCY INVITES CITIZENS TO “CAFÉS D’EUROPE” TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF EUROPE ON 9 MAY

*Brussels, 02/05/2006 (Agence Europe) – The Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU, in cooperation with the Institute of the Regions in Europe in Salzburg, is inviting EU citizens to take part in debates on Europe in designated “Cafés d’Europe” in each of the capitals of the 25 Member States, and in Bulgaria and Romania. In Austria, and especially in Vienna, *kaffeehäuser* have a long tradition and even today play an important role as a place to meet and discuss every and any topic. “We want to intensify the dialogue on Europe with citizens by creating a public discussion area through these “Cafés d’Europe” on 9 May, not only in Austria, but simultaneously in all Member and accession States,” said Austrian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Hans Winkler, at the presentation of the project in Brussels on 26 April. “Europe is not just politics, European directives and regulations. Europe has an emotional and cultural side too. Cafés are places for communication and literary exchange; they are a symbol of a common European heritage. We want to use the atmosphere of a café for open discussion with people, especially the young, artists and writers in order to speak about Europe,” he said.*

Jiří Gruša, President of International PEN, has been asked to write a text, “*Temptress Europe*”, in which he speaks of Europe’s abduction by Zeus, to launch the project. International PEN has selected 26 other European authors who have been asked to write their own stories on Europe. On 9 May, these stories will provide the starting point for discussions in each of the 27 member and accession countries. Those visiting the “Cafés d’Europe” will be asked to interpret and complete the stories, which will then be translated into English and published in one volume. The final book will be submitted to the European Council of 15 and 16 June at which the future of Europe will be the main topic for discussion by heads of state and government. The authors (for example, Václav Havel in Prague, Eva Demski in Berlin, Timothy Garton Ash in London and Jan Baeke in Amsterdam) will all be in “their” Café d’Europe to read their compositions and be involved in the discussions.

At the presentation, Mr Winkler was at pains to stress the independence of the project, brought into being by the Institute of the Regions in Europe and International PEN without the direct involvement of the Austrian Presidency or that of any Member State government, either regarding the choice of authors or the way discussion should unfold. The Presidency equally does not want the “Cafés d’Europe” to be seen by the public as just being “*European propaganda*” or a purely elitist initiative. “*Everyone can come along and give their opinion on Europe, on what is good and what is not. I hope there will also be critical contributions,*” said Mr Winkler.

9 May will also see the publication of what Mr Winkler called “*the first European daily*”, The Europe Journal, which will appear in German and English as a supplement to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, with European reports from the correspondents of the German daily in the 27 countries concerned.

The “Cafés d’Europe” will also offer a selection of European desserts, with each country putting forward what it considers to be its national sweet. Visitors will receive a book of European recipes *Sweet Europe* as a souvenir. The “Cafés d’Europe” will be located in the following establishments: Vienna (Café Central), Brussels (Falstaff), Sofia (Café Bulgaria), Nicosia (Flo Café), Prague (Café Slavia), Copenhagen (Café Sommersko), Tallinn (Kohvik Bestseller), Helsinki (Kappeli), Paris (Les Deux Magots), Berlin (Café Einstein), Athens (Polis Café), Budapest (Central Kavehaz), Dublin (Bewley’s Café), Rome (Presso Bibli), Riga (Monte Kristo Kafija), Vilnius (Tores), Luxembourg (Café am Musée), Valetta (Café Cordina), Amsterdam (Café Americain), Warsaw (Kawiarnia Nowy Swiat), Lisbon (Martinho da Arcada), Bucharest (Grand Caffee Galleron), Stockholm (Grillska Huset), Bratislava (Café Roland), Ljubljana (Café at Grand Hotel Union), Madrid (Circulo dez Bellas Artes), London (Waterstone’s Store).

(EU) EU/FINNISH PRESIDENCY: 02/05/2006 (Agence Europe) – Prime Minister of Finland Matti Vanhanen will be in Brussels on 4 May for talks with the Presidents of the European Commission and Parliament José Manuel Barroso and Josep Borrell, and also with the leader of the European Parliament Socialist group (PES) Martin Schultz. The aim of the visit is, above all, to prepare for the Finnish Presidency in the second half of this year.