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Winkler: “Temptress Europe – discover its sensuous and cultural diversity for yourself”

Presentation of “Café d'Europe” – an initiative launched by the Institute of the Regions of Europe under the patronage of the Austrian Presidency

“The best way to nurture a feeling for and interest in Europe is to discover its sensuous and cultural diversity for yourself”, said State Secretary Hans Winkler during the presentation of Café d'Europe in Brussels, which was also attended by Franz Schausberger, President of the Institute of the Regions of Europe.

On Europe Day (9 May) 2006, the Institute of the Regions of Europe will unveil a Europe-wide culture project – Café d'Europe – under the patronage of the Austrian Presidency. “The Austrian Presidency has set itself the task of furthering dialogue with the citizens of Europe and creating room for discussions on Europe. Café d'Europe provides an opportunity to implement this idea - not only in Austria, but also simultaneously in all EU capitals, as well as in the capitals of Romania and Bulgaria”, Winkler declared.

“In Europe, sensuous and cultural aspects, and not just EU policies, directives and regulations, are extremely important. A coffee house is a place where people meet to talk and exchange literary ideas; it is also a symbol of a common European heritage. We want to benefit from the café atmosphere and hold open discussions with people, particularly young people, artists and writers and talk about Europe”, said Winkler.

On 9 May 2006, young Europeans and coffee house visitors will come together to discuss Europe and write stories about Europe in 27 Cafés d'Europe. Jiří Gruša, President of the International PEN Club, has written a thought-provoking text with the title “Temptress Europe” – an allusion to Zeus' seduction of Europe - and invited European authors to write their stories about Europe. All the authors and coffee house visitors will take up, interpret and expand upon this main theme.

The contributions will be subsequently compiled and published. Authors such as Václav Havel in Prague, Eva Damski in Berlin, Timothy Garton Ash in London, Jan Baeke in Amsterdam and a host of other European writers will read from their literary contributions and discuss with the public.

On 9 May, the first European daily newspaper (The Europe Journal) will appear in German and English. A European editing team formed by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and comprising members from 27 countries will be reporting. In addition, the Cafés d'Europe will be tempting their visitors with a selection of European desserts. The recipes for “Sweet Europe” will be put together in a folder for visitors to take away as a sweet souvenir.