

BULGARIAN PRIME MINISTER TALKS TO EU CITIZENS

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Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev took part over the weekend in Tomorrow's Europe, the first European Union (EU) citizens' deliberative poll, the Government's press office said on October 15.

Almost 400 EU citizens participated in the deliberative poll with experts and politicians, where challenges and opportunities facing the Union in the medium term were discussed. Participants were aged between 18 and 80 and come from the 27 member states. They exchanged opinions and arguments and asked questions to panels of experts and politicians.

In his first answer to the participants' questions, Stanishev said that "the method of deliberative polling was very useful and his government intended to use it for education, healthcare and public spending policies".

The role of the EU in terms of economic policies was very serious these days and more co-ordinated efforts in this sphere were needed, Stanishev said, quoted by Bulgarian National Radio (BNR). The world had turned global and the only way for each individual member state to be successful was to follow the steps of the others with respect to both the foreign and economic policies of the Union, he said.

New decision-making mechanisms, as regards EU foreign policy, were called for. Talks with Turkey did not need to be any different than those with other aspirants. EU is a union of democracies, of secular states, not necessarily only Christian, and Turkey, if it wanted to join to EU, should abide by the values of the Union, Stanishev said.

In his view, Europe carried a great responsibility for the countries in the Western Balkans, because the war in former Yugoslavia had left the legacy of a deep division between nations, Stanishev said.