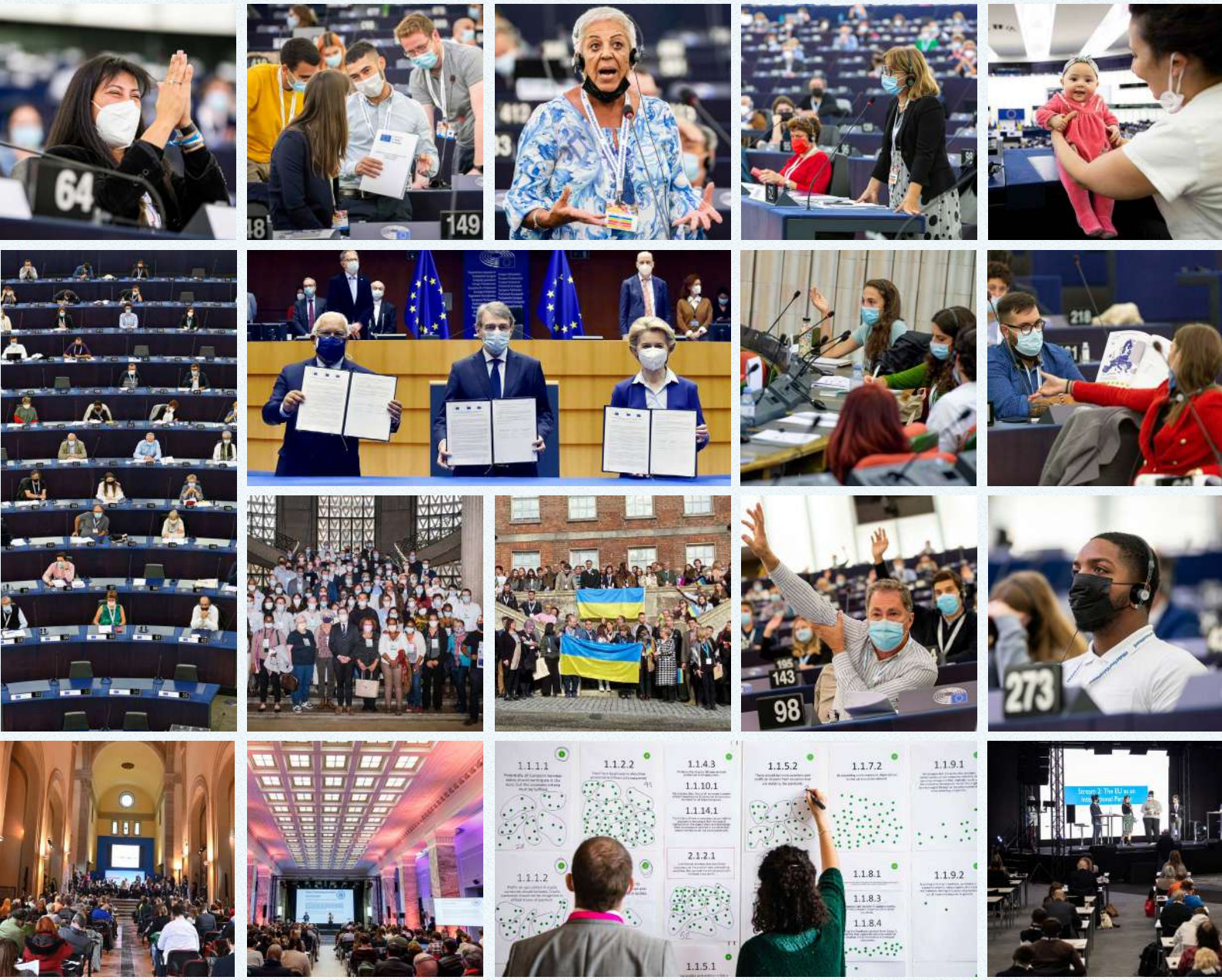
Conference on the Future of Europe

REPORT ON THE FINAL OUTCOME

May 2022



The **future**
is **in your hands**

Conference
on the **Future**
of **Europe**

Contents

Introduction **5**

I. The architecture of the Conference **6**

II. Contributions to the Conference: citizens' input **10**

(A) Multilingual Digital Platform 11

(B) Citizens' Panels 15

1. European Citizens' Panels 15

2. National Citizens' Panels 22

(C) Events organised in the framework of the Conference. 26

1. National events 26

2. European Youth Event (EYE) 32

3. Other events 32

III. The Conference Plenary **34**

(A) Composition, role and functioning 35

(B) Working Groups 36

(C) Chronological summary 37

IV. The Plenary proposals **40**

Final considerations of the Executive Board **90**

Annexes **98**

I — Recommendations of the four European Citizens' Panels

II — Recommendations of the National Citizens' Panels

III — References to the results of national events

IV – Reference to the report from the Multilingual Digital Platform

#TheFutureIsYours
An Chomhdháil ar Thodhchaí na hEorpa
Konferencen om Europas fremtid
Konferenz zur Zukunft Europas
Conférence sur l'avenir de l'Europe
Konferencja w sprawie przyszłości Europy
Konferencia sobre o futuro da Europa
Europos ateities konferencija
Konferenca o prihodnosti Evrope
Konferencia pre budúcnosť Európy
Konferencija o budućnosti Europe
Konferens om Europas framtid
Konferencja dwar przyszłości Europy
Konferenca për të ardhmen e Europës
Konferenca o budućnosti Europe

Introduction

On 10 March 2021, European Parliament President David Sassoli, Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa, on behalf of the Council of the EU, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe. Their pledge was simple: to allow, by way of a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise, all Europeans to have a say on what they expect from the European Union and have a greater role in shaping the future of the Union. Their task was, by contrast, immensely challenging: the organisation, for the first time, of a transnational, multilingual and interinstitutional exercise of deliberative democracy, involving thousands of European citizens as well as political actors, social partners, civil society representatives and key stakeholders in accordance with article 16 of the Conference Rules of Procedure.

On 9 May 2022, after months of intense deliberations, the Conference concluded its work, putting forward a report on the final outcome that includes 49 proposals to the three EU Institutions. The proposals reflect the expectations of European citizens on nine topics: A stronger economy, social justice and jobs; Education, culture, youth and sport; Digital transformation; European democracy; Values and rights, rule of law, security; Climate change, environment; Health; EU in the world; and Migration. All of them are presented in this final report, which also aims to provide an overview of the various activities undertaken in the context of the unique process that the Conference on the Future of Europe has been.

Steered by three Co-Chairs – Guy Verhofstadt for the European Parliament, Ana Paula Zacarias, Gašper Dovžan and Clément Beaune successively for the Council of the EU, and Dubravka Šuica for the European Commission – and driven by an Executive Board (consisting of an equal representation of the three Institutions as well as observers from key stakeholders), the Conference has constituted an unprecedented experience of transnational deliberative democracy. It has also proven its historical relevance and importance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression of Ukraine. The Conference on the Future of Europe involved the establishment of the Conference's Rules of Procedure on 9 May 2021, the setting up of a Multilingual Digital Platform allowing European citizens to contribute in 24 EU languages, and the organisation of four European Citizens' Panels, six National Citizens' Panels, thousands of national and local events as well as seven Conference Plenaries. It is the result of unparalleled determination from the EU institutions, the Member States, but also and above all from European citizens, to debate the European Union's challenges and priorities and to introduce a new approach to the European project.

But this is only the beginning. In line with the founding text of the Conference, the three Institutions will now examine swiftly how to follow up effectively on this report, each within the framework of their competences and in accordance with the Treaties. The three Institutions' commitment in this regard is paramount.

I.
The architecture of the Conference

The Conference on the Future of Europe[1] was a novel and innovative process which has opened up a new space for debate with citizens to address Europe's challenges and priorities, with a view to underpinning the democratic legitimacy of the European project and to upholding citizens' support for our common goals and values. It was a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise for Europeans to have their say on what they expect from the European Union. The Conference was a joint undertaking of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, acting as equal partners together with the Member States of the European Union.

[1] https://futureu.europa.eu/

1. Joint Declaration

On 10 March 2021, the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe (Joint Declaration) was signed by late European Parliament President David Sassoli, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, on behalf of the Council of the EU, and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. It paved the way for this unprecedented, open and inclusive European democratic exercise, which places citizens at its very heart.

The Conference was placed under the authority of the Presidents of the three institutions, acting as its Joint Presidency. The Joint Presidency was supported by an Executive Board, which was co-chaired by a member from each of the three EU institutions.

In accordance with the Joint Declaration, the following structures were set up:

- an Executive Board, which oversaw the organisation of the Conference. It included representatives from the three EU institutions (three members each and four observers), as well as observers from the presidential Troika of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC). The Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, and social partners were invited as observers.
- a Common Secretariat ensuring equal representation of the three institutions, which assisted the work of the Executive Board. In particular, the team – led by three co-heads from the three institutions – oversaw the set-up and preparations of the Executive Board meetings, Conference Plenaries and the European Citizens' Panels. In cooperation with service providers, it was responsible for managing the multilingual digital platform and reporting on milestones throughout the process. The unique composition of the team allowed for the continuous collegiality of the work and ensured synergies and efficiencies across the board.
- a Conference Plenary (see Chapter III.B for more information), which ensured that the recommendations from the National and European Citizens' Panels, grouped by themes, were debated in full respect of the EU's values and the Conference Charter[II], without a predetermined outcome and without limiting the scope to predefined policy areas. The input gathered from the Multilingual Digital Platform was also discussed when relevant. Nine thematic Working Groups were established to give input to prepare the debates and the proposals of the Plenary.

[II] Conference Charter

2. Rules of Procedure

On 9 May 2021, the Executive Board endorsed the Rules of Procedure of the Conference, established in accordance with the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe and laying down the foundations and principles of the Conference.

The Rules of Procedure provided the framework for the work of the different Conference structures and their interaction.

3. Conference events

According to the Joint Declaration, each EU Member State and Institution could organise events under the umbrella of the Conference, in line with their own national or institutional specificities, and make further contributions to the Conference (see Chapter II.C for more information).

EU institutions and bodies, Member States, regional and local authorities, organised civil society, social partners and citizens were therefore invited to organise events in partnership with civil society and stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level, in a wide variety of formats across Europe, and to report the outcome of those events on the digital platform. Several thousand such events took place involving some 650 000 participants.

4. Establishment of the Multilingual Digital Platform

The multilingual digital platform (see Chapter II.A for more information) was set up as the place for citizens to share their ideas and send online submissions, in line with the Joint Declaration. It was the main hub for citizens' contributions and information on the different parts of the Conference and an interactive tool to share and debate ideas and input from the multitude of events taking place under the umbrella of the Conference. The Platform

was launched on 19 April 2021. Over 17 000 ideas were put on the platform. Throughout the Conference, reports were drawn up on the contributions submitted on the platform.

Contributions gathered through the platform were taken on board by the European Citizens' Panels and debated and discussed in the Conference Plenary.

5. European Citizens' Panels

In accordance with the Joint Declaration, a central and particularly innovative feature of the Conference was the European Citizens' Panels (see Chapter II.B for more information), organised on the main topics of the Conference.

A total of 800 randomly selected citizens, representative of the EU's sociological and geographical diversity, organised into four Panels of 200 citizens, met for three deliberative sessions each. The European Citizens' Panels came up with recommendations that fed into the overall Conference deliberations, in particular, into the Conference Plenaries.

The Co-Chairs of the Executive Board jointly established the practical arrangements for the organisation of the European Citizens' Panels, in accordance with the Joint Declaration and the Rules of Procedure, and informed in advance the Executive Board.

The Executive Board was regularly informed of developments related to the creation and organisation of the European Citizens' Panels.

6. National Citizens' Panels

According to the Joint Declaration, Member States could organise National Panels. To assist Member States intending to organise National Citizens' Panels, guidance was approved by the Co-Chairs and sent to the Executive Board on 26 May 2021 to ensure that National Panels were organised under the same principles as the European Citizens' Panels. The guidance includes principles for good deliberation, based on the OECD principles[III]. Each Member State could decide whether to organise a National Citizens' Panel. Overall, six Member States organised one (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and the Netherlands).

In accordance with the Joint Declaration, the recommendations of National Citizens' Panels were presented and debated in Conference Plenaries, alongside the recommendations of the European Citizens' Panels.

[III] OECD, Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions, 2020 https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf

II.
Contributions to the Conference: citizens’ input

(A) Multilingual Digital Platform

The Multilingual Digital Platform was launched on 19 April 2021 and served as the main hub of the Conference. It was the place that allowed everyone to participate in the Conference – all citizens across the EU and beyond, as well as civil society, social partners and various other stakeholders.

The platform was specifically developed for the Conference using European open-source software for citizens' participation called Decidim. This was pioneering at European but also global level in terms of scale, interactivity and multilingualism. All contributions were made available in the 24 official EU languages thanks to machine translation. The debate was organised around ten topics: 'Climate change and the environment', 'Health', 'A stronger economy, social justice and jobs', 'EU in the World', 'Values and rights, rule of law, security', 'Digital transformation', 'European democracy', 'Migration', 'Education, culture, youth and sport', and 'Other ideas'.

Participation on the platform could take various forms.

Anybody could share their ideas under one of the ten topics. It was also possible to comment on other people's ideas. The platform thus offered the possibility of a genuine pan-European debate among citizens. Participants could also endorse ideas, indicating that they supported another user's contribution.

Another important way of contributing to the Conference was to organise events (virtual, in-person or hybrid), announce them on the platform, report on their outcome and link them with ideas. Guides and information materials were made available on the platform for organisers, helping to ensure that the events would be participatory and inclusive.

The platform played a fundamental role in the transparency of the overall process and the access to information. It was the place where everyone could find information on the Conference process itself (Conference Plenary and Plenary Working Groups, the European Citizens' Panels, National Panels and events and the Executive Board). Plenary debates and Working Group meetings were web-streamed on the platform, as were the plenary meetings of the European Citizens' Panels. All this information will remain accessible on the platform.

Throughout the process, the platform was continuously improved wherever possible, for example by adding functionalities or visual materials. Over time, the platform was also made more accessible to people with disabilities.

All contributions on the platform were publicly accessible, as were the open data files related to the digital platform, ensuring full transparency. In order to facilitate the collection and analysis of the contributions, the Commission's Joint Research Centre developed an automated text analysis tool and an analytics platform that allowed multilingual sense-making and in-depth analysis of the content on the platform. The analytics platform was an essential tool to provide regular reporting with a uniform level of quality across languages. In addition, a datathon held in March 2022 by the European Commission encouraged new approaches to analysing the open data set and supported the transparency of the data analysis process.

In order to provide an overview of the contributions on the platform, an external service provider prepared reports, which were published on the platform itself. A first interim report was published in September covering contributions collected up until 2 August 2021. In mid-October 2021, the second interim report was published, covering contributions up until 7 September 2021. The third interim report was published in December 2021, covering contributions up until 3 November 2021. With the work on the Conference entering its last phase, the last report feeding into the Conference Plenaries was published in mid-March 2022, taking into account contributions published on the digital platform up until 20 February 2022. This timeline was well advertised on the platform and elsewhere,

and February 2022. The contributions submitted until 9 May will be covered in the additional report. Supplementary reports on contributions on the platform per Member State were also made available at the same time as the reports in September and December 2021 and in March 2022.

The main focus of these reports was a qualitative analysis of the contributions on the platform, in order to provide a general overview of the breadth and diversity of ideas proposed on the platform and discussed at events. To this end, a manual textual analysis and clustering of the contributions was performed by a research team, aided by the analytical tools provided by the Commission's Joint Research Centre. This allowed for the identification of common themes and subthemes, which were described in detail under each topic and summarised in mind maps for a quick overview. To complement this qualitative approach with quantitative elements, themes, subthemes or ideas that often recurred or had a high number of endorsements or comments were indicated in the text of each report. The aim behind this was to reflect the state of play at a given stage of the Conference, including a high level of interest in or debate on certain issues. The reports also provided an overview of the socio-demographic data of participants. Although contributors were asked to provide information on their country of residence, educational background, age, gender and employment status on a voluntarily basis, there are limitations on the insights that could be provided. For example, 26.9% of all contributions came from participants who did not disclose their country of residence.

Since the launch of the platform, the topic of 'European democracy' has recorded the highest level of contributions (ideas, comments and events). 'Climate change and the environment' ranked second. Contributions under 'Other ideas' were in third place, followed by 'Values and rights, rule of law, security' and 'A stronger economy, social justice and jobs'.

The reports on contributions on the platform, including the mind maps, provided valuable

input for the work of the European Citizens' Panels. At the beginning of each of their three sessions, the Panels were presented with the main findings of the reports and the mind maps and received links to the full reports. Many ideas on the Platform are therefore reflected in the recommendations of the European Citizens' Panels.

The reports were also discussed at the Conference Plenaries, starting with the Plenary on 23 October 2021, and in the preceding Working Groups meetings. The input from the Platform therefore continued to enrich the proposals developed in the Conference Plenary.

By 20 April 2022 close to 5 million unique visitors had visited the Multilingual Digital Platform and there were over 50.000 active participants, 17.000 ideas debated, and over 6,000 events registered on the platform. Behind these numbers are thousands of engaged citizens, sharing and debating numerous ideas and organising a multitude of original and innovative events in the various Member States.

IIn order to ensure that the platform would be a space where citizens from every walk of life and all corners of Europe feel comfortable and welcome to contribute to the debate, everyone using the platform needed to commit to the Conference Charter and the Rules of Participation. A moderation team was put in place, working under the supervision of the Common Secretariat on behalf of the Executive Board throughout the Conference to ensure that the Charter and the rules of participation were respected. No prior moderation took place. When a contribution was hidden, the users received a message from the moderation team explaining the reason for this action. Details on the moderation principles and process were made available in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the platform.

Between 19 April 2021 and 20 April 2022, 430 ideas (2,4%), 312 comments (1,4%) and 396 events (6,0%) were hidden. About 71% of ideas were hidden for reasons such as lack of proposal, spam, user request, containing personal information or an inadequate related image. About 17% of hidden ideas are duplicates. Only 11% of the ideas are hidden for reasons of offensive content. The vast majority of events, 76%, were hidden for reasons of duplicate posting or incomplete event information, per organisers' requests or because they were not related to the Conference.

The possibility to make contributions on the platform remained open until 9 May 2022. An additional report is foreseen after its closing in order to complete the overview of all contributions received during the Conference.

What is happening at the Conference on the Future of Europe?

52,346 Platform participants	**652,532** Event participants	**17,671** Ideas
21,877 Comments	**6,465** Events	**72,528** Endorsements

State of participation on 20 April 2022 (source: Conference on the Future of Europe (europa.eu))

Participation on the platform continued to increase throughout the Conference, it remained however uneven across Member States and across socio-demographic profile of the contributors. Overall, the platform provided an innovative deliberative space, which allowed many thousands of citizens and various stakeholders from all over Europe and beyond to engage in a multilingual online debate across Member States on European issues. It therefore proved itself to be valuable tool of deliberative democracy at EU level.

(B) Citizens' Panels

1. European Citizens' Panels

The European Citizens' Panels were one of the main pillars of the Conference, together with the National Panels, the Multilingual Digital Platform and the Conference Plenary. They lie at the heart of the Conference on the Future of Europe and brought together around 800 citizens from all backgrounds and corners of the European Union. If the concept of Citizens' Panels or assemblies has been used for decades by municipalities and is increasingly visible at national and regional level, the pan-European dimension was essentially uncharted. The European Citizens' Panels were the first transnational and multilingual experience of this scale and with this level of ambition. The remarkable interpretation set-up accompanying the process allowed for inclusive, respectful and efficient dialogue between the panellists, thereby ensuring the respect of multilingualism.

The European Citizens' Panels were organised by the three Institutions on the basis of the Joint Declaration, the Rules of Procedure and the modalities established by the Co-Chairs, under the supervision of the Executive Board. They were supported by a consortium of external service providers composed of a mix of experts in deliberative democracy and a logistical support team. The Executive Board was kept informed of the Panels' work, it received updated practical modalities and adjusted the provisional calendar of the European Citizens' Panel sessions during the process as needed.

The participants of the European Citizens' Panels were selected in summer 2021. European Union citizens were randomly selected (random telephone calling was the main method used by 27 national polling institutes coordinated by an external service provider), with the aim of setting up 'Panels' which were representative of the EU's diversity on the basis of five criteria: gender, age, geographic origin (nationality as well as urban/rural), socio-economic background and level of education. The number of citizens per Member State was calculated according to the degressive proportionality principle applied to the composition of the European Parliament, taking into consideration that each Panel should include at least one female and one male citizen per Member State. As the Conference had a specific focus on youth, one third of the citizens composing a Citizens' Panel was between 16 and 24 years old. For each group of 200 persons, an additional 50 citizens were selected as a reserve.

Four European Citizens' Panels were organised. The topics for discussion for each of the four Panels were based on the themes from the Multilingual Digital Platform and clustered in the following way:

(1) Stronger economy, social justice, jobs/ education, youth, culture, sport/digital transformation;

(2) European democracy/values and rights, rule of law, security;

(3) Climate change, environment/health;

(4) EU in the world/migration.

Each Panel met over three weekends. The first sessions were held in Strasbourg, the second online and the third in four cities (Dublin, Florence, Warsaw/Natolin and Maastricht), hosted by public higher education institutes and with the support of the local municipalities.

FIRST PANEL SESSIONS

The first session of each Panel was held in person in Strasbourg. The objective of the session was to define the agenda for the deliberations. The citizens participating in the Panels started by reflecting upon and building their vision for Europe, starting from a blank page, and identifying the issues to be debated, within the framework of the Panel's main themes. They then prioritised the topics which they wanted to concentrate on more deeply in order to generate specific recommendations for the European Union institutions to follow up on.

The discussions and collective work were in two formats:

- In subgroups composed of 12 to 14 citizens. Four to five languages were spoken in each subgroup, each citizen being able to speak in his/her own language. Subgroup work was guided by professional facilitators selected by the consortium of external service providers.
- In plenary, with all participants. Plenary sessions were led by two main moderators. The priority topics resulting from the discussions were organised in so-called 'streams' (i.e. headline topics) and 'substreams' and served as a basis for the second sessions. To this end, the participants received basic information about the topics, and the relevant input, including analysis and mind maps, from the first interim report of the Multilingual Digital Platform and presentations from high-level external experts.

During the first sessions, the 20 representatives of each Panel to the Conference Plenary were selected by a draw, from a pool of citizens volunteering.

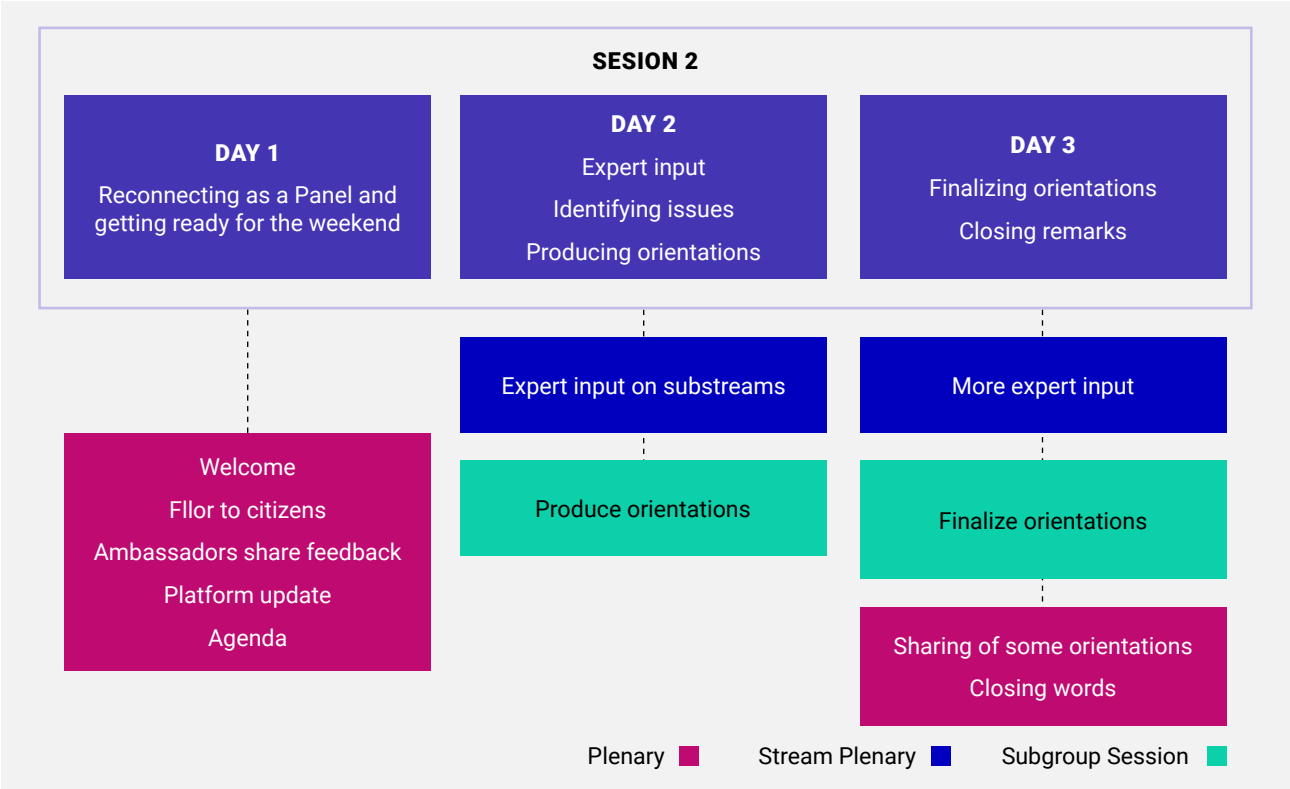
SECOND PANEL SESSIONS

The European Citizens' Panels continued their work by convening online throughout the month of November. For this purpose, a special set-up was prepared, involving a studio in Brussels hosting the main moderation and the Plenaries and a system allowing connection with the participating citizens from all over the EU and interpretation.

In the second sessions, with the support of experts and fact-checkers, the citizens identified and discussed specific issues and drafted 'orientations' for each of the thematic streams they had identified during the first session. Particular attention was paid to ensuring balanced groups of experts in terms of gender and geographical diversity and balanced inputs from each them, via extensive briefings providing citizens with facts and/or the state of play of the debate while avoiding sharing personal opinions. They were also provided with the interim reports of the Multilingual Digital Platform.

With the support of experts' input on the topics, citizens' own knowledge and experiences, and through deliberations during the second sessions, citizens identified and discussed issues related to the topics allocated to them. Issues were defined as problems that needed solutions or situations that needed to change.

Citizens then addressed the issues by drafting orientations. Orientations represented the first step towards producing recommendations, which was the objective of Session 3. Additionally, citizens were asked to formulate



justifications for those orientations.

Discussions and collective work were carried out in three formats:

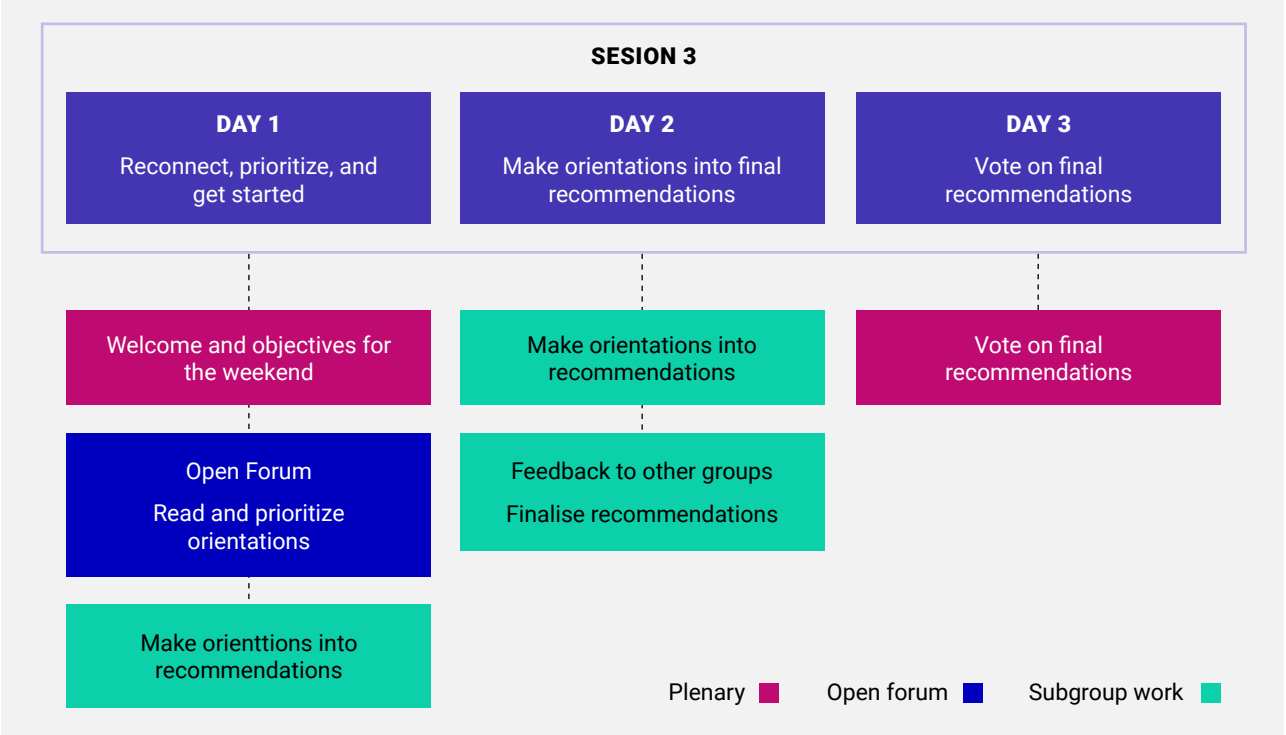
- In subgroups. Each of the 15 subgroups was composed of 12 to 14 citizens. Four to five languages were used in each subgroup to allow citizens to express themselves in their own language or in a language in which they felt comfortable. Each subgroup was led by a professional facilitator from the consortium of external service providers.
- In 'stream plenaries'. Stream plenaries gathered together the subgroups working within the same thematic stream. The stream plenaries were moderated by professional facilitators, with interpretation covering all the languages needed for the participants.
- In plenary, with all of the participating citizens, to introduce and wrap up the session. Plenary sessions were led by two main moderators from the consortium, with interpretation in 24 languages.

THIRD PANEL SESSIONS

The third and final Panel sessions took place in person in educational institutions in four Member States. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures in Ireland and in the Netherlands, the third sessions of Panel 1 (A stronger economy, social justice and jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation) and Panel 4 (EU in the world / Migration) had to be postponed until February 2022, in consultation with the national authorities and associated partners.

Discussions and collective work were in the following formats:

- In plenary with all of the participants at the start of the session to introduce the programme and at the end of the session, as explained below. Plenary sessions were led by two main moderators from the deliberation group, with interpretation in the 24 official EU languages.
- Citizens started by examining all of the orientations produced by the Panel during Session 2 in an 'open forum' setting. Each citizen then prioritised up to ten orientations per stream. Once prioritisation at Panel level was completed, citizens joined the same subgroups they worked in during Session 2 and collectively acknowledged – and confronted with their own assessment – which of their group's orientations had been prioritised by the rest of the Panel. For the development of recommendations, each subgroup was given an indicative range for the number of recommendations to draft,



namely between one and three, with a maximum of five.

- In each of the 15 subgroups, work was carried out to develop orientations into recommendations. Citizens discussed the orientations that had received the most support (in order of rank) and started the process of drafting the recommendations.

In the third sessions, expertise/information was not provided through direct interaction with the citizens but through a specifically designed system – a 'knowledge and information corner'. This system centralised on-site all requests for information and fact-checking and sent experts' and fact-checkers' short and factual answers to the subgroups. It was devised to ensure that the expert and fact-checking input was prepared in a way that ensured the highest quality standards and avoided any undue influence at this stage of the process. Citizens were also provided with the interim reports of the Multilingual Digital Platform.

During the work in subgroups, inter-subgroup feedback sessions were held in order to help participants understand the work carried out in the other subgroups and to enhance their recommendations.

The recommendations from each subgroup were then voted on by the Panel on the last day of the session. Before the vote, all participants received a document with all of the draft recommendations generated the day before so that they could read them in their own language (automatically translated from English). Each recommendation was read out in English in plenary to allow the citizens to hear the interpretation simultaneously. The recommendations were voted on one by one by all participants via an online form. According to the results of the final votes, recommendations were classified as follows:

Recommendations reaching the threshold of 70% or more of the votes cast were adopted by the Panel. Recommendations failing to pass the threshold were considered not to have been validated by the Panel. In total the European citizens panels endorsed a total of 178 recommendations.

The voting procedure was supervised by a voting committee including two citizens who had volunteered for that task.

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANELS REPRESENTATIVES IN THE PLENARY

The recommendations adopted by the four European Citizens' Panels were subsequently presented and debated by the 80 European Citizens' Panels' Representatives in the Conference Plenary and Working Groups on 21 and 22 January 2022 (Panels 2 and 3) and on 11 and 12 March 2022 (Panels 1 and 4). The 80 European Citizens' Panels' Representatives (with an average of 70 on-site and 10 online) then continued promoting and explaining the European Citizens' Panels' recommendations both in the Plenary sessions and Working Groups during three consecutive meetings (25-26 March, 8-9 April and 29-30 April). They also exchanged views regularly in 'citizens' component' meetings (preparatory online meetings and during Plenaries on-site) with each other and with the 27 representatives of national events/panels. On 23 April, the European Citizens' Panels' Representatives met online with all their fellow panellists to explain how the recommendations had been debated and had made their way into the Plenary proposals, and to receive feedback from their fellow panellists. A group composed of members of the Common Secretariat and of the consortium supported the citizens' component in the Plenary.

TRANSPARENCY OF THE PROCESS

The overall process was handled in full transparency. The Plenary meetings of the European Citizens' Panels were live-streamed, while the documents of their discussions and deliberations were made publicly available on the Multilingual Digital Platform. The output report of each of the Panel sessions is available on the Platform, as are the recommendations. Output reports also contain information on all experts who supported the work of the Panels.

As a true democratic innovation, the European Citizens' Panels attracted a lot of attention from the research community. Researchers were able to be present at the European Citizens' Panels and observe the proceedings, while respecting certain rules and the work and privacy of the participants.

Conférence
sur l'avenir
de l'Europe
Conference
on the Future
of Europe

Panel 1

'A stronger economy, social justice, jobs/ Education, culture, youth, sport/ Digital transformation'

The first Panel session on 'A stronger economy, social justice, jobs/ Education, culture, youth, sport/ Digital transformation' took place from 17 to19 September 2021 in Strasbourg. This Panel addressed the future of our economy and jobs, especially after the pandemic, paying due attention to related issues of social justice. It also tackled the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation – one of the biggest future-oriented topics under debate. The Panel also addressed the future of Europe in the areas of youth, sport, culture and education. The participating citizens were welcomed by Co-Chair Guy Verhofstadt. The work of the first session concluded with the endorsement of the five streams: 'Working in Europe'; 'An economy for the future'; 'A just society'; 'Learning in Europe' and 'An ethical and safe digital transformation'.

From 5 to 7 November 2021, Panel 1 met for the second time – this time in a virtual format, and continued the deliberations of the first session. During this second session, panellists drafted 'orientations' to prepare concrete recommendations (in their third session) for each of the five streams they had identified during the first session. In total, citizens from Panel 1 produced 142 groups of orientations.

From 25 to 27 February 2022, citizens from Panel 1 met for the third time, continuing the deliberations that took place during Sessions 1 and 2. For this final session, participants in Panel 1 were hosted at Dublin Castle by the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA), with the possibility of participating online. Using the orientations they had developed during Session 2 as the basis of their work, citizens produced and endorsed 48 final recommendations.

Panel 2

'European democracy/ Values and rights, rule of law, security'

Session 1 of the Panel on 'European democracy/ Values and rights, rule of law, security' took place from 24 to 26 September in Strasbourg. The Panel addressed topics related to democracy, such as elections, participation outside election periods, perceived distance between the people and their elected representatives, media freedom and disinformation. The Panel also addressed issues related to fundamental rights and values, the rule of law and the fight against all forms of discrimination. At the same time, the Panel addressed the internal security of the EU, such as the protection of Europeans from acts of terrorism and other crimes. The panellists were welcomed by Co-Chair Gašper Dovžan. The work of the first session concluded with the endorsement of the five streams: 'Ensuring rights and non-discrimination'; 'Protecting democracy and the rule of law'; 'Reforming

Photo: European Citizens' Panel 1

Photo: European Citizens' Panel 2

the EU'; 'Building European identity'; and 'Strengthening citizens' participation'.

From 12 to 14 November, Panel 2 met for the second time – in a virtual format – and continued the deliberations of the first session. During this second session, they drafted 'orientations' to prepare concrete recommendations (in their third session) for each of the five streams they had identified during the first session. In total, citizens from Panel 2 produced 124 groups of orientations.

From 10 to 12 December 2021, citizens from Panel 2 met for their final session hosted at the European University Institute in Florence, with the possibility of participating online. Using the orientations they had developed during Session 2 as the basis of their work, citizens produced and endorsed 39 final recommendations.

Panel 3

'Climate change and the environment/Health'

The Panel on 'Climate change and the environment/Health' held its first session from 1 to 3 October in Strasbourg. It addressed the effects of climate change, environmental issues and new health challenges for the European Union. The Panels also addressed the EU's objectives and strategies such as agriculture, transport and mobility, energy and the transition to post-carbon societies, research, healthcare systems, responses to health crises, prevention and healthy lifestyles. The work of the first session concluded with the endorsement of the five streams: 'Better Ways of Living'; 'Protecting our environment and our health'; 'Redirecting our economy and consumption'; 'Towards a sustainable society'; and 'Caring for all'. The output report of the session can be found on the Multilingual Digital Platform.

From 19 to 21 November 2021, Panel 3 met for the second time – this time in a virtual format – to continue the deliberations of the first session. During this second session, they drafted 'orientations' to prepare concrete recommendations (in their third session) for each of the five streams they had identified during the first session. In total, citizens from Panel 3 produced 130 groups of orientations.

From 7 to 9 January 2022, citizens from Panel 3 met for their final session hosted at the College of Europe in Natolin, and at the Palace of Culture and Science, with support from the City of Warsaw. There was the possibility of participating online. Using the orientations they had developed during Session 2 as the basis for their work, citizens produced and endorsed 51 final recommendations

Photo: European Citizens' Panel 3

Panel 4

'EU in the world / Migration'

The fourth Panel on 'EU in the world / Migration' met for the first time from 15 to 17 October in Strasbourg, where they discussed, in particular, the global role of the EU. That included objectives and strategies for the EU's security, defence, trade policy, humanitarian aid and development cooperation, foreign policy, EU neighbourhood policy and enlargement, as well as how the EU should deal with migration. The citizens were welcomed by Co-Chair Dubravka Šuica. The work of the first session concluded with the endorsement of the five streams: 'Self-reliance and stability'; 'The EU as an international partner'; 'A strong EU in a peaceful world'; 'Migration from a human perspective'; and 'Responsibility and solidarity across the EU'. The output report of the session is available on the Multilingual Digital Platform.

Photo: European Citizens' Panel 4

From 16 to 28 November 2021, Panel 4 held their second session online, based on the work done in the first session. During this second session, they drafted 'orientations' to prepare concrete recommendations (in their third session) for each of the five streams they had identified during the first session. In total, citizens from Panel 4 produced 95 groups of orientations.

From 11 to 13 February 2022, citizens from Panel 4 met for their final session hosted at the Maastricht Exhibition and Conference Centre (MECC) by Studio Europa Maastricht in cooperation with Maastricht University and the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA). There was the possibility of participating online. Using the orientations they had developed during Session 2 as the basis of their work, citizens produced and endorsed 40 final recommendations.

2. National Citizens' Panels

In accordance with the Joint Declaration, recommendations from the National and European Citizens' Panels were debated by the Conference Plenary, grouped by theme. To assist Member States intending to organise National Citizens' Panels, guidance was approved by the Co-Chairs and sent to the Executive Board on 26 May 2021. This was based on the same principles as the European Citizens' Panels and included principles for good deliberation, based on an OECD report[IV].

Six Member States – Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Lithuania and the Netherlands – have organised National Citizens' Panels fulfilling the principles of the abovementioned guidance. The recommendations of those National Citizens' Panels were presented and debated in the January and March Plenaries, as well as in the Plenary Working Groups, together with the recommendations of the European Citizens'

Panels on the same topics.

1) BELGIUM

In October 2021, a Citizens' Panel was organised in which 50 randomly selected citizens, representative of the general population, came together over three weekends to discuss the topic of 'European democracy' and how citizens could be more involved in EU affairs.

Photo: Belgium National Citizens' Panel

[IV] OECD, Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions, 2020 https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf

The Panel was organised under the auspices of Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External and European Affairs, Ms Sophie Wilmès.

The citizens made recommendations on five topics of their choice, namely:

- improving communication about the European Union;
- identifying and combating disinformation about the EU;
- citizens' panels as a tool for participation;
- referendums on EU affairs;
- improving existing participatory instruments in the European Union.

The Belgian Citizens' Panel resulted in 115 recommendations prepared, discussed and voted on by the 50 randomly selected Belgian citizens.

2) GERMANY

In January 2022, the German Federal Foreign Office organised a National Citizens' Panel. In this Panel, 100 randomly selected citizens, representative of the population, participated online.

On 5 and 8 January 2022, five online launch workshops were organised, each with 20 participants discussing the following topics:

- Europe's role in the world;
- Climate and environment;
- Rule of law and values;
- A stronger economy and social justice.

The randomly selected 100 citizens met on 15 and 16 January 2022 to discuss related challenges and possible solutions, and adopted their recommendations. The participants developed two specific proposals under each of the abovementioned topics.

The results were presented on 16 January at a final online conference attended by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Minister of State for Europe and Climate Anna Lührmann.

Photo: German National Citizens' Panel

3) FRANCE

Citizens' Panels were organised in France by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs with the support of the Ministry responsible for Relations with Parliament and Citizen Participation.

18 Citizens' Panels were organised in September and early October 2021 in all metropolitan and overseas regions of France. Each Citizens' Panel brought together between 30 and 50 randomly selected citizens, representative of the diversity of the regional population. In total, more than 700 citizens participated in the Panels. The outcome of the regional Panels was a list of 101 aspirations, with 515 amendments and 1 301 specific proposals.

Photo: French National Citizens' Panel

A total of 100 citizens representing the Panels met in Paris on 16 and 17 October 2021 during the national summary conference ('Conférence nationale de synthèse') in order to draft and adopt the recommendations. In total, 14 priority recommendations were identified in this process. The recommendations, covering the nine topics of the Conference, were submitted to the French government, including State Secretary Clément Beaune, and were the French government's contribution to the Conference.

4) ITALY

A Citizens' Panel was organised in March 2022 by an independent third party under the supervision of the Italian Department for European Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

A total of 55 randomly selected citizens, representative of Italian society and its regions, participated in the Panel. The participants were randomly selected to ensure the presence of people of different genders, ages, social backgrounds, places of residence and employment status.

The citizens met online on 11 and 12 March 2022 to discuss two topics of the Conference:

- A stronger economy, social justice and jobs;
- Europe in the world.

On 12 March 2022, the Panel adopted a total of 58 recommendations – 33 were on a stronger economy, social justice and jobs and 25 were on Europe in the world. On the last day, the participants verified and validated the first draft of the recommendations drawn up during the first phase of the work.

Photo: Italian National Citizens' Panel

5) LITHUANIA

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a National Citizens' Panel was organised by an independent third party in January 2022.

A total of 25 randomly selected citizens, aged between 18 and 65 and representative of the different socio-economic groups and regions of Lithuania, participated in the Panel.

Photo: Lithuanian National Citizens' Panel

On 4 January 2022, an online opening session was organised and citizens discussed two topics:

The EU's role and powers in foreign policy;

- The economic role of the EU.

On 15 January 2022, the participants met in person to formulate the main conclusions of their discussions. On 25 January 2022, they adopted 21 recommendations in a virtual session, 10 of which were on the EU's role and powers in foreign policy and 11 on the economic role of the EU.

6) THE NETHERLANDS

The Citizens' Panel was organised by an independent third party, as the 'Visions of Europe' dialogues started on 1 September. They consisted of several parts.

On 1 September 2021, the online part was launched, consisting of a questionnaire and a simplified selection tool where citizens could give their preferences, wishes and recommendations on the nine Conference topics. The questionnaire was distributed to a selected representative and inclusive group of 4 000 citizens.

In October and November 2021, in-depth online and offline debates were organised with citizens, also to reach young people and hard-to-reach target groups.

Two reports entitled 'Our vision of Europe; opinions, ideas and recommendations' ('Onze kijk op Europa; meningen, ideeën en aanbevelingen') were published, which gathered the citizens' 30 recommendations on the nine Conference topics.

Dutch National Citizens' Panel

(C) Events organised in the framework of the Conference

1. National events

Member States contributed to the Conference through a wide range of events and initiatives. These events reached many thousands of citizens from all across the EU. A dedicated section on the multilingual digital platform gives an overview of the main activities that Member States' authorities have organised or supported. The events were presented at the Conference Plenaries on 23 October 2021 and 25 March 2022 by the representatives of national events and/or National Citizens' Panels and also fed into the Conference through platform reports, enriching the debate at European level.

The main objective of these events and initiatives was to listen to citizens and to involve them in debates on the European Union. Inclusivity and reaching out to citizens was also a priority, with efforts made to include those who are not usually involved in EU issues.

Different types of events took place, with a mixture of centralised and decentralised approaches, including various forms of support for bottom-up initiatives. Activities and events in the Member States were organised by different institutions and stakeholders, including national, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, social partners, associations and citizens. In some cases, non-governmental organisations, cultural institutions, think tanks, universities and research institutes also actively engaged in organising events about the Conference. In many of these activities and events, special importance was given to the involvement of the younger generation.

Overview of main events and initiatives in Member States:

1

Belgium

Several events were organised by the federal and regional authorities. Several debates with citizens took place, for instance on the EU in the world and on climate change and the environment. A structured dialogue with citizens was held on 'Living in a border region', as well as a hackathon on 'the impact of healthy lifestyles and climate change on the quality of life' and 'barriers for young people in the labour market'. In addition, an event was held on digitalisation and a sustainable economy, and a series of debates on the theme of 'Europe is listening' were conducted between young people and politicians.

2

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian exercise was launched in a ceremony entitled 'How to hear the voice of citizens through the Conference on the Future of Europe?' with public authorities and citizen representatives. As part of the events organised, a citizens' dialogue on demography and democracy was organised. Several local events were held in large university cities, organised with the assistance of Europe Direct centres.

3

Czechia

The Czech Republic organised discussions at central level with the general public and awareness-raising events for relevant stakeholders. These events were complemented by events for young people and events with international participation. In particular, a transnational event with German and Czech citizens was organised. Several regional debates took place throughout the country, as well as regional seminars for secondary school students on the theme 'Decide on Europe'.

4

Denmark

A broad and inclusive national debate was organised, where civil society and other non-governmental actors played a central role. A designated pool of public funds was granted to a diverse group of organisations, including NGOs, media, youth organisations, cultural institutions, think tanks and research institutes, to support debates and initiatives hosted by non-governmental organisations. More than 180 debates were held, with approximately half of them specifically targeted at young people. In addition, the government and parliament organised a series of official events, such as citizens' consultations and debates.

5

Germany

Events organised in Germany involved the Federal Government, Bundestag, federal states and civil society. In addition to the events held by the Federal Government, more than 50 regional events were organised by the 16 federal states of Germany and about 300 events by civil society. Cross-border events and student and youth dialogues were a central element of many initiatives, putting young people at the forefront of the discussions to shape the future of Europe.

6

Estonia

Various events, seminars and debates were organised by the government office together with the European Commission Representation in Estonia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other ministries as well as by civil society, youth organisations and others. In particular, a discussion was organised for high school students on key questions regarding climate change, energy policies, and the Conference in general. A discussion on 'Estonian diplomacy in the service of achieving the climate goals' was also organised.

7

Ireland

Inclusivity and reaching out to all sectors of the community, particularly young people, was the central theme for Ireland's activities. In cooperation with European Movement Ireland (EMI), a programme of regional and sectoral engagements ran across 2021 and 2022. The first phase of regional meetings was held in June and July as virtual consultations. The second phase of the regional events was organised as in-person town-hall meetings during early 2022. From July, a programme of government-led events took place.

8

Greece

The Foreign Ministry was in charge of coordinating the national dialogue. Central and local government agencies and civil society were strongly encouraged to hold discussions and other events. For instance, events took place on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the Western Balkans, the demographic challenge, migration and democracy, involving citizens and different stakeholders.

9

Spain

The Spanish framework included six events at national level (for instance a consultation of Spanish citizens on the future of Europe) and about 20 at regional level. An event was also organised with Portuguese and Spanish citizens, to discuss key themes relevant to the future of their regions and to the EU. At regional and local level, events were organised by the authorities on several themes, for instance cross-border cooperation, the impact of demographic changes, sustainable transport and mobility, climate change, migration and the future of outermost regions.

10

France

The French government conducted a large online consultation for young people from May to July 2021. 50 000 young French people expressed their views, endorsing 16 main ideas for the future of Europe. The outcome of this exercise was compiled in a final report, together with the outcome of the French Citizens' Panel, and constitutes France's contribution to the Conference. The French government also encouraged all French actors who wished to do so – associations, local authorities, elected representatives, civil society representatives – to organise events.

11

Croatia

A task force for the coordination of activities was established and compiled ideas and plans for conducting national activities. The ministries, central state offices, regional development agencies, universities, NGOs and institutes organised events in the form of conferences, citizens' dialogues and debates with citizens, public discussions and educational workshops, with a special emphasis on young people. The themes covered included migration, demography, climate neutrality, and the circular economy. Some events were held with other Member States and non-EU neighbouring countries.

12

Italy

Several events, with a special focus on young people, were set up in order to reach as many citizens as possible, with the active support of local authorities. A media campaign was launched to raise as much awareness as possible. Activities included the EU-Balkan Youth Forum organised with young people from the Western Balkans, the Med Dialogues Youth Forum with young people from the Southern Neighbourhood, as well as competitions for secondary school students and university students entitled 'Europe is in your hands'.

13

Cyprus

Several activities were held, which included many stakeholders, focusing on young people. A launch event was organised, with a discussion with the younger generation on its expectations, concerns and vision for Europe and Cyprus within the EU. An open dialogue was also organised on young people's role in the debate on Europe and the problems they face at national and European level. An event also took place to discuss the future of European security and defence.

14

Latvia

Various events were organised, including a nationwide online discussion with students called 'the future is in your hands', tackling economic, social and security issues. A nationwide poll and focus-group discussions were organised to collect public-opinion-poll data on citizens' perspectives on the future priorities of the European Union for all themes of the Conference. Regional in-person discussions were held to raise awareness of the Conference among people older than 55, as well as in-person discussions with pupils from secondary schools.

15

Lithuania

Events were mainly organised with a decentralised approach, and the main focus was on the regions of Lithuania and on young people (for instance, with the Baltic States Youth Debate). A series of citizens' dialogues (on democracy, digitalisation, climate change etc.), transnational dialogues (for instance with France, Ireland, and Italy respectively), and civil society-driven events took place. In addition, schools were encouraged to discuss the future of Europe.

16

Luxembourg

A number of events were organised at national level in an open, inclusive and transparent approach. For instance, the parliament organised a number of events using new formats such as 'bistro talks'. A hackathon for students and young entrepreneurs was also organised, to discuss the Digital Compass and the EU industrial strategy. In addition, there was a trinational exchange between German, French and Luxembourg high school students.

17

Hungary

A broad variety of events in the society (more than 800) have been organised. Institutional events included high-level international conferences organised by several ministries (for instance on enlargement and the EU's digital strategy) and of roundtable discussions with students and youth organisations (for example on European integration). A Several organisations held Panels to discuss EU institutions; a stronger economy, social justice and jobs, digital transformation, education, culture, youth and sport; values and rights, rule of law and security; NGOs; migration; and demography, family, health, climate change and the environment.

18

Malta

Following a launch event, a national coordinating committee was set up to promote the initiative on different communication channels and steered the debate through national and local events. Themed public dialogues (for instance on health, European values, and the future of work for a fair society), press conferences, consultations with sectoral stakeholders and interactive sessions with children and students were held in either physical or hybrid format.

19

Netherlands

The Netherlands focused on organising its National Citizens' Panel 'Visions of Europe - Kijk op Europa', which was carried out both online and in person. It was organised in two phases: firstly gathering people's thoughts and opinions on 'what' they expect and want, followed up by a second phase focused on understanding their underlying opinions ('why' and 'how') through group dialogues.

20

Austria

Debates took place in various formats, at federal, regional and local level. 'Future labs' and 'future dialogues' presented in-depth exchanges with high-level experts on different topics and sought holistic solutions for the future. Furthermore, a number of events were organised by and for the 'Austrian Local Councillors for Europe. Several events were aimed directly at young people and pupils.

21

Poland

Events were mainly organised with a decentralised approached. At the regional level, the Regional Centres for International Debate organised public events in all 16 Polish regions in both physical and virtual format. The topics of discussions covered the thematic areas of the Conference, e.g. solidarity in times of crises, agriculture, and new technologies. A national debate was also organised on climate, digitalisation, the internal market, health, the EU in the world, and migration.

22

Portugal

Following the first citizens' event in Lisbon which kicked off citizens' participation in the Conference, many events were organised in partnership with local authorities, universities, schools, social partners, youth organisations, local civil society organisations, among others. For instance, a transnational event was held with Spain, to discuss key themes relevant to the future of the two countries' regions and to the EU. In addition, national decentralised events were organised on different topics such as migration and international partnerships, the future of European democracy, and digital transformation.

23

Romania

Events were mainly hosted or co-hosted by the administration and specific institutes, with the active participation of civil society and youth organisations. Debates covered a wide range of topics, such as digitalisation, education, health, the environment, sustainable development, the economy, agriculture, and the EU's strategic partnerships. Events were organised in the capital and at local level, with all age groups participating.

24

Slovenia

The overall vision was to encourage a broad debate with civil society playing a central role and participation by young people especially encouraged. The government organised a kick-off event, which was followed by several initiatives, for instance the Bled Strategic Forum where the main topic was the Future of Europe, with a specific focus on EU enlargement and the Western Balkans. Other events covered topics such as monetary policy, climate neutrality, youth, and the role of the EU in a multipolar international environment.

25

Slovakia

Events were organised under two main pillars. The first was the 'WeAreEU' project focused on the broad public, including discussions with students and public consultations, with a series of regional events organised under the 'WeAreEU Road Show'. The second pillar consisted of the National Convention on the EU, focused on expert and analytical input on themes such as the single market, disinformation and populism, and the digital and green transitions.

26

Finland

A series of regional consultations, including the 'most northern Conference event of the EU', were organised by the government on different topics, for instance on sustainable growth, education, and the rule of law. A poll was also set up to feed into the discussion. Events were organised by the government in cooperation with cities, local authorities, universities, NGOs and the Finnish youth organisation as well as with the Finnish parliament, the European Parliament and European Commission information offices in Finland.

27

Sweden

Events were mainly organised with a decentralised approach as a joint exercise between the government office, national parliament, political parties, social partners, local and regional representatives, civil society organisations and other relevant societal stakeholders. For instance, Sweden's EU minister discussed Europe's future with students in different schools, and participated in town square meetings to discuss the future of Europe and democracy with citizens. Digital media were also used to engage in citizens' dialogues through, for instance, Q&A sessions.

The abovementioned descriptions are not exhaustive. More information on national events is available on a dedicated section on the multilingual digital platform.

The above-mentioned descriptions are not exhaustive. More information on national events is available on a dedicated section on the multilingual digital platform.

2. European Youth Event (EYE)

The European Youth Event (EYE2021) took place on 8-9 October 2021 and brought together 10 000 young people online and in the European Parliament in Strasbourg to shape and share their ideas for the future of Europe. EYE was a unique opportunity for 16 to 30–year-olds to interact in person and online, inspire each other and exchange their views with experts, activists, influencers and decision-makers, right in the heart of European democracy.

From May 2021, in collaboration with pan-European youth organisations, more than 2 000 proposals from young citizens around the European Union were collected online. In addition, several sessions were organised focusing on the Conference on the Future of Europe, both online ahead of the event and during the EYE in Strasbourg. After the event, the 20 most prominent ideas among participants, two per Conference topic, were collected in the Youth Ideas report for the Conference on the Future of Europe, published in 23 languages.

The Youth Ideas report was presented to the Conference Plenary on 23 October by young participants from the European Citizens' Panels who had also taken part in EYE2021. All the ideas collected are available on searchyouthideas.eu.

3. Other events

In addition to the above events, many other institutions and stakeholders gathered EU citizens to discuss the future of Europe[v].

Throughout the entire Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) was committed to raising awareness about it and to helping its vast network of civil society organisations in the Member States organise national consultations. In total, it supported the roll-out of 75 events, of which 33 at national level, and 42 at central level. 60 % of these events produced reports on the Conference platform and those 45 events alone gathered more than 7 300 participants. In particular, the EESC kicked off its activities in June 2021 with a major conference – 'Bringing the European project back to citizens', and

[v] Consult the Digital Multilingual Platform to access information about all events.

organised a 'Connecting EU seminar' in Lisbon in November 2021 as well as 'Shaping Europe together', a high-level event in Brussels in February 2022. The Committee also promoted the use of the online platform, where it uploaded 60 new ideas, and launched a vast communication campaign on social media, with 32 million people of potential reach on Twitter only, promoting national events in English and in the local language and reaching out before and after every Plenary and Conference-related meeting.

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) organised thematic debates in its commissions and plenaries as well as 140 local, cross-border and inter-regional events involving 10 000 citizens and 200 local politicians. Moreover, the first-ever survey polling the 1.2 million local politicians in the EU-27 about their views on Europe's future was published in October 2021. In addition, the CoR proposed 44 ideas via the multilingual digital platform. In early 2022, an independent High Level Group on European Democracy put forward ideas on how to improve democracy in the EU. A resolution outlining proposals for the final Conference report was adopted by the CoR and a 12-point manifesto on behalf of the one million local and regional politicians in the EU was endorsed at the European Summit of regions and cities in March 2022. A report 'Citizens, local politicians and the future of Europe' (March 2022) summarises all CoR activities for the Conference.

The three employers' organisations in the EU's social partnership, BusinessEurope, SGI Europe and SMEunited, all published their priorities and contributions on the digital platform and presented them in the relevant Working Groups and at Plenary level. Furthermore, they all promoted the Conference both internally and with external stakeholders and organised events and engaged with stakeholders across different fora. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) mobilised to contribute to the Conference and participated in Plenary and Working Group meetings. The ETUC defined trade union proposals for a fairer future for Europe and included them on the online platform (amongst the most-supported proposals). The ETUC and its affiliates organised events and communication activities to present and discuss the trade union proposals.

The civil society component – composed of the Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe and the European Movement International – held many events across Europe and was vocal at the Plenary level. It engaged hundreds of civil society organisations, in a bottom-up approach through thematic clusters, to draft joint and comprehensive proposals on a variety of policy areas covered by the Conference. The ideas were fed into the Conference through the platform, the Working Groups, the Plenary sessions and in direct contact with the Executive Board, the Co-Chairs and the Common Secretariat.

The European Commission Representations in the Member States, Europe Direct Centres, European Documentation Centres, as well as the European Parliament Liaison Offices were very active in communicating about and informing citizens on the Conference on the Future of Europe. The European Commission Representations have reported 1400 activities that helped to communicate and implement the Conference all over Europe. They have organised or actively participated in more than 850 events, of which about 65% were targeted to young people and women to encourage their wider participation in the Conference. The European Parliament Liaison Offices organised over 1300 promotional activities across all the Member States. Thematic workshops on the different main topics of the Conference, with MEPs, citizens and stakeholder organisations, national authorities and regional and local media were organised to broaden the outreach of the Conference. The Europe Direct Centres reported about more than 1000 thematic events on the Conference and more than 600 promotional activities, involving a wide range of target groups and youth organisations. European Documentations Centres reported over 120 actions related to the communication of the Conference.

III.
The Conference Plenary

(A) Composition, role and functioning

A Conference Plenary was set up to debate the recommendations from the National and European Citizens' Panels, grouped by themes, without a predetermined outcome and without limiting the scope to predefined policy areas. Input gathered from the Multilingual Platform was also debated when relevant. The Plenary had a unique composition as it included, for the first time, citizens representing European and National Citizens' Panels and events alongside representatives of EU institutions and advisory bodies, elected representatives at national, regional and local levels, as well as representatives of civil society and social partners. After the recommendations were presented by and discussed with citizens, the Plenary had to put forward its proposals on a consensual basis[VI] to the Executive Board. The Conference Plenary met seven times from June 2021 to April 2022.

The Conference Plenary was composed of 108 representatives from the European Parliament, 54 from the Council and 3 from the European Commission[VII], as well as 108 representatives from all national parliaments on an equal footing, and citizens. 80 representatives from European Citizens' Panels, of which at least one third was younger than 25, the President of the European Youth Forum and 27 representatives[VIII] of national events and/or National Citizens' Panels participated. 18 representatives from the Committee of the Regions and 18 from the Economic and Social Committee, 6 elected representatives from regional authorities and 6 elected representatives from local authorities, 12 representatives of the social partners, and 8 from civil society also participated. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was invited when the international role of the EU was discussed. Representatives of key stakeholders, such as representatives from the Western Balkans partners, Ukraine, churches, religious associations or communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations were also invited.

The meetings of the Conference Plenaries were chaired jointly by the Co-Chairs of the Conference. The Conference Plenaries took place in the premises of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Due to the applicable health and safety regulations in place, the first five Conference Plenaries took place in hybrid format, whereas the last two took place in person. The Conference Plenaries were live-streamed and all the documents from the meetings were made publicly available on the Multilingual Digital Platform.

[VI] Consensus had to be found at least between the representatives of the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission and representatives from national Parliaments, on an equal footing. If there was a clear diverging position from representatives of citizens from national events and/or European or National Citizens' Panels, this had to be expressed in this report.

[VII] Other members of the European Commission were invited to the Plenary, notably where matters relevant to their portfolio were to be discussed.

[VIII] One per Member State.

(B) Working Groups

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Conference, the Co-Chairs proposed to the Conference Plenary that nine thematic Working Groups be established, according to the themes of the Multilingual Digital Platform, in order to give input to prepare the debates and the proposals of the Conference Plenary, within the parameters of the Joint Declaration. In October 2021, the Co-Chairs agreed on the Terms of Reference applicable to the Working Groups. The Working Groups respectively covered: Climate change and the environment; Health; A stronger economy, social justice and jobs; EU in the world; Values and rights, rule of law, security; Digital transformation; European Democracy; Migration; and Education, culture, Youth, Sport.

The Working Groups put forward their input to the Conference Plenary by discussing the recommendations from the respective National and European Citizens' Panels as well as the contributions on the Multilingual Digital Platform related to the nine topics gathered in the framework of the Conference. Members of the Conference Plenary were distributed in the following way among the 9 Working Groups: 12 members per Working Group for the European Parliament and the national parliaments, 6 for the Council, 3 for the representatives from National Citizens' Panels or events, 2 each for the Committee of Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, 1 or 2 for the social partners, 1 for civil society, and 1 for elected members of local and regional authorities, as well as representatives of the European Citizens' Panels. Representatives of the European Citizens' Panels participated in the relevant Working Group for their Panel. In addition, specific provision was made to allow members of the college of Commissioners to participate in Working Groups according to their portfolio responsibilities.

The Working Groups held lively debates and worked on draft proposals prepared under the authority of the Chair and the Spokesperson, selected from among the representatives of the European Citizens' Panels within the Working Group, with the assistance of the Common Secretariat. The Working Groups had to work on the basis of consensus as defined in Article 17 of the Conference Rules of Procedure. The Chair and the Spokesperson then gave presentations of the outcome of the Working Group to the Plenary. The Chair of the Working Group was assisted by the Common Secretariat. The Common Secretariat of the Conference prepared the summary records of each Working Group meeting under the guidance of the Chair and in consultation with the members of the Working Group.

The Working Groups met in the margins of the Conference Plenaries from October 2021 until 8 April 2022, as well as online in December 2021. Some Working Groups had additional meetings. Working Group meetings were live-streamed as of 20 January 2022. Their summary records were duly made available in the Plenary section of the Multilingual Digital Platform.

(C) Chronological summary

INAUGURAL CONFERENCE PLENARY, 19 JUNE 2021

The inaugural Conference Plenary took place on 19 June 2021 in hybrid format[IX]. It allowed the members of the Plenary to listen to a presentation and to have a general discussion on the purpose of and expectations for the Conference. The Co-Chairs underlined the unprecedented nature of this deliberative democracy exercise at EU level, which reinforced representative democracy, by bringing citizens to the heart of policymaking in the European Union. The Co-Chairs also outlined how the three pillars of the Conference – the Multilingual Digital Platform, the European and National Citizens' Panels and the Plenary – would work.

In addition, the members of the Plenary were informed of the intention to set up nine thematic Working Groups and of the calendar of the Conference. In the debate that followed, in which over 150 participants spoke, a wide variety of topics were addressed. As the selection of the participants for the European Citizens' Panels had not been completed yet, the President of the European Youth Forum and 27 representatives of national events and/or National Citizens' Panels participated as part of the citizens component.

SECOND CONFERENCE PLENARY, 22-23 OCTOBER 2021

The second Conference Plenary took place on 22-23 October 2021 in hybrid format, with representatives of the European Citizens' Panels participating for the first time. Members of the Plenary were able to listen to a presentation on the state of play of the four European Citizens' Panels and to hold a discussion. In addition, the representatives of the national events and Panels were able to present the events being held at national level. Furthermore, the Conference Plenary was presented with a report on the European Youth Event (EYE), which provided the members with an overview of the 20 tangible ideas selected by the young citizens participating in the EYE. In the further discussion, the innovative nature of the Multilingual Digital Platform was emphasised, which gave a voice to citizens and a place to debate in all EU official languages. This discussion was based on the second interim report on the Platform. The Western Balkans partners were invited to participate in this Plenary meeting as key stakeholders.

THIRD CONFERENCE PLENARY, 21-22 JANUARY 2022

The third Plenary of the Conference, taking place on 21 and 22 January 2022, was the first to be dedicated to the official presentation of recommendations stemming from the European Citizens' Panels, as well as the related National Citizens' Panels. This Plenary was indeed the first to take place after some European Citizens' Panels had finalised their recommendations, namely: European Citizens' Panels 2 (European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security) and 3 (Climate change and the environment/health). The Plenary took place in a hybrid format, with more than 400 Conference Plenary members participating either on-site or remotely.

This Plenary was also marked by the recent passing away of the European Parliament's President David Maria Sassoli. The Co-Chairs paid tribute to his memory at the opening of the Plenary.

The debates of this Plenary were organised by theme, on the topics covered by European Citizens' Panel 2 and European Citizens' Panel 3.

Discussions took place in an innovative interactive format, including time allocated for citizens' feedback and a special 'blue card' question system that allowed for spontaneous and lively exchanges on citizens' recommendations.

[IX] On 17 June 2021, a first European Citizens' event took place in Lisbon in a hybrid format, ahead of the inaugural Plenary of 19 June, to kick off the citizens' participation in the Conference.

FOURTH CONFERENCE PLENARY, 11-12 MARCH 2022

The fourth Plenary of the Conference was also dedicated to the presentation of the recommendations stemming from the European Citizens' Panels, as well as the related National Citizens' Panels. This Plenary took place after the remaining two European Citizens' Panels had finalised their recommendations, namely: European Citizens' Panels 1 (A stronger economy, social justice and jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation) and 4 (EU in the world / Migration).

Similarly to the January Plenary, the debates of this Plenary were organised by theme. The topics covered, this time, were those of European Citizens' Panel 1 and European Citizens' Panel 4. Discussions on citizens' recommendations again resulted in lively, in-depth exchanges, aided by an innovative interactive format.

FIFTH CONFERENCE PLENARY, 25-26 MARCH

The fifth Plenary marked the entry of the Conference into its next stages, with the beginning of the process of shaping Plenary proposals based on citizens' recommendations. Therefore, the Plenary members, after preparing in the smaller thematic setting of Working Groups, held, for the first time, debates on all nine topics of the Conference: A stronger economy, social justice and jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation / European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security / Climate change and the environment / Health / EU in the world / Migration. This Plenary was also a chance for the representatives of national events, organised across the 27 EU Member States, to present the results of their undertakings.

SIXTH CONFERENCE PLENARY, 8-9 APRIL 2022

The sixth Conference Plenary saw the finalisation of the draft Plenary proposals. After the last meetings of the thematic Working Groups had taken place, by way of nine substance-focused debates, all Plenary members expressed their final views and comments on the draft proposals they had been shaping over the past months. This exchange also gave them an opportunity to reflect on the unique process of elaboration of Plenary proposals, based on citizens' recommendations, and the work achieved since those recommendations were formulated. Citizens in particular stressed the unique human experience and added value of this deliberation process, which bound them together around this common project. This debate fed into the final draft proposals that would be submitted to the very last Conference Plenary.

SEVENTH AND FINAL CONFERENCE PLENARY, 29-30 APRIL 2022

The seventh and last Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe was a milestone, closing a months-long process of intense deliberations with the formulation of 49 proposals.

The 49 proposals were put forward and formulated by the Conference Plenary to the Executive Board on a consensual basis. Such consensus was found between the representatives of the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission and National Parliaments.

The representatives of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, elected representatives at regional and local level as well as representatives of social partners and civil society also expressed themselves favourably on the process, and gave their support to the proposals.

The citizens' component presented its final opinion on the proposals (see key messages below).

During the closing Plenary (29-30 April 2022), the 108 citizens members of the citizens' component presented their final position on the Plenary proposals. Their presentation was designed collectively and presented by 17 of them at the final debate. The text below is a summary of the key messages from their interventions.

**

We start by thanking the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission for the opportunity to help shape the future of Europe. We met fellow Europeans from all over the Union, from different panels and events, with politicians and social actors, and broadened our horizons. We grew as Europeans. For this to happen, we all made sacrifices: we were thrown out of our daily life, took days off work, and spent, for the European Citizens' Panels members, nine weekends away from our families. But we lived an incredible and unique experience. For us, it was not a waste of time.

There were ups and downs along the way. We did not always get an answer to our questions. We know that it will take time for the proposals to be implemented. But we are confident that you will do what it takes to make it happen, out of respect for our joint work. If we, the citizens, were able to get past our differences, the language barriers, to work together and grow to your level, so can you.

**

We all came a long way and now that our work in the Plenary is done, we can be proud of it. We see 8 cross-cutting topics that give a clear and strong mandate for the Future of Europe.

First, a European Union based on solidarity, social justice and equality. Indeed, a great concern for the citizens is to find equal conditions and rights in different areas: healthcare, social services, education and life-long learning, equal opportunities for inhabitants of rural and urban areas, to take account of demographic considerations. In the future, Europeans, across Member States and regions, should no longer face discrimination due to their age, residency, nationality, gender, religion, or political preferences. They should be offered decent living standards, wages and working conditions. The EU needs to be more than an economic union. Member States need to show more solidarity towards one another. We are a family and should behave as such in situations of crisis.

Second, the EU needs to be bold and act fast to become an environment and climate leader, by making the transition to green energy faster, improving its railway network, encourage sustainable transport and a truly circular economy. There is no time to lose. The EU needs to lead the change in many policy areas: agriculture, biodiversity, economy, energy, transport, education, health, digital transformation and climate diplomacy. We have research capacities, economic strength and geopolitical leverage to do it. If we make climate a priority, we can look forward to a prosperous future.

Third, Europe needs a more democratic Union. European citizens love the EU, but let's face it: it is not always easy. You called on us to help you and asked us: How should European democracy look like in the Future? And we answered to you: We citizens want a Europe in which decisions are made transparently and quickly, where the unanimity principle is reconsidered and in which we citizens are regularly and seriously involved.

Fourth, the EU needs more harmonisation in some fields, and to grow closer together as a Union. War is knocking on our Eastern doors, and this calls on us to be more unified than ever, and to grant the EU more competence on foreign affairs. This Conference can be the foundation for the creation of a more united and politically cohesive Europe. It all boils down to this word: Union. We cannot describe ourselves as such if we do not achieve the collaboration that this Conference exemplified.

Fifth, the EU needs to grow in autonomy and secure its global competitiveness. Throughout this process, we talked about reaching this goal in key strategic sectors: agriculture, energy, industry,

health. We need to avoid being dependent on third countries for many sensitive products. We need to bet on the talent of our labour force, prevent brain drain and provide training in the right skills to citizens at all stages of their lives, and no matter where they live in the EU. We cannot have huge disparities within the EU and young people with no prospect in one country, forced to move to another.

Sixth, the future of the EU is one based on its values. These have guided our work. When we started, no one could have imagined that a war would break out on our continent. This fight for freedom makes us realise how lucky we are to live in a peaceful union. Behind all our proposals, these values are being expressed: a human and dignified reception of migrants, equal access to health, the fight against corruption, the call for the protection of nature and biodiversity, and for a more democratic Union.

Seventh, in the Future, citizens should feel more European and know more about the EU. This was a transversal issue that underpinned the work of all panels. Digital transformation, education, mobility, and exchanges can give substance to this European identity, which complements, without challenging, our national identities. Many of us did not feel European before this Conference: it emerged here, slowly, by exchanging with one another. We were lucky to have this opportunity, but many do not. Therefore information, communication and awareness raising are so important.

Finally, an **eighth** cross-cutting topic that is extremely important for us is education and the empowerment of citizens overall. For this Conference, you decided to invite citizens as young as 16. We are grateful because, more than ever, it is necessary to empower young people. The high youth abstention rate shows us that the link between youth and politics needs to be reunited. Empower them economically and socially too: it is still too hard to enter the job market, to claim their social rights. During the - Covid-19 pandemic, they felt abandoned and many still suffer the consequences on their mental health. But all Europeans need to be empowered, not only young people: through mobility programmes and life-long learning, we need to open the horizons of all Europeans. We need also to educate citizens in democracy, civic participation and media literacy. We need a truly holistic approach.

**

No one knew what the result would be. 27 countries, 24 languages, different ages. And yet, when we worked together, we felt connected: our brains, thoughts, experiences. We are not experts on the EU or any of the topics of the Conference, but we are experts in real life, and we have our stories. We go to work, we live in the countryside and suburbs, we work nightshifts, we study, we have children, we take public transport. We have our diversity to rely on. Consensus was found on the proposals between the four different components, and within the citizens' component. We agree and support all proposals now in your hands. We express a diverging position on measure 38.4, third bullet since it originated neither from the European nor the National Panels and was not sufficiently discussed in the Plenary Working Group. That is why we do not express ourselves on the substance nor the relevance of this measure. With this in mind, we call on you to look at these proposals as a whole, to implement them, and not just the ones that suit you the most and are easily implemented. Do it transparently. We worked on them with dedication and passion, we are proud of our work: please respect it.

The Conference on the Future of Europe has gone through a pandemic and witnessed a war in Europe, demonstrating full solidarity with the Ukrainian people. It has been a turbulent year for the participants, and it has been a turbulent year for all Europeans. But the Conference continued its work, against all odds. On behalf of the citizens of the Conference, let us now conclude by addressing you with a simple message: we feel European, we feel engaged and listened to in the process of democratisation, we believe in the EU and we want to keep believing. So, from the bottom of our hearts, read the proposals well and implement them, for the sake of Europe's future.

The representatives of the Council component of the Conference Plenary did not comment on the substance of the proposals but instead supported and encouraged the activities of the citizens and took note of their recommendations. After 9 May 2022, the Council will determine how to follow up on the results of the Conference, within its own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties.

The Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe takes note of the proposals put forward by the Conference Plenary and presents them as the final outcome of the Conference. Providing guidance on the future of Europe, these proposals were achieved after almost a year of deliberations, in the framework of the Joint Declaration and the Rules of Procedure of the Conference.

IV.
The Plenary proposals

"Climate change and the environment"

1. Proposal: agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution

Objective: Safe, sustainable, just, climate responsible, and affordable production of food, respecting sustainability principles, the environment, safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystems, while ensuring food security:

Measures:

1. Bring the concept of green and blue economy to the fore, by promoting effective environmentally and climate friendly agriculture and fishery in the EU and worldwide, including organic farming as well as other forms of innovative and sustainable farming, such as vertical farming, that allow to produce more food with less input whilst reducing emissions and environmental impact but still guaranteeing productivity and food security (Panel 3 – recommendation 1, 2 and 10; Panel 2 – recommendation 4)
2. Redirect subsidies and strengthen incentives towards organic farming and sustainable agriculture which comply with clear environmental standards and help achieving the global climate goals (Panel 3 – recommendations 1, 12)
3. Apply circular economy principles in agriculture and promote measures against food waste (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform (MDP))
4. Significantly reduce the use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, in line with the existing targets, while still ensuring food security, and support for research to develop more sustainable and natural based alternatives (Panel 3 – recommendation 10, WG debate)
5. Introduce a certification of carbon removals, based on robust, solid and transparent carbon accounting (Plenary discussion)
6. More research and innovations, including in technological solutions for sustainable production, plant resistance, and precision farming, and more communication, advisory systems, and training for and from farmers (Panel 3- recommendation 10, WG debate, Plenary discussion)
7. Eliminate social dumping and enhance a just and green transition to better jobs, with high quality safety, health and working conditions, in the agriculture sector (WG debate)
8. Address aspects such as plastic use in agricultural films and ways to reduce water consumption in agriculture (MDP)
9. Reasoned breeding and meat production with a focus on animal welfare and sustainability, using measures such as clear labelling, high standard and common norms for animal farming and transport, strengthening the link between breeding and feeding (Panel 3- recommendation 16 and 30)

2. Proposal: agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution

Objective: Protect and restore biodiversity, the landscape and oceans, and eliminate pollution

Measures:

1. Create, restore, better manage, and extend protected areas – for the conservation of biodiversity (FR recommendation, Panel 3 – recommendation 11)
2. Have in place a coercion and reward system to tackle pollution applying the polluter pays principle, which should also be embedded in taxation measures, combined with increasing awareness and incentives (Panel 3 – recommendation 32, FR recommendation, Plenary discussion)
3. Enhance the role of municipalities in urban planning and construction of new buildings supporting blue-green infrastructure, avoid and stop further sealing of land and obligatory green spaces of new constructions, in order to promote biodiversity and urban forests (Panel 3 - recommendation 5, Panel 1- recommendation 18, FR recommendation)
4. Protect insects, in particular indigenous and pollinating insects, including through protection against invasive species and better enforcement of existing regulation (Panel 1 – recommendation 18)
5. Support reforestation, afforestation, including forests lost by fire, enforcement of responsible forest management, and support better use of wood replacing other materials. Setting binding national targets across the EU Member States for reforestation of native trees and local flora, taking into account different national situations and specificities (Panel 3 – recommendation 14, Panel 1 – recommendation 18)
6. Enforce and extend the ban on single use plastics (MDP)
7. Protect water sources and combat river and ocean pollution, including through researching and fighting microplastic pollution, and promoting of environmentally friendly shipping by using best available technologies and establishing EU research and funding for alternative maritime fuels and technologies (MDP, WG debate)
8. Limit light pollution (WG debate)

3. Proposal: climate change, energy, transport

Objective: Enhance European energy security, and achieve the EU's energy independence while ensuring a just transition, and providing Europeans with sufficient, affordable and sustainable energy. Tackle climate change, with the EU playing a role of global leader in sustainable energy policy, and respecting the global climate goals:

Measures:

1. Accomplish and whenever possible speed up the green transition, in particular through more investments in renewable energy, in order to reduce external energy dependency, recognizing also the role of local and regional authorities in the green transition (WG debate)
2. Consider within energy policies the geopolitical and security implications, including human rights, ecological aspect and good governance and rule of law, of all third country energy suppliers (WG debate)
3. Reduce dependencies from oil and gas imports through energy efficiency projects, support of affordable public transport, high-speed rail and freight network, expansion of clean and renewable energy provision (Panel 4 – recommendation 2, Panel 1 – recommendation 10, FR, DE recommendations)
4. Improve quality and interconnectivity, ensure maintenance, and transform the electrical infrastructure and electrical grids in order to enhance safety and to enable the transition to renewable energy sources (Panel 1 – recommendation 10, WG discussion)
5. Invest in technologies to produce renewable energy, such as efficient production and use of green hydrogen, especially in sectors which are difficult to electrify (Panel 3 – recommendation 31, WG debate)
6. Invest in the exploration of new eco-friendly sources of energy and storage methods and, until tangible solution are found, additional investment into existing optimal solutions of energy production and storage (Panel 3 – recommendations 9 and 31)
7. Make CO2 filters mandatory for fossil fuels power plants, and provide financial aid to Member States that do not have financial resources to implement the CO2 filters. (Panel 3 – recommendation 29)
8. Ensure a just transition, protecting workers and jobs, through adequate funding for the transition and further research, through reform of the tax system with fairer taxation and anti-tax fraud measures, and through ensuring inclusive governance approach in policy making at all levels (e.g. ambitious measures to reskill/upskills, strong social protection, keeping public service in public hands, safeguarding occupational health and safety rules) (Plenary discussion, WG debate, MDP)
9. Introduce an investment package for climate-friendly technologies and innovations, which should be financed through climate-related import tariffs and climate related carbon adjustment levies (DE recommendation)
10. After a transition period, fossil fuels should no longer be subsidized and there should be no funding for traditional gas infrastructure (WG debate)
11. Increase EU's leadership and taking a stronger role and responsibility to promote ambitious climate action, a just transition, and support to address the loss and damages, in the international framework with the United Nations at the centre (NL recommendation, WG debate).

4. Proposal: climate change, energy, transport

Objective: Provide high quality, modern, green, and safe infrastructure, ensuring connectivity, including of rural and island regions, in particular through affordable public transport:

Measures:

1. Support public transport and develop a European public transportation network especially in rural and island regions, which is efficient, reliable and affordable, with extra incentives for public transportation usage (Panel 3 – recommendation 36, Panel 4 – recommendation 2)
2. Invest in high-speed and night trains, and set single standard of railroad eco-friendly technology in Europe, to provide a credible alternative and facilitate the possibility to replace and discourage short distance flights (WG debate, MDP)
3. Promote the purchase, bearing in mind the affordability for households, and promote (shared) use of electric vehicles complying with good standard of battery life, as well as investments in the necessary recharging infrastructure, and investments in the development of other non-polluting technologies for those vehicles whose electrification is difficult to achieve (Panel 3 – recommendation 38).
4. Develop high speed internet and mobile network connectivity in rural and island regions (Panel 3 – recommendation 36)
5. Improve existing transportation infrastructure from an ecological point of view (Panel 3- recommendation 37)
6. Require urban development programs for “greener” cities with lower emissions, with dedicated car-free zones in cities, without harming commercial areas (Panel 3 - recommendation 6)
7. Improve infrastructure for cycling, and give further rights and enhanced legal protection to cyclists and pedestrians including in case of accidents with motorised vehicles, guaranteeing road safety and providing training on road traffic rules (Panel 3 – recommendation 4).
8. Regulate the mining of cryptocurrencies, which are using an enormous amount of electricity (MDP)

5. Proposal: sustainable consumption, packaging and production

Objective: Enhance the use and management of materials within the EU in order to become more circular, more autonomous, and less dependent. Build a circular economy by promoting sustainable EU products and production. Ensure all products placed on the EU market comply with common EU environmental standards:

Measures:

1. Stricter and harmonised production standards within the EU and a transparent labelling system for all products sold on the EU market regarding their sustainability/ environmental footprint, as well as longevity, using a QR-code and eco-score, or the Digital Product Passport (Panel 3 – recommendations 8, 13, 20, 21, P1 - 16, Panel 4 - recommendation 13)
2. Review global supply chains, including in agricultural production, in order to reduce dependency of the EU and shorten the chains (MDP)
3. Further avoid waste by setting prevention and reuse targets and setting quality standards for waste sorting systems (WG debate, FR recommendation)
4. Phase-out non-sustainable form of packaging, regulate environmentally-safe packaging, and avoid wasting of material in packaging, through financial incentives and penalties, and investing in research into alternatives (Panel 3 – recommendations 15, 25, Panel 1 – recommendation 12, Panel 4 – recommendation 16)
5. Introduce EU wide packaging deposit return scheme and advanced standards for containers (Panel 3 – recommendations 22, 23, MDP)
6. Launch an EU knowledge platform on how to ensure long-term and sustainable use and how to “repair” products, including the available information from consumer associations (Panel 3 – recommendation 20)
7. Introduce measures to tackle early, or pre-mature (including planned) obsolescence, ensure longer warranties, promote a right to repair, and ensure availability and accessibility of compatible spare parts (Panel 3 – recommendation 20, FR and DE recommendations, Panel 1 – recommendation 14)
8. Establish a secondary raw materials market, also by considering requirements for percentages of recycled content and encouraging less use of primary materials (WG discussion)
9. Rapid implementation of an ambitious sustainable textile strategy and setting up a mechanism ensuring consumers can be aware the product meets sustainable criteria (Panel 3 - recommendation 28, WG debate)
10. Take EU actions that enable and incentivize consumers to use products longer (Panel 3 - recommendation 20)
11. Increase environmental standards, and enforce compliance, related to export of waste both within the EU and to third countries (Panel 4 - recommendation 15, MDP)
12. Introduce measures to limit advertising of products that are environmentally damaging, introducing a mandatory disclaimer for products that are particularly harmful for the environment (Panel 3 - recommendation 22)
13. Stricter manufacturing standards and fair working conditions throughout the production and entire value chain (Panel 3 - recommendation 21)

6. Proposal: information, awareness, dialogue and life-style

Objective: Foster knowledge, awareness, education, and dialogues on environment, climate change, energy use, and sustainability:

Measures:

1. Create an interactive fact-checked information platform, with regularly updated and diverse scientific environmental information (Panel 3 - recommendation 33)
2. Support information campaigns on eco-awareness, including a long-term EU campaign for sustainable consumption and lifestyle. (DE, NL and FR recommendations, Panel 3 – recommendation 7)
3. Promote and facilitate dialogue and consultations between all levels of decision making, especially with youth and at the local level (DE, NL and FR recommendations, Panel 3 – recommendations 27, 35, Plenary discussion)
4. The development by the EU, with assistance of Member States, of a common European charter targeting environmental issues and fostering environmental awareness among all citizens (Panel 3 - recommendation 7).
5. Provide educational courses and teaching materials for all, in order to increase climate and sustainability literacy and to enable lifelong learning on environmental topics (Panel 1 – recommendations 15, 35, Panel 3 - recommendation 24, WG debate)
6. Include food production and biodiversity protection as part of education, including the advantage of unprocessed over processed food, and promoting school gardens, subsidizing urban gardening projects and vertical farming. Consider making biodiversity a mandatory subject in schools and raise awareness for biodiversity through the use of media campaigns and incentivised 'competitions' across the EU (local community scale competitions) (Panel 3 – recommendation 5, Panel 1 – recommendation 18)
7. Strengthen the role and action of the EU in the area of environment and education, by extending the EU's competence in the area of education in the area of climate change and environment and extending the use of qualified majority decision-making on topics identified as being of 'European interest', such as environment (NL, FR recommendations)
8. Promote a plant-based diet on the grounds of climate protection and the preservation of the environment (MDP)

"Health"

7. Proposal - Healthy food and healthy lifestyle[1]

Objective: Ensure that all Europeans have access to education on healthy food and access to healthy and affordable food, as a building block of a healthy lifestyle, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Setting minimum standards for food quality, as well as food traceability, including by limiting the use of antibiotics and other animal medicinal products to what is absolutely necessary to protect the health and well-being of animals instead of use in a preventive way and by making sure that controls are tightened in that respect. [# 3, #17]
2. Educating people about healthy habits from an early age, and encouraging them to make safe and healthy choices, through taxation of non-healthy processed food and by making information on the health properties of food readily available; for that purpose, establishing a European-wide evaluation system for processed food based upon independent and scientific expertise, and a label covering the use of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in the production of food. In this regard, reinforce monitoring and enforcement of existing rules and consider strengthening them. [#18, #19, WG]
3. Encouraging dialogue with the food chain actors from production to sales for corporate social responsibility regarding healthy food. [#19, WG]
4. Supporting at EU level the provision of healthy, varied and affordable food in establishments servicing the public, such as school canteens, hospitals, or nursing homes, including through dedicated funding. [#3, Plenary, WG]
5. Investing in research on the impact of the use of antibiotics and the effects of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in human health. [#17, #18] [2]

8. Proposal – Reinforce the healthcare system[3]

Objective: Reinforce the resilience and quality of our healthcare systems, in particular through:

Measures:

1. The creation of a European health data space, which would facilitate exchange of health data; individual medical records could be made available – on a voluntary basis – through an EU individual electronic health passport, in compliance with data protection rules. [#41, WG]
2. Adequate working conditions, in particular through strong collective bargaining, including in terms of wages and working arrangements, and harmonisation of training and certification standards for health professionals; networking and exchange programmes should be developed such as an Erasmus for medical schools, contributing notably to skills development. In order to ensure talent retention, young professionals' knowledge and working experiences, EU exchange programmes need to be established to motivate our best minds in Life Sciences not to be drained by third countries. [#39, WG]
3. Ensuring strategic autonomy at EU level to avoid dependency on third countries [NL2][4] for medicines (in particular active ingredients) and medical devices (including raw materials); in particular, a list of essential and priority, but also innovative medicines and treatments (such as biotechnology solutions) should be established at EU level relying on existing European agencies and HERA, to guarantee their availability for citizens. Consider organising coordinated strategic stockpiling throughout the EU. In order to achieve the necessary coordinated, long-term action at Union level, include health and healthcare among the shared competencies between the EU and the EU Member States by amending Article 4 TFUE. [#40, #49, Plenary, WG]
4. Further developing, coordinating and funding existing health research and innovation programmes without undermining other health-related programmes, including for European Reference Networks as they constitute the basis of the development of networks of medical care for highly specialised and complex treatments. [#42, #43, WG]
5. Investing in the health systems, in particular public and non-for profit, infrastructure and digital health and ensuring that healthcare providers respect the principles of full accessibility, affordability and quality of services, hence ensuring that resources are not drained by profit-oriented health operators with little to no regard for the general interest. [#51, WG]
6. Issuing strong recommendations to the Member States to invest in effective, accessible, affordable, high-quality and resilient health systems, notably in the context of the European Semester. The impact of the war in Ukraine on public health demonstrates the need to further develop resilient health systems and solidarity mechanisms. [#51, WG]

9. Proposal – A broader understanding of Health[5]

Objective: Adopt a holistic approach to health, addressing, beyond diseases and cures, health literacy and prevention, and fostering a shared understanding of the challenges faced by those who are ill or disabled, in line with the "One Health Approach", which should be emphasized as a horizontal and fundamental principle encompassing all EU policies.

Measures:

1. Improve understanding of mental health issues and ways of addressing them, including from early childhood and early diagnostics, building on good practices developed throughout the EU, which should be made readily accessible through the Public Health Best Practice Portal. To raise awareness, EU institutions and relevant stakeholders should organise best practices exchange events and help their members disseminate them in their own constituencies. An EU Action Plan on mental health should be developed, that would provide long term Mental Health Strategy, including on research and also tackle the issue of availability of professionals, including for minors and the setting up in the near future of a dedicated European Year of Mental Health. [#44, #47, WG]
2. Develop at EU level a standard educational programme on healthy lifestyles, covering also sexual education. It should also encompass actions targeting both healthy lifestyle and environmental protection and how they can help prevent many diseases, such as for instance bicycling as a healthy mean for everyday mobility. It would be available free of charge to Member States and schools to use in their curricula, as appropriate. Such a programme would address stereotypes on those who are ill or disabled. [#46, WG]
3. Develop first aid courses – including a practical component – that would be made available to all citizens free of charge and consider regular courses as standard practice for students and in workplaces. There should also be a minimum number of defibrillators available in public places in all Member States. [#50]
4. Expanding the health week initiative, which would take place across the entire EU in the same week, when all health issues would be covered and discussed. Also consider health year initiatives, starting with the year on mental health. [#44, WG]
5. Recognise as regular medical treatment in terms of taxation the hormonal contraception products used for medical reasons, such as in the cases of fibromyalgia and endometriosis, as well as female sanitary products. Ensure access to reproductive treatments for all individuals suffering fertility problems. [#45, WG]

10. Proposal – Equal access to health for all[6]

Objective: Establish a "right to health" by guaranteeing all Europeans have equal and universal access to affordable, preventive, curative and quality health care:

Measures:

1. Establish common minimum healthcare standards at EU level, covering also prevention and accessibility as well as proximity of care, and provide support to achieve these standards. [#39, WG]
2. Recognising the need to take full account of the principle of subsidiarity and the key role of local, regional and national players in health matter [NL3], ensure there is the ability to act at EU level when the right to health is best addressed there. To allow faster and stronger decision-making on key subjects and to improve the effectiveness of European governance towards the development of the European Health Union (such as, for example, in the event of a pandemic or for rare diseases). [#49, FR wish11, Digital Platform]
3. Enhance the European Health Union using the full potential of the current framework and include health and healthcare among the shared competencies between the EU and the EU Member States by amending Article 4 TFUE. [#49, FRwish11, Digital Platform, WG][7]
4. Make sure anyone can access existing treatments, wherever first available in the EU; to that purpose, facilitate cross-border cooperation, notably on rare diseases, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and highly specialised treatments, such as organ transplants and the treatments of severe burns. A European network for transplants and organ donations should be put in place for the benefit of all European patients in need of a transplant. [Plenary and WG]
5. Ensure affordability of care, through stronger investment in healthcare, in particular of dental care including prophylaxis, and ensure affordable dental care is available to everyone within 15 to 20 years. [#48, WG]
6. Ensure that treatments and medicines across the EU are of equal quality and of fair local cost, including through tackling existing fragmentation of the Internal Market. [#40, NL3, WG, Plenary]
7. Fight health poverty by encouraging free of charge dental care for children, low-income groups and other vulnerable groups, such as for instance the disabled. Also consider the impact of poor-quality housing on health. [#48, WG]
8. Consider the international dimension to health and recognise that medicines should be universally available, including in poorer countries. [NL2]

"A stronger economy, social justice and jobs"

Introduction

We are living in extraordinary times and the EU will be judged on its efforts to emerge from the current crises stronger, with a more sustainable, inclusive, competitive and resilient growth model. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the COVID-19 pandemic have changed the face of the EU. The Conference will also need to address the social and economic consequences of this war in an already very demanding post-pandemic context. At the same time, climate change still represents a continuous threat to humanity and will have a dramatic impact on the economy and on our societies. From the recommendations received, it is clear that citizens are calling for stronger EU action. Outstanding transnational challenges, such as inequalities, competitiveness, health, climate change, migration, digitalisation or fair taxation, call for proper European solutions. From the recommendations and discussions, it is also clear that we need a comprehensive strategy to ensure better wellbeing for the European citizens in the different aspect of their lives. Some elements of this strategy can be found in already existing policies and can be achieved by making full use of the existing institutional framework at European and national level; others will require new policies and, in some cases, treaty changes. However, new policies and treaty changes should be seen as means to achieve better wellbeing and not as ends in themselves. It is both possible and necessary to reshape the EU in a way that will guarantee its strategic autonomy, sustainable growth, improvement of living and working conditions and human progress, without depleting and destroying our planet in the framework of a renewed Social Contract. These recommendations are intended to achieve these goals. The proposals below should be read while taking into account that citizens all over Europe have formulated a diversity of views and recommendations. It is this diversity of views that is one of Europe's unique strengths.

11. Proposal: Sustainable Growth and innovation[8]

Objective: We propose that the EU supports the shift to a sustainable and resilient growth model, considering the green and digital transitions with a strong social dimension in the European Semester, and empowering citizens, trade unions and businesses. The conventional macroeconomic indicators and the GDP could be complemented with new indicators in order to address the new European priorities such as the European Green Deal or the European Pillar of Social Rights and to better reflect the ecological and digital transitions and the wellbeing of people. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Promoting greener production processes by companies and supporting companies to identify the best solutions and providing positive and negative incentives (ECP 11 & 12), and by increasing local production and consumption; (discussions)
2. Working towards a more sustainable and circular economy by addressing the issue of planned obsolescence and ensuring the right of repair; (ECP14)
3. Reviewing the EU's economic governance and the European Semester in order to ensure that the green and digital transitions, social justice and social progress go hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness, without ignoring the economic and fiscal nature of the European Semester. In addition, there is a need to better involve social partners and the local and regional authorities in the implementation of the European Semester in order to improve its application and accountability; (online platform, discussions)
4. Tackling the use of single use plastic packaging/containers; (ECP 12)
5. Expanding the use of European technology and make it a viable alternative to foreign technology; (discussions)
6. Promoting research into new materials and technologies, as well as the innovative use of existing materials, while ensuring that research efforts are not duplicated; (ECP 9, NL 1)
7. Addressing the sustainability, affordability and accessibility of energy, considering energy poverty and the dependence on non-EU states, by increasing the share of sustainably sourced energy; (ECP 10, LT 3, IT 1.1)
8. Raising awareness among both companies and citizens how to behave in a more sustainable manner, and guarantee just transition, based on social dialogue and quality jobs; (ECP 12 & online platform)
9. Including ambitious social, labour and health standards, including occupational health and safety, in new EU trade agreements; (LT8)

12. Proposal: Enhancing EU's competitiveness and further deepening the Single Market[9]

Objective: We propose strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of the European Union's economy, single market, industry and addressing strategic dependencies. We need to promote an entrepreneurial culture in the EU, where innovative businesses of all sizes, and in particular Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) , as well as start-ups are encouraged and can thrive in order to contribute to more resilient and cohesive societies. There is a need for a strong functioning market economy in order to facilitate the vision of a more social Europe. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Developing a clear vision for the European economy and playing to Europe's strengths, quality and diversity while taking into account of economic and other differences between Member States, and promoting cooperation and competition between businesses; (NL 1 & 2)
2. Consolidating what has been done in terms of the single currency and the interconnection of payment systems and telecommunications; (IT 4.a.2)
3. Reducing the standardisation of products and recognising local and regional cultural and production peculiarities (respect for production traditions); (IT 2.2)
4. Enhancing upward social and economic convergence in the Single Market, by completing existing initiatives, such as the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union, and implementing a forward- looking reform of our Economic and Monetary Union; (discussions)
5. Promoting policies for a strong industrial base and innovation in key enabling technologies, and a forward-looking climate policy coupled with industrial competitiveness with a strong social dimension, based on social dialogue and well-functioning industrial relations; (discussions)
6. Giving special attention in all new initiatives to SMEs, the backbone of our economy. The "Think Small First" principle must be respected in all EU's legislative proposals and a SME test should be reinforced in the Commission's impact assessment in accordance with clear principles while fully respecting social an environmental standards and consumer rights; (discussions)
7. Ensuring the participation of SMEs in funding applications, tenders and networks with as little administrative effort as possible. Access to finance for SMEs with high-risk innovation projects should be further developed by entities such as the European Innovation Council and the European Investment Bank; (discussions)
8. Creating a better framework for investments in R&I aimed at a more sustainable and biodiverse business models. (ECP 10, 11 & 14) Focusing on technology and innovation as drivers of growth; (IT 1.3)
9. Promoting collective economic performance through autonomous, competitive industry; (FR3)
10. Identifying and developing strategic sectors, including space, robotics and AI; (FR 3 & 9)
11. Investing in an economy based on tourism and culture, including the many small destinations in Europe; (IT 1.2)
12. Addressing the security of supply by diversifying input sources/raw materials and increasing the manufacture of key goods in Europe, such as health, food, energy, defence and transport; (FR 9, LT 1, IT 1.4)
13. Promoting the digitalisation of European businesses, for instance through a specific scoreboard allowing businesses to compare

their degree of digitalisation, with the overall aim of increasing competitiveness; (DE 2.1)

14. Promoting digital cohesion to contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion as defined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; (discussions)
15. Strengthening cross-border cooperation in order to enhance cohesion and resilience within and beyond regions, by fostering the European Cross Border Mechanism and similar tools; (discussions)
16. Enhancing and promoting the possibilities for cross-border training in order to upskill the European workforce and increase competitiveness, while at the same time boosting citizens' economic literacy; (DE 2.2, LT7). Promoting exchanges between workers in Europe through a European Job Centre. (IT 6.1) Encouraging young people to study science subjects; (IT 1.5)
17. Reducing, where non-essential, bureaucracy (permits, certifications); (IT 2.1)
18. Combating counterfeiting and unfair competition; (IT 2.4)
19. Ensuring greater participation of start-ups and SMEs in innovation projects as this increases their innovative strength, competitiveness and networking. (online platform, discussions)
20. Consolidating and protecting the Single Market should remain a priority; measures and initiatives at EU and national level should not be detrimental to the Single Market and should contribute to the free flow of people, goods, services, and capital; (discussions)
21. New EU policy initiatives should undergo a “competitiveness check” to analyse their impact on companies and their business environment (cost of doing business, capacity to innovate, international competitiveness, level playing field, etc). Such check shall be in accordance with, the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality, and shall not undermine the protection of human, social and workers' rights nor environmental and consumer protection standards. To this effect, we also propose the establishment of a European Advisory Competitiveness Body which should monitor how the competitiveness check is performed and in particular assess the cumulative impact of legislation, as well as put forward proposals to improve the right framework conditions for competitiveness of EU companies. Such body should include organised civil society and the social partners in its governance; (discussions)

13. Proposal: Inclusive labour markets[10]

Objective: We propose to improve the functioning of labour markets so that they ensure fairer working conditions and promote gender equality, employment, including that of young people and vulnerable groups. The EU, Member States and social partners need to work to end in-work poverty, address the rights of platform workers, ban un-paid internships and ensure fair labour mobility in the EU. We must promote social dialogue and collective bargaining. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the areas of "equal opportunities and access to the labour market" and "fair working conditions", while respecting competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. While doing so, there should be a respect of national traditions and the autonomy of social partners and a cooperation with civil society. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Ensuring that statutory minimum wages guarantee that each worker can earn a decent and similar quality of living across all Member States. Clear criteria (e.g. living costs , inflation, above the poverty line, the average and median wage at national level) to be taken into account when setting minimum wages level should be set up. The levels of statutory minimum wages should be regularly reviewed in light of these criteria in order to ensure their adequacy. Special attention should be put on effective implementation of these rules and monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living. At the same time, collective bargaining should be strengthened and promoted throughout the EU; (ECP1 & 30; DE 4.2; online platform).
2. Taking stock and more strongly enforcing the implementation of the Working Time Directive (Directive 2003/88/EC) and other relevant legislation that ensures healthy work life balance while looking at new national policies in this domain; (ECP2)
3. Introducing or reinforcing existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' and incentivising companies to promote it. (ECP 7) The EU should ensure the right to disconnect, do more to address the digital divide at the workplace and assess the implications of remote work on health, working time and companies performance. There is a need to guarantee fair digitalisation based on human rights, improved working conditions and collective bargaining; (discussions).
4. Having integrated employment policies at an EU level where active labour market policies remain central and increasingly coordinated (IT 6.2) while Member States focus on continuing their reform efforts to create favourable conditions for quality job creation. (discussions)
5. Taking steps to ensure that social rights are fully protected and safeguarded in case of conflict with economic freedoms including via the introduction of a social progress protocol in the Treaties. (online platform, discussions)
6. Ensuring gender equality, in line with 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy. The EU should continue measuring the gender equality through a gender equality index (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and encourage the sharing of expertise and best practices and set up a possible direct citizen-feedback mechanism (e.g. an Ombudsperson); (ECP28; IT 5.a.1). There is a need to address gender pay gap and introduce quotas in senior positions. There should be more support for women entrepreneurs in the business environment and women in STEM (discussions).
7. Promoting youth employment, for example through financial assistance for companies, but also by giving employers and workers

additional support (NL 4) and support to young entrepreneurs and young self-employed professionals for example through educational tools and courses (discussions);

8. Promoting employment of disadvantaged groups (NL 4), in particular among people with disabilities (online platform);
9. Promoting employment and social mobility and, therefore, to have a full chance of self-realisation and self-determination. (IT 5.a.4 & IT 6.1) There could be a long-term strategy to ensure everyone in our societies has the right skills to find a job and bring their talents to fruition, in particular the young generation (discussions). It is important to invest in people's skills adapted to the changing labour market needs and promoting life-long learning through among others exchange programme at all stages of life and ensure the right to lifelong learning and the right to training. (FR 6; DE 4.1) To this end, there is a need to strengthen the cooperation between businesses, trade unions and vocational, education and training providers (discussions).

14. Proposal: Inclusive labour markets[11]

Objective: We propose to reduce inequalities, fight social exclusion and tackle poverty. We need to put in place a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy that could include, among other, a reinforced Child Guarantee and Youth Guarantee, the introduction of minimum wages, a common EU framework for minimum income schemes and decent social housing. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the area of "social protection and inclusion" with due regard for respective competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Reinforcing the competences of the EU in social policies and proposing legislation to promote social policies and ensure equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory. (ECP 19 & 21) The EU could support and complement the policies of Members State by among others proposing a common framework for minimum incomes to ensure that nobody is left behind; These actions should be carried in the framework of the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan; (discussions)
2. Not compromising on welfare rights (public health, public education, labour policies); (IT 4.a.1)
3. Promoting research in social matters and health in the EU, following priority lines that are considered to be of public interest and agreed on by the member countries, and providing the appropriate funding. This could be achieved in part by reinforcing collaboration across fields of expertise, across countries, centres of studies (universities, etc.); (ECP 20)
4. Granting access to medical services to all persons below 16 years old across the EU in case these services are not available in the national context; (discussions)
5. Ensuring that the EU, together with social partners and national governments, supports targeted access to decent social housing for citizens, according to their specific needs financial effort should be shared among private funders, landlords, housing beneficiaries, Member State governments at central and local levels, and

the European Union. (ECP25)

15. Proposal: Demographic transition[12]

Objective: We propose to address the challenges arising from the demographic transition, as a critical ingredient of Europe's overall resilience, in particular low birth rates and a steadily ageing population, by ensuring support to people throughout the lifecycle. This should involve comprehensive action aimed at all generations, from children and young people, to families, to the working-age population, to older persons who are still prepared to work as well as those in retirement or need of care. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Ensuring quality, affordable and accessible childcare across the EU, so that mothers and fathers can confidently reconcile their work and family life. Where appropriate this could include childcare opportunities at or near the workplace. In some Member States also overnight care is available, which should serve as an example. Additionally, this could be flanked by supportive measures such as reduced VAT rates on equipment needed for children. It is essential to prevent poverty and social exclusion of children; (ECP 22 & 26) Reinforcing the Child Guarantee, guaranteeing access of children in need to services such as education and care, healthcare, nutrition and housing, could be an instrument to achieve this (online platform, discussions).
2. Introducing specific support and protection of work for young people. Such measures towards the working-age population should include access to knowledge for mothers and fathers about their return to work. (ECP 22) Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee could be an instrument to improve the access of young people under the age of 30 to good quality offers of employment, continued education, apprenticeships or traineeships; (discussions)
3. Promoting the right to free movement of education within the Union, among others, through mutual recognition of degrees, grades, skills and qualifications; (discussions)
4. Improving legislation and implementation thereof to ensure support of families across all Member States, for instance with regard to parental leave as well as childbirth and childcare allowances. (ECP 26 & IT 5.a.1) Housing plays a crucial role in supporting families and should be addressed (online platform, discussions);
5. Taking action to guarantee that all families enjoy equal family rights in all Member States. This should include the right to marriage and adoption; (ECP 27)
6. Promoting flexible retirement ages by taking account of the specific situation of older persons. When determining the retirement age, there should be a differentiation depending on the profession, and thereby factoring in particularly demanding work, both mentally and physically; (ECP 21 & IT 5.a.1)
7. Preventing old age poverty by introducing minimum pensions. Such minimum levels would need to take account of the living standard, the poverty line and purchase power in the respective Member State; (ECP 21)
8. Guaranteeing appropriate social and health care to older persons. In doing so, it is important to address both community-based as well as residential care. Equally, measures need to take account of both care receivers and care givers; (ECP 23)
9. Ensuring the sustainable development and the demographic resilience of the regions that are lagging behind in order to make them more vibrant and attractive, including through the cohesion policy; (online

platform & discussions)

10. Taking coordinated action at the European level for collecting data disaggregated by factors such as gender and analysing demographic trends, sharing best practices and knowledge and supporting Member States in shaping and implementing adequate policies including by establishing a specialized EU body in this area. (online platform & discussions)

16. Proposal: Fiscal and tax policies[13]

Objective: We propose that the EU promotes future-oriented investments focused on the green and digital transitions with a strong social and gender dimension, taking also into account the examples of the Next Generation EU and the SURE instrument. The EU needs to take into account the social and economic impact of the war against Ukraine and the link between the EU economic governance with the new geopolitical context and by strengthening its own budget through new own resources. Citizens want to move away taxation from people and SMEs and target tax evaders, big polluters and by taxing the digital giants while at the same time they want to see the EU supporting Member States' and local authorities' ability to finance themselves and as well as in using EU funds. This objective should be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Harmonizing and coordinating tax policies within the Member States of the EU in order to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, avoiding tax havens within the EU and targeting offshoring within Europe, including by ensuring that decisions on tax matters can be taken by qualified majority in the Council of the EU. On the other hand, there are recommendations from citizens' panels that state that taxation is a matter for individual countries, which have their own objectives and circumstances; (ECP 13 & 31, IT 4.b.3, NL2.3)
2. Promoting cooperation between EU Member States to ensure that all companies in the EU pay their fair share of taxes; Introducing a common corporate tax base or a minimum effective rate (NL3)
3. Ensuring that companies pay taxes where profits are made; (ECP 13)
4. Ensuring that tax policy support European industry and prevents job losses in Europe; (ECP 13 & 31)
5. Give further consideration to common borrowing at EU level, with a view to creating more favourable borrowing conditions, while maintaining responsible fiscal policies at Member State level; (LT 9)
6. Strengthening oversight of the absorption and use of EU funds, including at local and municipal level. (LT 10)

"EU in the world"

17. Proposal: Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in economically strategic sectors

Objective: We propose that the EU take measures to strengthen its autonomy in key strategic sectors such as agricultural products, strategic economic goods, semiconductors, medical products, innovative digital and environmental technologies and energy, through:

Measures:

1. boosting research, development and innovation activities and collaboration on that between public and private partners
2. maintaining an ambitious trade negotiation agenda that can contribute to building resilience and diversification of supply chains, in particular for raw materials, while also sharing the benefits of trade more equally and with more partners, thereby limiting our exposure and dependency on a small number of potentially risky suppliers[14].
3. increasing the resilience of EU supply chains through fostering investment in strategic sectors in the EU, stockpiling critical productions and devices and diversifying the supply sources of critical raw materials;
4. investing further in the completion of the internal market, creating a level-playing field to make it more attractive to produce and buy these items in the European Union.
5. support to keep such products available and affordable to European consumers and reduce dependencies from outside, for example through the use of structural and regional policies, tax breaks, subsidies, infrastructure and research investments, boosting the competitiveness of SMEs as well as education programmes to keep related qualifications and jobs in Europe that are relevant to secure basic needs[15].
6. European-wide programme to support small local producers from strategic sectors across all Member States[16], making greater use of the EU programmes and financial instruments, such as InvestEU.
7. better cooperation between Member States to handle the management of supply chain risks[17]

18. Proposal: Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in energy

Objective: We propose that the EU reach more autonomy in the field of energy production and supply, in the context of the ongoing green transition by:

Measures:

1. adopting a strategy to be more autonomous in its energy production. A European body should integrate the existing European energy agencies and should coordinate the development of renewable energies and promote knowledge sharing[18]
2. actively supporting public transport and energy efficiency projects, a pan-European high-speed rail and freight network, the expansion of clean and renewable energy provision (in particular in solar and wind) and alternative technologies (such as hydrogen or waste-to-energy), as well as cultural change in urban settings from the individual car towards public transport, e-car sharing and biking[19].
3. ensuring a just and fair transition, supporting in particular vulnerable citizens, who face the greatest challenges in transitioning towards climate neutrality and who are already suffering from increasing energy prices because of energy dependency and the recent tripling of energy prices.
4. increased collaboration around the assessment of the use of nuclear energy in the ongoing green transition to renewable energy in Europe, examining the collective issues that it could solve or create, given that it is still being used by many member states[20].
5. engaging with international partners, committing them in attaining more ambitious goals to address climate change at different international fora, including G7 and G20.
6. Linking foreign trade with climate policy measures (e.g. by launching an investment package for climate-friendly technologies and innovations, including funding programmes)[21]
7. pursuing common purchases of imported energy and sustainable energy partnerships in order to reduce European energy import dependencies, specifically in the area of gas and oil and developing EU domestic sources of energy.

19. Proposal: Defining standards within and outside the EU in trade and investment relations

Objective: We propose that the EU strengthen the ethical dimension of its trade and investment relations through:

Measures:

1. preserving and reforming our multilateral rules-based international trade architecture, and partnership with like-minded democracies
2. effective and proportionate EU legislation to ensure that decent work standards are fully applied along the global value chains, including EU production and supply processes and that goods which are imported comply with qualitative ethical standards, sustainable development, and human rights standards including workers' and trade union rights, offering certification for products abiding by this EU legislation[22] and engage in an EU wide dialogue process that seeks to inform and educate on the environmental and ethical effects of policy changes in international trade
3. restrictions on the import and sale of products from countries that allow forced and child lbour, a periodically updated blacklist of companies, and promoting consumer awareness on child labour through information made by official EU channels[23].
4. following up and enforcing Trade Sustainable Development chapters (TSD) in EU Free Trade Agreements (FTA) including the possibility of a sanctions-based mechanism as a last resort.
5. reforming the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to include strong conditionality provisions and effective and appropriate monitoring, reporting and dialogue processes in order to improve the impact GSP can have on trade, human rights and development in partner countries with trade preferences to be withdrawn in case of non-compliance.

20. Proposal: Defining standards within and outside the EU in environmental policies

Objective: We propose that the EU strengthen the environmental dimension of its trade relations through:

Measures:

1. harmonising and strengthening eco-labelling and introducing a mandatory eco-score to be displayed on all products that can be bought by the consumer. The eco-score would be calculated according to emissions from production and transportation, as well as harmful content, based on a list of hazardous products. The eco-score should be managed and monitored by an EU authority[24].
2. strengthen environmental standards for the export of waste and more stringent controls and sanctions to stop illegal exports. The EU should incentivise the Member States to recycle their own waste and use it for energy production[25].
3. setting a goal of eliminating polluting packaging by promoting less packaging or more environmentally-friendly packaging[26] .establishing partnerships with developing countries, supporting their infrastructure and with mutually favourable trade deals to aid them in the transition towards green energy sources[27].
4. rewarding countries that apply high sustainability standards by offering them further access to the EU market for their sustainable goods and services, either unilaterally through the General System of Preferences GSP+, bilaterally through negotiated trade agreements, or multilaterally through initiatives in the World Trade Organisation

21. Proposal: Decision making and cohesion within the Union

Objective: We propose that the EU improve its capacity to take speedy and effective decisions, notably in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), speaking with one voice and acting as a truly global player, projecting a positive role in the world and making a difference in response to any crisis, notably through:

Measures:

1. in particular in the area of the CFSP, issues that are currently decided by way of unanimity to be changed, normally to be decided by way of a qualified majority[28].
2. basing cooperation in security and defense policy on the recently endorsed Strategic Compass and making use of the European Peace Facility[29]
3. strengthening the role of the High Representative to ensure that the EU speaks with one voice[30].
4. agreeing on a strong vision and a common strategy to consolidate the unity and decision taking capacity of the EU in order to prepare the EU for further enlargement[31].
5. ratifying recently concluded trade agreements more promptly without precluding proper examination and discussion.

22. Proposal: Transparency of the EU and its relations with the citizens

Objective: We propose that the EU, in particular in its actions at the international level, including trade negotiations, improve its accessibility for citizens through better information, education, citizen participation, and transparency of its action, notably by:

Measures:

1. strengthening links with citizens and local institutions to improve transparency, reach the citizens and communicate and consult better with them about concrete EU initiatives and at the international level[32].
2. stronger citizen participation in the EU's internationalpolitics and direct citizens' involvement events, similar to the Conference on the Future of Europe, organised on a national, local and European level[33] and with the active participation of organised civil society[34].
3. full support by all relevant stakeholders to citizens who choose to get involved in organised civil society organisations, as they did with COVID-19 and Ukraine.
4. Allocating a specific budget to develop educational programmes on the functioning of the EU and its values that it could propose to the Member States that wish, so that they can integrate them into their curricula (primary, secondary schools, and universities). In addition, a specific course on the EU and its functioning could be offered to students wishing to study in another European country through the Erasmus programme. Students choosing this course would be given priority in the allocation of said Erasmus programmes.
5. improving its media strategy by strengthening its visibility on social media and actively promote its content and encouraging innovation by promoting an accessible European social media[35].

23. Proposal: The EU as a strong actor on the world scene in peace and security

Objective: We propose that the EU continue to act to promote dialogue and guarantee peace and a rules-based international order[36], strengthening multilateralism and building on long standing EU peace initiatives which contributed to its award of the Nobel Prize in 2012, while strengthening its common security through [37]:

Measures:

1. Its joint armed forces that shall be used for self-defence purposes and preclude aggressive military action of any kind, with a capacity to provide support in times of crises including natural catastrophes. Outside European borders it could be deployed in exceptional circumstances preferably under a legal mandate from the UN Security Council and thus in compliance with international law[38], and without competing with or duplicating NATO and respecting different national relationships with NATO and undertaking an assessment of EU relations with NATO in the context of the debate on the EU's strategic autonomy.
2. Playing a leading role in building the world security order after the war in Ukraine building on the recently adopted EU

strategic compass.

3. Protecting its strategic research and its capacity in priority sectors such as the space sector, cybersecurity, the medical sector and the environment[39].
4. Strengthening the operational capabilities necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the mutual assistance clause of Art. 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, providing adequate EU protection to any member state under attack by a third country.
5. Reflect on how to counter disinformation and propaganda in an objective and factual way

24. Proposal: The EU as a strong actor on the world scene in relationship building

Objective: We propose that the EU should, in its relations with third countries:

Measures:

1. make greater use of its collective political and economic weight, speaking with one voice and acting in a unified way, without individual Member States dividing the Union through inappropriate bilateral responses[40].
2. strengthen its ability to sanction States, governments, entities, groups or organisations as well as individuals that do not comply with its fundamental principles, agreements and laws and ensuring that sanctions that already exist are quickly implemented and enforced. Sanctions against third countries should be proportional to the action that triggered them and be effective and applied in due time[41].
3. promote sustainable and rules-based trade while opening new trade and investment opportunities for European companies. While bilateral trade and investment agreements are key to promote European competitiveness, standards and rules are needed to ensure a level playing field. The EU needs to remain an active and reliable partner by negotiating, concluding and implementing trade agreements that also set high sustainability standards
4. conclude major international cooperation agreements as the EU rather than as individual countries[42].
5. reform EU trade and investment policy to relaunch global multilateralism with as objectives the creation of decent jobs and the protection of fundamental human rights, including workers' and trade union rights; the preservation of the environment and biodiversity and the conformity with the Paris Agreement on climate change; the safeguarding of high-quality public services; and the strengthening of Europe's industrial basis. The EU should contribute to a relaunch of global multilateralism, through a profound reform based on democracy and peace, solidarity and respect for human, social and environmental rights and a reinforced role for the ILO.
6. include in cooperation and investment agreement with third countries the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration and cooperation with reference to any appropriate repatriations.
7. establish partnerships with developing countries, supporting their infrastructure and with mutually favourable trade deals to aid them in the transition towards green energy sources[43].
8. develop a more effective and unified policy towards autocratic and hybrid regimes and develop partnerships with civil society organisations in such countries.

9. increase the resources of EU electoral observation missions.
10. offer a credible accession perspective for candidate and potential candidate countries to foster peace and stability in Europe and bring prosperity to millions of Europeans[44].

NOTE: Several members of the WG considered that Proposals “Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in energy” and “Transparency of the EU and its relations with the citizens” in particular were matters for other WGs. Some members wished to draw attention to other alternatives to unanimity in the Council besides QMV, such as variable geometry, opt-outs and enhanced cooperation. Some WG members advocated using the term "sustainable" instead of "ethical" in Proposal “Defining standards within and outside the EU in trade and investment relations”. There was a difference of views as to whether accession of new Member States should continue to require the unanimous agreement of all current Member States. There was a range of views as to the extent to which there should be joint armed forces. Two members mentioned the prospect of Irish unity in the event of Northern Ireland voting for it in accordance with the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, and for the EU to be prepared for such an eventuality.

"Values and rights, rule of law, security"

25. Proposal: Rule of Law, Democratic values and European identity[45]

Objective: Systematically uphold the rule of Law across all Member States, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Ensuring that the values and principles enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are non-negotiable, irreversible and sine qua non conditions for EU membership and accession. EU values must be fully upheld in all Member States also so they can act as an international standard and pole of attraction through diplomacy and dialogue. Enlargement of the EU should not undermine the EU acquis with relation to fundamental values and citizens' rights;[46]
2. Making European values tangible for EU citizens, especially through more interactive and direct involvement. To this end, the European citizenship should be strengthened for instance through a European citizenship statute providing citizen-specific rights and freedoms, as well as a statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations. European values should also be promoted through an "onboarding package" providing didactic elements and information material to citizens. Finally, a European public sphere including audiovisual and online media outlets should be developed by further EU investment, existing EU media hubs improved, and the over 500 local European liaison offices further supported;[47]
3. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights should be made universally applicable and enforceable. In addition, annual conferences on the rule of law (following the Commission' Rule of law Report) with delegations from all Member States involving randomly selected and diverse citizens, civil servants, parliamentarians, local authorities, social partners and civil society should be organised. Organisations, including civil society, which promote the rule of law on the ground should also be further supported;[48]
4. Effectively applying and evaluating the scope of the 'Conditionality Regulation' and other rule of law instruments, and considering extensions to new areas regardless of their relevance for the EU budget. Any necessary legal avenues, including Treaty changes, should be considered to punish breaches of the rule of law;[49]
5. Fostering educational and media programmes that make EU values part of migrants' integration process and encourage interactions between migrants and EU citizens, with a view to ensuring their successful integration within EU societies and to create awareness among EU citizens about migration-related issues.[50]

26. Proposal: Data Protection[51]

Objective: Guarantee a more protective and citizen-oriented data treatment policy, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Implementing in full the existing data privacy legislation and reviewing it to evaluate, if necessary, the establishment of stronger enforcement mechanisms for entities processing personal data, currently under competence of independent national data protection authorities respecting the principle of subsidiarity. Such entities should be sanctioned in a stricter way than in the current implementation of the regulation, in proportion to their annual turnover (up to 4%), also possibly through a ban on their activities, and be subject to annual independent audit;[52] [53]
2. Giving more effect to the principle of privacy by design and default, e.g. by evaluating and introducing easily understandable, concise and user-friendly harmonised data processing consent forms that clearly indicate what is necessary and what not. Users must be able to give or withdraw their consent to data processing in an easy, fast and permanent manner; [54] [55]
3. Evaluating and introducing clearer and more protective rules about the processing of minors' data, possibly in the EU GDPR, including through the creation of a special category for sensitive minors' data and the harmonization of age consent threshold within the EU Member States. While the bulk of privacy rules implementation and awareness raising should remain within Member States' remit, including through higher investment and further resources at national level, the EU should also have stronger role e.g. by creating EU competences on civic education concerning data protection; [56]
4. Better enforcing eligibility criteria for the European and national Data Protection Authorities, in terms of qualifications and suitability, to ensure the highest level of independence of their members.[57] [58]

27. Proposal: Media, Fake news, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Cybersecurity[59]

Objective: Tackle disinformation by further promoting media independence and pluralism as well as media literacy, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Introducing a legislation addressing threats to media independence through EU-wide minimum standards, including a review of the media business model to ensure the integrity and independence of the EU media market; [60]
2. Strictly enforcing EU competition rules in the media sector, in order to prevent large media monopolies and ensure media pluralism and independence from undue political, corporate and/or foreign interference. Quality journalism, with established high ethical and self-regulatory standards, should also be promoted;[61]
3. Setting up an EU body in charge of addressing and tackling targeted disinformation and interference, increasing situational awareness and strengthening fact-checking organisations as well as independent media. 'Hotlines' and websites, such as Europe Direct, where citizens as well as national media can request and be provided with fact-checked information on European politics and policies, should also be further supported and promoted more actively; [62] [63]
4. Promoting citizens' media literacy and awareness about disinformation and unintentional dissemination of fake news, including through mandatory school trainings. Member States should also be encouraged to provide adequate human and financial resources to this end; [64]
5. Building on existing initiatives, such as the Code of Practice on Disinformation and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), to require online platforms to issue clear statements about the algorithms they use (leaving users to decide whether they consent to be subjected to them) and the disinformation risks users are exposed to, while safeguarding the right for legal free speech and right to privacy. [65] [66]

28. Proposal: Media, Fake news, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Cybersecurity (bis)

Objective: A stronger role for the EU in countering cybersecurity threats, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Reinforcing the EU agency for cybersecurity (ENISA) in order to further protect individuals, organisations and institutions against cybersecurity breaches and the use of artificial intelligence for criminal purposes. Data privacy and protection of personal data should, at the same time, be safeguarded;[67] [68]
2. Enhancing the coordination of national cybersecurity authorities and making additional efforts in ensuring that EU-level rules are well implemented at national level. [69] [70]

29. Proposal: Anti-discrimination, Equality and Quality of life[71]

Objective: Take action to harmonize living conditions across the EU and improve EU citizens' socio-economic quality of life, in particular by:

Measures:

1. In consultation with experts and social partners, developing transparent quality of life indicators including economic, social and rule of law criteria , in order to establish a clear and realistic timeline for raising social standards and achieving a common EU socio-economic structure, including through implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. These should be integrated in the economic governance framework and the European semester process; [72] [73]
2. Increasing and facilitating direct public investment in education, health, housing, physical infrastructures, care for the elderly and people with disabilities. Additional investment should also aim to guarantee appropriate work/life balance for citizens. Such investment should be carried out in a fully transparent manner, allowing to track the entire process; [74]
3. Encouraging taxing large corporations, fighting access to tax havens and eliminating their existence in the EU with a view to increasing public investment in priority areas such as education (scholarships, Erasmus) and research. EU-wide fight against tax evasion should be also a way to raise funds for publically financed initiatives; [75] [76]
4. Providing EU-wide criteria on anti-discrimination in the labour market and incentivizing the hiring by private companies of people that are usually most subject to discrimination (e.g. youth, elders, women, minorities), including through subsidies, and, as a second step, temporary quotas. Social partners should be closely associated in this regard. Discrimination outside the labour market should also be prevented by law, and equality promoted; [77]
5. Ensuring the creation and facilitation of affordable kindergartens, both public and in the private sector, and free childcare for those in need of it. [78]

30. Proposal: Animal rights, Agriculture[79]

Objective: Take decisive measures to promote and guarantee a more ecological and climate-oriented agriculture, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Setting detailed, measurable and time-bound minimum criteria for the protection of farming animals, with a view to ensuring higher animal wellbeing standards in line with the introduction of sustainability objectives and on the basis of an integrated food system approach; [80] [81]
2. Introducing financial penalties for negative externalities of agricultural activity (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, use of pesticides, water overuse, long-haul transport, etc.) based on their environmental impact. Agricultural goods imported into the EU should also be gauged on that basis, including through custom duties, as a way to iron out any competitive advantage arising from lower environmental standards;[82]
3. Reducing subsidies for agricultural mass production where it does not contribute to a sustainable transition and redirect those resources to support an environmentally sustainable agriculture, whilst ensuring affordable food products. [83] [84]

"Digital Transformation"

Europe must become a world leader and standard setter in digital transformation and charter a European way to build an ethical, human-centred, transparent and safe digital society. Europe needs to be ambitious in its approach and fully use the opportunities digitalisation offers, while at the same time managing the risks and challenges brought about by digitalisation. Digitalisation touches on and must be given consideration in all areas of our society. Reference was made in this context to the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade and suggestions were made to consider a possible future Charter of Digital Rights.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine has only reinforced many of the points addressed in the proposals, such as the need for digital sovereignty, an increased focus on cyber defence and protection against disinformation. It has also made it evident that conflicts nowadays have consequences in the digital sphere, raising new issues like the long-term consequences of the seizure of personal information and the illegitimate use of that data in the future.

31. Proposal: Access to digital infrastructure[85]

Objective: Equal access to the internet is a fundamental right of every European citizen. We propose that everyone in Europe should in practice have access to the internet and to digital services, and that the sovereignty of the EU's digital infrastructure is enhanced through:

Measures:

1. Investing in high-quality and innovative 1. Investing in high-quality and innovative European digital infrastructures (including 5G and 6G being developed in Europe); (ECP1 recommendation number 40 and 47, Dutch NCP 1)
2. Ensuring fast, affordable, secure and stable internet access everywhere in the EU, including for roaming, with a priority to bring internet connection to 'white zones/ dead zones', rural areas and remote and peripheral regions in order to address the digital divide between and within Member States and make sure that no one gets left behind; (ECP1 recommendation number 17, 47 and Dutch NCP 1)
3. Advance the deployment of digital and electrical infrastructure both in public and private spaces to enable use of electric and autonomous vehicles; (WG debate)[86]
4. Taking measures to ensure there is fair and open competition and prevent monopolies, vendor lock-in, data concentration and dependence on third countries in relation to infrastructure and services, improving markets from the perspective of consumers; (ECP1 recommendation number 17)
5. Making children, families, elder people as well as vulnerable groups, a priority when it comes to access to internet and hardware, particularly in view of access to education, public services, and health; (ECP1 recommendation number 17 and WG debate)
6. Improving digital access to and accessibility of essential public and private services for citizens and businesses, for example when it comes to administrative procedures, and ensure inclusive access and support such as through help desks in relation to these services; (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)

7. Harmonising high quality digital standards and improving secure mobility of data to facilitate cross-border interoperability; (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)
8. Considering environmental impacts of digital infrastructure and digitalisation in order to make digital transformation sustainable and strive for a green digital society. (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform).

32. Proposal: Digital literacy and skills that empower people[87]

Objective: We propose that the EU ensures that all European citizens can benefit from digitalisation, by empowering them with the necessary digital skills and opportunities, through:

Measures:

1. Ensuring access to formal and non-formal digital literacy and skills training and education, including in school curricula, during all stages of life by building on existing initiatives at European level, with special focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups and elderly, enhancing digital skills of children in a manner that is compatible with their healthy development and tackling digital inequalities, including the digital gender gap; (ECP1 recommendation number 8, Italian NCP 5.2, WG debate)
2. Ensuring a healthy use of the internet by encouraging Member States to implement digital skills training for all age-groups with standard programmes and curricula set at European level concerning e.g. the risks and opportunities of the internet, online rights of users and the netiquette; (ECP1 recommendation number 47, WG debate)
3. Taking all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people and that technology is accessible to them by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. At the same time it should be ensured that essential services can also be accessed in person and by non-digital means; (ECP1 recommendation number 34 and 47)
4. The introduction of an EU certification relating to digital skills in schools that will prepare young people for the future job market; (ECP1 recommendation number 8)
5. Develop training initiatives coordinated at EU level to retrain and upskill workers to remain competitive in the job market, taking especially also account of competences and skills needed in small and medium sized enterprises and to train digital experts; (ECP1 recommendation number 8 and WG debate)
6. Awareness raising about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and help in finding jobs in the EU, such as EURES; (ECP1 recommendation number 8)
7. Increasing investments and efforts to boost digitalisation of education, including higher education. (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)

33. Proposal: Safe and trustworthy digital society – cyber security and disinformation[88]

Objective: We propose that in order to have a safe, resilient and trustworthy digital society the EU should ensure effective and swift implementation of existing legislation and have more powers to enhance cyber security, deal with illegal content and cyber criminality, counter and recover from cyber threats from non-state actors and authoritarian states, and address disinformation through:

Measures:

1. Strengthening capacities of Europol/ European Cybercrime Center in terms of financial and human resources, allowing for a more proactive approach in combatting cybercrime and building up joint European cyber defense capabilities against large scale attacks, including through better cooperation; (ECP1 recommendation number 39, Lithuanian NCP 2.6, Dutch NCP 1, WG debate)
2. Taking necessary measures to be prepared for and to recover swiftly from any large scale attacks and black-outs, by for example ensuring the existence of resilient infrastructure and alternative communication channels; (WG debate)
3. Ensuring similar sanctions and quick and effective enforcement in Member States in case of cybercrime through better coordination of local, regional and national cybersecurity centres and authorities; (ECP1 recommendation number 39)
4. Enhancing digital literacy and critical thinking as a way to counter disinformation, online threats and hate speech, as well as dark patterns and preferential pricing; (WG debate)
5. Countering disinformation by legislation and guidelines for online platforms and social media companies to address disinformation vulnerabilities and implementing transparency measures, including for example AI based algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact-checked information. When using algorithms, human beings should remain in ultimate control of decision making processes; (ECP1 recommendation number 46 and WG debate)
6. Supporting digital platforms that provide for media pluralism and provide resources and initiatives to assess the trustworthiness and impartiality of information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) and other media in full respect of the principle of media freedom and provide citizens with information about the quality of the news. (ECP1 recommendation number 46)

34. Proposal: Safe and trustworthy digital society – data protection[89]

Objective: We promote data sovereignty of individuals, better awareness and more efficient implementation and enforcement of existing data protection rules (GDPR) to enhance personal control of own data and limit misuse of data through:

Measures:

1. Better explaining data protection rules (GDPR), increasing transparency and improving communication by creating guidance on informed consent texts that use simple and clear language understandable by everyone, including more visual ways to provide consent to data use, accompanied by an information campaign and ensuring needed skills for those processing data and advising those who need assistance; (ECP1 recommendation number 42, 45 and Dutch NCP 2)
2. Ensuring that the existing prohibition of default consent on re-use or reselling of data is applied; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
3. Ensuring that requests of users for permanent data deletion are followed up on in a specific timeframe; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
4. Providing clear and as short as possible information to users on how and by whom data will be used; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
5. Ensuring compliance of non-European companies with European data protection rules; (ECP1 recommendation number 42 and 43)
6. Encouraging a certification system at EU level that reflects compliance with GDPR in an accessible, clear and simple way, and visible on websites and platforms and should be issued by an independent certifier at European level. It should not create disproportionate burdens for small and medium sized companies; (ECP1 recommendation number 44, WG debate)
7. Ensure that citizens are efficiently and swiftly helped when encountering issues with opt outs or revoking consent. To this end intrusive behavior needs to be better defined and guidelines and mechanisms for opt out and revoking data and to identify and sanction fraudsters should be developed at European level; (ECP1 recommendation number 43, and WG debate)
8. Providing for sanctions including a fine proportional to the companies' turnover and limitations of companies' operations, such as imposing temporary or definitive bans on unwanted data processing and supporting its enforcement by the European Data Protection Supervisor and national agencies. (ECP1 recommendation number 42, 43, and WG debate)

35. Proposal: Digital innovation to strengthen the social and sustainable economy[90]

Objective: We propose that the EU promotes digitalisation measures which strengthen the economy and the single market in a fair and sustainable way, increase European competitiveness in technology and innovation, enhance the digital single market for companies of all sizes and make Europe a world leader in digital transformation and in human centric digitalisation, through:

Measures:

1. The introduction or reinforcement of legislation that regulates (human-centric) 'smart working', taking into account the impact on workers' physical and mental health for example by ensuring a right to disconnect. A 'human centric' approach should incorporate the 'human in control' principle; (ECP1 recommendation number 7 and WG debate)[91]
2. EU legislation that incentivises companies to be socially responsible and to keep high quality 'smart working' jobs within Europe and thus avoiding the relocation of such jobs to lower cost countries. Incentives may be financial and/or reputational and should take into account internationally recognised environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria. To this end, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all relevant stakeholders to examine and strengthen this legislation; (ECP1 recommendation number 7)
3. Ensuring human oversight of decision-making processes involving artificial intelligence in the work place and transparency of algorithms used; giving consideration to negative impacts of illimited digital surveillance in the workplace; informing and consulting workers prior to the introduction of digital technologies that impact working conditions; ensuring that new forms of work, such as platform work, respect worker rights and provide appropriate working conditions; (WG debate)
4. Taking initiatives to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training and providing resources for ergonomic equipment for home offices; (ECP1 recommendation number 17 and WG debate)
5. Introducing a publicly accessible digital score board, creating a ranking system that indicates and compares the current level of digitalisation of EU businesses; (German NCP)
6. Achieving a strong and competitive digital economy and spread the benefits of digital transformation equitably across Europe by focusing on technology and innovation as drivers of growth, by driving world class transformative research and making room for innovation ecosystems throughout all regions by improving the operating environment of SMEs and start-ups and fair access to funding and by doing away with legal or other burdens hindering cross boarder activities. (Italian NCP 1.3, WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
7. Building a data infrastructure based on European values; implement the 'digital first' and 'once only' principle and facilitate digital and secure access to data for innovation and business; encouraging the digitalisation of public services. (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
8. Fully utilize the potential of trustworthy and responsible use of artificial intelligence, use the potential of blockchain technology and cloud services, setting safeguards and standards that ensure transparency, interoperability, generate trust, enhance ease of use and avoiding any discriminatory or biased algorithms; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)

9. Promoting open source software and its use in education and training and free access to publicly funded research and software; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
10. Introducing a European common digital identity to facilitate cross-border digital transactions and services, with a framework of European standards and guidelines providing the necessary safeguards; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
11. Assess the feasibility of digitalisation of product information for consumption and nutrition products through a standardised European app which would allow for more user-friendly access and would provide additional information on products and production chain. (ECP1 recommendation number 16)

"European democracy"

36. Proposal: Citizens information, participation and youth

Objective: Increase citizens' participation and youth involvement in the democracy at the European Union level to develop a 'full civic experience' for Europeans, ensure that their voice is heard also in between elections, and that the participation is effective. That is why the most appropriate form of participation should be considered for each topic, for example by:

1. Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens' participation mechanisms, in line with EU acquis, by better informing on them. Ideally, all the information about the participatory spaces should be summarized[92] in an integrated official website with different features.[93] A mechanism should be devised to monitor policy and legislative initiatives, which have emerged from participatory democracy processes;[94] Participatory mechanisms should be inclusive and their communication able to reach a diverse public. Attention should be paid to content material, topics and moderators' skills. They should include an analysis on the impact of the policies discussed on, inter alia, women and vulnerable persons.[95]
2. Increasing the frequency of online and offline interactions between EU institutions and its citizens through different means of interaction in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policy-making process to voice their opinions and to get feedback, and creating a charter for EU officials on citizens' participation;[96]
3. Offering a user-friendly digital platform where citizens can share ideas, put forward questions to the representatives of EU institutions and express their views on important EU matters and legislative proposals, in particular youth. The platform should also allow for online polls;[97]
4. Improving and streamlining existing mechanisms at the European, national, and local level, to make them more secure, accessible, visible and inclusive;[98]
5. Include organised civil society and regional and local authorities and existing structures such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR)[99] in the citizens' participation process;[100]
6. Create a system of local EU Councillors, as a way to reduce the distance between the EU institutions and European citizens;[101]
7. Holding Citizens' assemblies periodically, on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be incentivized. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the institutions, this should be duly justified;[102] Participation and prior involvement of citizens and civil society is an important basis for political decisions to be taken by elected representatives. The EU is founded on representative democracy: with European elections, citizens give a clear mandate to their representatives and indirectly express themselves on EU policies;[103]
8. Provide enhanced structural support, financial and otherwise, for civil society, especially for youth civil society and support local authorities in setting up local youth councils;[104] this could be achieved through a specific pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan for involvement of civil society and social partners, and a dedicated civil society strategy;[105]
9. Introduce a "Youth-check" of legislation, including both an impact assessment and a consultation mechanism with

representatives of young people, when legislation is deemed to have an impact on young people;[106]

10. Strengthening cooperation between EU legislators and civil society organisations to utilise the link between decision-makers and citizens which civil society organisations constitute;[107]
11. Summarize elements of citizens' participation in an EU Charter for the involvement of citizens in EU-affairs.

37. Proposal: Citizens information, participation and youth (bis)

Objective : Make the European Union more understandable and accessible and strengthen[108] a common European identity, in particular by:

1. Guaranteeing a minimum level of education on the EU and especially its democratic processes, including the history of European integration and European citizenship. People of all ages should be able to benefit from such programmes, which should be designed in an engaging and age appropriate manner, for instance through the development of specific programmes and educational material for children and schools;[109] and civil society organisations active in the field of non-formal education;[110]
2. Making reliable information on the EU easily accessible in an inclusive manner to all citizens. EU institutions should use more accessible language and avoid using bureaucratic terms in their communication, while at the same time maintaining the quality and expertise of the given information and adapting the information to different communication channels and audience profiles.[111] It should consider, for instance, creating a mobile application where information concerning EU policies is presented in a clear language.[112] A special effort should be made to reach out to young people through digital media, youth movements and various 'ambassadors' (organisations and individuals) explaining[113] the EU project;[114]
3. Making a greater use of artificial intelligence and translation technologies to circumvent[115] language barriers,[116] ensuring the accessibility and usability of all the digital tools for people with disabilities;[117]
4. Defending and supporting free, pluralistic and independent media, and encouraging media outlets, including public broadcasters and public news agencies and European media, to cover European affairs more regularly while respecting their freedom and independence, to ensure regular and comprehensive coverage across the EU Member States;[118] stepping up the fight against disinformation and foreign interferences, and ensure the protection of journalists;[119]
5. Bringing Europe closer to citizens by improving[120] contact points and dedicated hubs, or "Houses of Europe", at local level to provide resources, information and advice to citizens on EU matters, as well as listen to their concerns and engage in debates with associations to help spread citizens' views at European level;[121]
6. Taking further steps to strengthen common identity among Europeans, for instance through an EU fund for supporting online and offline interactions (i.e. exchanges programmes, panels, meetings) of both short and longer duration between EU citizens, creating common sports events and teams, or making Europe Day (9 May) an additional[122] European public holiday for all EU citizens.[123]

38. Proposal: Democracy and elections

Objective: Strengthen European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in European Parliament elections, fostering transnational debate on European issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives, in particular by:

1. Ensuring the protection of EU values laid down in the treaties, including the rule of law and a strong social model,[124] which are at the core of the European democracy. In its relationship with external countries, the European Union should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders. Only after achieving this, the European Union can be an ambassador of our democratic model in the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue;[125]
2. Conceiving a EU wide referendum, to be triggered by the European Parliament, in exceptional cases on matters particularly important to all European citizens;[126]
3. Amending EU electoral law to harmonise electoral conditions (voting age, election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their financing) for the European Parliament elections, as well as moving towards voting for Union-wide lists, or 'transnational lists',[X] with candidates from multiple Member States, having taken[127] into account the views expressed among citizens across the EU Member States on this issue.[128]
   - Some of the Members of the European Parliament should be elected through a European Union-wide list, the rest being elected within the Members' States;[129]
   - This reform should also aim at facilitating digital voting possibilities[130] and guaranteeing effective voting rights for persons with disabilities,[131]
4. Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens' desire to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments.[132] This is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged;[133]
   - European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the Commission. This could be achieved either by the direct election of the Commission President[134] or a lead candidate system;[XI]
   - The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative, in order to propose[135] the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations;[136]
   - European Parliament should decide on the budget of the EU as it is the right of parliaments at the national level;[XII137]
   - Political parties, civil society organisations, trade unions should be more lively and accessible in order for citizens to be

[X] European Commission representatives explained it should be implemented after a transition period, not to rush things through.

[XI] EP position: the lead candidate of the European political party that has obtained the highest share of votes at European elections, who is able to be supported by a majority of European Parliament's Members, shall be elected President of the European Commission. In case a coalition majority cannot be reached, the task should be assigned to the next lead candidate. To this end, European political parties may nominate candidates to run for the Commission President's post. Mr Paulo Rangel: in order to reinforce the lead candidate process the positions of the European Parliament and the European Council should be reversed and this implies a treaty change: the Parliament would propose and the Council would approve the President of the Commission. MDP (Final Kantar Report: "Group of contributions discusses the election of the Commission President and appointment of commissioners, including the Spitzenkandidaten system). EYE, pag. 23: "The can-didates for the President of the Commission should not be elect¬ed in backroom negotiations among winning parties. We should enforce the so-called "Spitzenkandidaten" system, where each party announces their candidate for the President of the Commission before the election campaign in the case that this party gains a majority. Through active par¬ticipation in the campaign and direct interaction with the citizens, the fu¬ture President could become more closely connected to the European population." , and discussion WG.

[XII] The Council does not consider that this proposal is based on a recommendation from the citizens. It is therefore not in line with the agreed methodology. See also Citizen component's position expressed on page 40.

more involved and engaged in European democracy.[138] This would also contribute to stimulate the inclusion of EU topics in public debates via political parties, organised civil society and social partners, not only during European elections but ahead of national, regional and local elections as well;[139]

5. Democracy is embodied in the institutions and in society at large, including in the workplace through the role of social partners.[140]

39. Proposal: EU decision making process

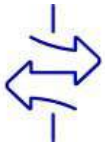
Objective: Improve the EU's decision-making process in order to ensure the EU's capability to act, while taking into account the interests of all Member States and guaranteeing a transparent and understandable process for the citizens, in particular by

1. Reassessing decision-making and voting rules in the EU institutions, focusing on the issue of unanimous voting, which makes it very difficult to reach agreement, while ensuring a fair calculation of voting 'weights' so that small countries' interests are protected;[141]
   - All issues decided by way of unanimity should be decided by way of a qualified majority. The only exceptions should be the admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU as stated in Art. 2 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.[142]
2. Ensuring transparency of decision-making by allowing independent citizens' observers to closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing broader[143] right of access to documents, and develop on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and the EU institutions;[144]
   - The EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process and institutions. For instance, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament, including its votes, should be broadcasted online in the same way. This would allow interested citizens to follow EU policy-making, and hold politicians and policy-makers accountable;[145] the European Parliament's right of inquiry should be strengthened;[146]
   - EU decision-making process should be further developed so that national, regional, local representatives, social partners and organised civil society are more involved.[147] Inter-parliamentary cooperation and dialogue should be strengthened. National parliaments should also be closer involved in the legislative procedure by the European Parliament, e.g. by way of participation in hearings.[148] In addition, a better involvement of the subnational level and of the Committee of the Regions helps to take better into account the experiences gained with the implementation of EU law.[149]
3. Considering changing the names of EU institutions to clarify their functions and respective role in the EU decision-making process for citizens;[150]
   - The EU decision making process should be based on a clearer and more understandable structure, resembling national systems,[151] explicitly reflecting the division of competences between the European institutions and the Member States;[152]
   - For example, the Council of the EU could be called the Senate of the EU and the European Commission could be called the Executive Commission of the EU.[153]
4. Enhance the European Union's delivery capacities in key important areas; [154]
5. Ensure proper civil and social dialogue mechanisms and processes at every step of the EU decision-making process, from impact assessment to policy design and implementation.[155]
6. Reform the way the European Union works by better involving social partners and organised civil society. Strengthening the existing structures in order to better reflect the needs and expectations of EU citizens in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. Within this framework, enhance the institutional role of the EESC and empower it as facilitator and guarantor of participatory democracy activities like structured dialogue with civil society organisations and Citizens' panels. A lively civil society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.[156]
7. Reopening the discussion about the

constitution, where applicable, to help us align better on our values. A constitution may help to be more precise as well as involve citizens and agree on the rules of the decision-making process;[157]

40. Proposal: Subsidiarity

1. Active subsidiarity and multilevel governance are key principles and fundamental features for the EU functioning and democratic accountability;[158]
2. The EU should review the mechanism allowing national Parliaments to assess whether new legislative proposals at the European level do not intrude on their legal competences and to be granted the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European level. Such mechanisms should also be enlarged to all regional parliaments within the EU that have legislative power;[159]
3. Reform the Committee of Regions to encompass adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role[160] in the institutional architecture, if matters with a territorial impact are concerned;[161]
4. Systematic use of a subsidiarity definition commonly agreed by all EU institutions could help to clarify whether decisions have to be taken at European, national or regional level.[162]
5. Social partners and organised civil society should be better included in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. A lively society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.[163]
6. We call on European Union institutions to make the conclusions of this working group a reality and effectively implement them. This could be realised through the possibilities the Lisbon Treaty already provides and, when necessary, by triggering the request of launching a European Convention.[164]



"Migration"

41. Proposal: Legal Migration[165]

Objective: Strengthen the EU's role on legal migration:

Measures:

1. Launching a communication campaign at a cross European level in order for EURES (European Employment Services), the EU Immigration Portal and the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals to be better known by European citizens and more frequently accessed and used by EU companies when recruiting (recommendation 6).
2. Creating a European entity for migrants' access to the EU labour market or alternatively widening the powers of the European Cooperation Network of Employment Services (EURES) for example improving the Talent Partnership projects (recommendation 7 and WG debate), with the possibility of online matching of supply and demand of skills, in the country of departure, on the basis of assessment criteria (recommendation 9 and WG debate). The EU should encourage Member States to simplify the process of reception and integration of legal migrants and their access to the EU labour market through a better interoperability amongst the different relevant administrations (WG debate).
3. Improving the functioning and implementation of the "blue card" directive to attract relevant qualifications that the EU economy needs (recommendation 7 and WG debate), taking into consideration the risk of brain drain (as in measure 1 proposal 42).
4. Promoting upwards convergence on working conditions harmoniously throughout the Union to combat inequalities of working conditions and to ensure an efficient EU labour migration policy and workers' rights. In this context, reinforce the role of trade unions at national and transnational level (recommendation 28 and WG debate), in cooperation with employers' organisations (Plenary discussion).
5. Increasing efforts to inform and educate citizens of the Member States about the topics related to migration and integration (recommendation 30 and LT recommendation 9 and WG debate).

42. Proposal: Irregular migration[166]

Objective: Strengthen the EU's role in tackling all forms of irregular migration and strengthen the protection of the European Union's external borders, while respecting human rights:

Measures:

1. Participating actively, for example through Partnership Agreements, in the economic and social development of countries outside the European Union and from where there is a high outflux of migrants to tackle migration at its root causes, including climate change. These actions should be transparent and have tangible results with measurable effects, which should be clearly communicated to EU citizens (recommendation 27 and NL recommendation 3 and WG debate).
2. Ensuring the protection of all external borders, by improving transparency and accountability of Frontex and by strengthening its role (recommendation 8 and WG debate) and adapting EU legislation to further address the present challenges of irregular migration, such as human smuggling, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, hybrid attacks by countries instrumentalising migrants and violation of human rights (LT recommendation 10 and WG debate).

43. Proposal: irregular migration[167] (bis)

Objective: Apply common rules uniformly in all Member States on the first reception of migrants:

Measures:

1. Developing EU-wide measures to guarantee the safety and health of all migrants, in particular pregnant women, children, unaccompanied minors and all vulnerable people (recommendations 10 and 38 and WG debate).
2. Increasing EU financial, logistical and operational support, also for local authorities, regional governments and civil society organisations, for the management of the first reception which would lead to a possible integration of refugees and regular migrants in the EU or repatriation of irregular migrants (recommendation 35 and WG debate).

44. Proposal: Asylum, integration[168]

Objective: Strengthen the EU's role and reform the European asylum system based on the principles of solidarity and fair share of responsibility:

Measures:

1. Adopting EU common rules concerning procedures for the examination of claims for international protection in Member States, applied uniformly to all asylum seekers. These procedures will have to be respectful of human dignity and international law (recommendation 29 and IT recommendations 3.8 and 4.4 p.15 and WG debate). As the reception of asylum seekers involves different actors at a national level, the EU should encourage Member States to simplify and speed up this process through a better interoperability amongst the different relevant administrations, and to set up a unique desk (one stop-shop or entry point) for asylum seekers to streamline national administrative procedures (recommendation 37 and WG debate).
2. Revisiting the Dublin system in order to guarantee solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility including the redistribution of migrants among Member States; additional forms of support could also be envisaged (recommendations, 33, 36, 37, 40; LT recommendations 2; IT recommendations 3.8 (p.15) and NL recommendation 2 and WG debate and Plenary discussion).
3. Enhance the minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers laid down in directive 2013/33/EU through stronger legislative measures to improve reception facilities and accommodation. (ECP recommendation 31 and IT recommendations 5.6 (p.11) and WG debate)
4. Special attention should be given to pregnant women, children, and particularly unaccompanied minors (recommendation 38 and WG debate).
5. Strengthening and increasing financial and human resources as well as management capacities of the EU Agency for Asylum to coordinate and manage the relocation of asylum seekers within the EU Member States to achieve a fair distribution (recommendations 36, 37 and LT recommendation 3 and WG debate).

45. Proposal: Asylum, integration[169] (bis)

Objective: Improve integration policies in all Member States:

Measures:

1. EU ensures, also with the involvement of local and regional authorities and the contribution of civil society organisations, that every asylum seeker and refugee, during the process of the residence procedure, attends language, integration courses, professional training, and activities (recommendation 32 and FR recommendation 13 and WG debate and Plenary discussion).
2. Asylum seekers with relevant qualifications should be given access to the labour market, when possible with the aim to strengthen their self-reliance, all over the EU (recommendation 7 and WG debate).

"Education, culture, youth and sport"

46. Proposal: Education

Objective: The EU and its Member states should seek to establish by 2025 an inclusive European Education Area within which all citizens have equal access to quality education and life-long learning, including those in rural and remote areas. To this aim, the European Union and its Member states should in particular:

Measures:

1. Coordinate the level of all different education programmes in the European Union with acceptance of the national, regional and local contents, and create closer links between the education systems, including via organising equivalence of diplomas.[170] A certified minimum standard of education in core subjects should be adopted commencing in primary school.[171] Shared competences in the field of education should be introduced, at a minimum in the field of citizenship education and the exercise of that competence by the EU shall not result in Member States being prevented from exercising theirs. Professional degrees and training should be validated and mutually recognised in all EU Member States.[172] The European Union should also champion the recognition of non-formal and informal learning[173] and the youth organisations that provide it, as well as learning periods abroad.
2. Develop future-proof education and life-long learning in Europe -in accordance with the right to free training in the workplace for all- focusing on the following subjects:

   – Civic education about democratic processes, as well as EU values and history of Europe.[174] This should be developed as a common module to be taught in all Member States. Economic literacy should also be improved as an aspect of better understanding the European integration process.[175]

   – Digital skills.[176]

   – STEAM[177]

   – Entrepreneurship and research

   – Improving critical thinking. Media literacy should be enhanced in order to ensure online safety, and empower citizens in every Member State to independently evaluate whether a piece of information is trustworthy or not, and identify fake news, but at the same time to benefit from the opportunities that the Internet offers. This should be implemented in basic education as a specific class and also be offered in other public spaces for citizens of all ages under the guidance of an EU-established dedicated organisation, drawing on best practices across the Member States. The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.[178]

   – Integrating soft skills in all the courses in the curricula in schools. By soft skills one means: listening to each other, encouraging dialogue, resilience, understanding, respect and appreciation for others, critical thinking, self-study, remaining curious, result-oriented.[179]

   – Enabling everyone to learn about environmental sustainability and its connection to health. Biodiversity should be made as a mandatory subject at school. This education should start at school with specific subjects addressing all ecological issues, and include field trips to show relevant real life examples, that should be

supported by a funding programme.[180]

- Combating bullying and racism.

3. Support the training of teachers[181], to learn from best practices and use up to date innovative and creative teaching techniques that reflect the evolution of teaching methods, including practical activities, building also on the lessons to be drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic and other kinds of crises, as well as promote opportunities for mobility.[182]
4. In order to meet the educational needs of all children and families, prioritise access to hardware and efficient broadband connectivity.[183]
5. Set up an information platform for an EU-wide exchange of knowledge and experiences, pooling information on transnational education and training courses in the EU, showcasing best practice examples and offering citizens the opportunity to present new ideas for cross-border exchange. It should offer teaching material about climate change, sustainability, environmental issues and digitisation and provide information on existing specialised forums on key topics.[184] - It could be made available together with a funding program to support the usage of, and implementation, of the information on the platform.

47. Proposal: European youth issues

Objective: The EU and its Member States have to focus on the specific needs of young people across all relevant policies, including the European Union's regional policy in order to offer them the best possible conditions for study and work and starting an independent life, while engaging them in the democratic life and decision making processes, including at European level. Youth organisations have a crucial role to play. To achieve this objective, we propose to:

Measures:

1. Offer young people more possibilities and champion existing programmes for participation and representation in the democratic and decision making processes at all levels, including by organising citizens' panels also with children (e.g. 10 to 16 years old) in schools. European representatives could meet schoolchildren in their schools in order to strengthen citizens' closeness to and understanding of Europe from an early age.[185] To ensure that all policy making at EU level is seen through a youth lens, an EU 'Youth Test' should be developed so that all new legislation and policy is subject to a youth focused impact assessment, including a consultation with young people.
2. Voting at European Parliament elections from the age of 16 should be discussed and considered, in parallel to an enhancement of citizenship education and education about the EU. National political parties should ensure that younger candidates are also put on their lists for the elections to the European Parliament.[186]
3. To better prepare young people for entering working life, give high school students (from 12 years old on) the opportunity to have high quality observatory visits in profit and non-profit organisations, in close cooperation between schools, local governments and the organisations and companies concerned,.[187] These visits should be seen as part of a broader career guidance process in formal education to allow young people to have a first contact with a professional work environment so they can obtain a professional orientation and or consider becoming an entrepreneur.
4. More significant EU financing under NextGenerationEU should also be devoted to the implementation of the reinforced European Youth Guarantee, including more

commitment, better outreach, improvements in the quality of the offer, funding and action by all Member States, and the relevant levels of authorities involved . Given youth organisations expertise in the needs of young people, national governments should collaborate in close dialogue with these organisations to ensure the most effective delivery of the Guarantee.

5. Ensure that young people's internships and jobs adhere to quality standards, including on remuneration, putting an end to youth minimum wages and any other discriminatory labour law provisions specific to young people, as well as banning through a legal instrument unpaid internships on the labour market and outside formal education.[188]
6. Ensure reasonable living standards for young people including access to social protection and housing. Young people should have access to social protection, equal to other age groups. Access to affordable housing for young people, including through EU funding, should also be facilitated.[189]
7. Specific policies are needed to avoid a brain drain from some regions and countries within the EU due to insufficient opportunities being available for young people, while making Europe more attractive to prevent the drain of European talents and workforce to third countries to prevent the hampering of territorial cohesion particularly as regards those areas which have an acute loss of young talent including through EU funding.[190]
8. In case of a serious crisis (e.g. health crisis, war) well prepared plans with detailed scenarios should be ready to deploy in a flexible way to minimise the impact on young people in their studies, vocational training, transition to the labour market and mental wellbeing.[191]

48. Proposal: Culture and exchanges

Objective: In order to promote a culture of exchange and foster European identity and European diversity across different areas, the Member States, with the support of the European Union, should:[192]

Measures:

1. Promote European exchanges in different fields, both physically and digitally, including educational exchanges, twinning, travel and professional mobility (including for teachers and local elected politicians). Such exchanges should be made accessible across Member States for all, regardless of their age, level of education, background and financial means.[193] With this overall aim, the EU should inter alia strengthen existing EU level exchange and mobility programmes, such as the European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+ and DiscoverEU, and ensure more widespread and diverse participation in these programmes and consider adding also new elements, such as an additional objective of civic service fostered through volunteering (for the European Solidarity Corps) and 'cultural passes' (for DiscoverEU). The local and regional authorities, under the auspices of the Committee of the Regions have a key role to play in this matter.
2. Promote multilingualism as a bridge to other cultures from an early age. Minority

and regional languages require additional protection, taking note of the Council of Europe Convention on Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The EU should consider setting up an institution promoting language diversity at the European level. From elementary school onwards, it should be mandatory that children reach competence in an active EU language other than their own to the highest possible level. In order to facilitate the ability of European citizens to communicate with wider groups of their fellow Europeans and as a factor of European cohesion, learning of the language of the immediate neighbouring EU Member States in cross border areas and reaching a certifiable standard in English should be encouraged by Member States.[194]

3. Create opportunities to share European cultures, bring people together and move them towards a common European identity, for instance through events and gatherings involving all target groups and taking place in various locations. Some specific examples include holding World Art days[195] a European Expo including educational events, or making Europe Day (9 May) a European public holiday for all EU citizens.[196]
4. Protect European cultural heritage and culture[197], including through recognising local and regional cultural and production peculiarities[198], new initiatives to safeguard and celebrate it, mobility to promote cultural heritage exchange, and the promotion of existing measures such as Creative Europe, the New European Bauhaus, Sister City Programmes and European Capitals of Culture in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. Take steps to ensure that cultural professionals are sufficiently protected at EU level, particularly in any future crises, by adopting a legal statute at European level.

49. Proposal: Sport

Objective: Sport is crucial for our societies - in order to defend our values, ensure healthy lifestyle and ageing, promote a culture of exchanges and also celebrate the diversity of European heritage. For this reason, the Member States, with the support of the European Union, should aim to:

Measures:

1. Put emphasis on values, especially gender equality, fairness and inclusiveness that can be concretely reflected through sport practice throughout education.
2. Raise awareness about health benefits of sport and physical activity.[199]
3. Include sport activities among EU level exchange and mobility programmes.[200]
4. Improve attention given not just to professional and commercial sports but also to local and traditional sport, as an aspect of European Cultural Diversity and cultural heritage promotion, and champion support for sports in a non-professional setting.
5. At the same time, encourage the showcasing of European identity by organising more inter-EU sports events, creating EU sports teams, or displaying EU flags or symbols at European sporting events.
6. Invest more in communication efforts such as the European Week of Sports to ensure that citizens from across the EU can benefit from flagship opportunities together.

Final considerations of the Executive Board

The overarching purpose of the Conference on the Future of Europe was to make the European Union fit for present and future challenges by providing an opportunity for citizens to articulate their concerns and ambitions and, together with representatives of the three Institutions, national parliaments and other stakeholders, to provide guidance for the future. To achieve this objective, the Conference had to be a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise, creating a new space to debate Europe's challenges and priorities and to develop an overview of what citizens expect from the European Union.

The Conference has indeed played this role. European citizens from all walks of life and corners of the Union participated in the Conference and produced Citizens' Panels' recommendations as well as, together with the subsequent Plenary including members from the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission, as well as representatives from all national parliaments, the Committee of the Regions, regional and local elected representatives, the European Economic and Social Committee, social partners, civil society and other key stakeholders, proposals for the future of Europe. The tools and methodology developed for this process provided a unique set of resources that could form the basis for future exercises in citizen engagement and deliberative democracy at EU level.

Through a multitude of events and debates organised across the Union, the interactive multilingual digital platform, the European and National Citizens' Panels, and the Conference Plenary, the Conference has now delivered a final report, including an overview of this year-long intensive work, as well as the proposals formulated by the Plenary for the future of Europe. These proposals make very clear that the EU must act to achieve the green and digital transitions, strengthen Europe's resilience and its social contract, while addressing inequalities and ensuring that the European Union is a fair, sustainable, innovative and competitive economy that leaves no one behind. The geopolitical developments during the Conference, and especially the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, have also shown that the EU needs to be more assertive, taking a leading global role in promoting its values and standards in a world increasingly in turmoil.

The Conference has provided a clear direction in these areas and the three EU Institutions now need to examine how to follow up on the concerns, ambitions, and ideas expressed. The next step in this process is to come up with concrete EU action building on the outcome of the Conference, contained in this final report. EU institutions will now therefore examine this report and its follow-up, each within the framework of their competences and in accordance with the Treaties. A feedback event will take place to update citizens in autumn 2022 on how the Institutions will live up to their commitment to ensure that European citizens are listened to and hold, in their hands, the future of Europe.

Endnotes

[1] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: #3, #17, #18, #19

[2] # = European Citizens' Panel's Recommendation

[3] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: #39, #40, #41, #42, #43, #49, NL1, NL2, #51

[4] National Citizens' Panel's Recommendation

[5] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: #44, #45, #46, #47, #50

[6] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: #39, #40, #45, #48, #49, #50, #51, FRchange8, FRwish11, NL2, NL3

[7] Dutch citizens' panel recommendations differ from the European citizen's panel recommendations, stating that health and healthcare should be primarily a national responsibility [NL3].

[8] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1: 9, 10, 11, 12, 14; The Netherlands: 1; Italy: 1.1,; Lithuania: 3, 8.

[9] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1: 10, 11 & 14; Germany: 2.1, 2.2; The Netherlands: 1, 2; France: 3, 9; Italy: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 4.a.2, 6.1; Lithuania: 1, 7.

[10] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1: 1, 2, 7, 28, 30; Germany: 4.1, 4.2; The Netherlands: 4; France: 6; Italy: 5.a.1, 5.a.4, 6.1, 6.2.

[11] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1: 19, 20, 21, 25; Italy: 4.a.1.

[12] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1: 21, 22, 23, 26, 27; Italy: 5.a.1.

[13] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1: 13, 31; The Netherlands: 2.3; Italy: 4.b.3, 4.b.6; Lithuania: 9, 10.

[14] From debates in Working Group and Plenary

[15] See Recommendation 1 from ECP4, Recommendation 2 from NCP Germany Panel 1 "EU in the World", and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Rec1, further developed in WG

[16] See Recommendation 4 from ECP4 and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Recs 5 and 6, further developed in WG

[17] See Digital Platform and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Recs 2 and 3, further developed in WG

[18] See Recommendation 14 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[19] See Recommendation 2 from ECP4 and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Rec4, further developed in WG

[20] See Recommendation 17 from ECP4 and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Rec4, further developed in WG

[21] See Recommendation 1 NCP Germany, Panel 1 "EU in the World", further developed in WG

[22] See Recommendation 3 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[23] See Recommendation 11 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[24] See Recommendation 13 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[25] See Recommendation 15 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[26] See Recommendation 16 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[27] See Recommendation 12 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[28] See Recommendation 21 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[29] See Digital Platform, further developed in WG

[30] See Digital Platform, further developed in WG

[31] See Recommendation 26 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[32] See Recommendation 18 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[33] See Recommendation 19 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[34] See Recommendation 19 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[35] See Recommendation 25 from ECP4

[36] From debate in Working Group and Plenary

[37] See Change 2 from the French national panel/events

[38] See Recommendation 20 from ECP4 and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Rec 7, further developed in WG

[39] See Change 2 from French National Citizens' Panel

[40] See Recommendation 24 from ECP4 and NCP Italy Cluster 2, Rec 7, further developed in WG

[41] See Recommendation 22 from ECP4, further developed in WG

[42] See Recommendation 1 on EU in World from Dutch National Citizens' Panel, further developed in WG

[43] See Digital Platform and Plenary Debates, further developed in WG

[44] See Digital Platform, further developed in WG

[45] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 2 (ECP2): 10, 11, 14, 30; Belgium National Citizens' Panel (NCP): 1.3.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.3; Germany NCP: 5.1, 5.2; The Netherlands NCP: 1.2.

[46] ECP2 recommendation number 14. Belgian NCP recommendation number 1.3.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.3. Dutch NCP recommendation 1.2.

[47] ECP2 recommendation number 11. German NCP recommendation number 5.1, 5.2. WG debate.

[48] ECP2 recommendation number 11. WG debate. Plenary debate.

[49] ECP2 recommendation number 10.

[50] ECP2 recommendation number 30

[51] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: ECP2: 7, 8, 9; The Netherlands NCP: 1.3, 4.3.

[52] ECP2 recommendation number 7. WG debate.

[53] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[54] ECP2 recommendation number 9

[55] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[56] ECP2 recommendation number 8. Dutch NCP recommendation number 1.3, 4.3.

[57] ECP2 recommendation number 7, 8

[58] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[59] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: ECP2: 5, 12, 13, 17, 28; Belgium NCP: 1.5.1, 2.1.1 up to 2.4.3; The Netherlands NCP: 3.1

[60] ECP2 recommendation number 5. Belgian NCP recommendation number 2.1.1. Dutch NCP recommendation 3.1

[61] ECP2 recommendation number 12. Belgian NCP recommendation 2.1.4.

[62] ECP2 recommendation number 17 and 28. Belgian NCP recommendation number 1.5.1, 2.1.3, 2.2.1., 2.2.2

[63] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[64] ECP2 recommendation number 5 and 28. Belgian NCP recommendation 2.3.2, 2.3.3

[65] ECP 2 recommendation number 28. Belgian NPC recommendation 2.3.1., 2.4.1., 2.4.2

[66] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[67] ECP2 recommendation number 13

[68] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[69] ECP2 recommendation number 13

[70] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Digital Transformation

[71] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: ECP2: 1, 2, 21, 22, 23; The Netherlands NCP: 1.1

[72] ECP2 recommendation number 22. WG debate

[73] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Stronger economy, social justice and jobs

[74] ECP2 recommendation number 21. Dutch NCP recommendation number 1.1.

[75] ECP2 recommendation number 23

[76] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Stronger economy, social justice and jobs

[77] ECP2 recommendation number 1. WG debate

[78] ECP2 recommendation number 2. WG debate

[79] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: ECP2: 3, 4, 6

[80] ECP2 recommendation number 3

[81] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Climate change and the environment

[82] ECP2 recommendation number 4

[83] ECP2 recommendation number 6

[84] Issue also covered by the Working Group on Climate change and the environment

[85] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 17, 40, 47; National Citizens Panels (NCP) The Netherlands 1

[86] See link to ECP 3, Rec 38 in relation to infrastructure for electrical vehicles

[87] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 8, 34, 47, National Citizens Panels (NCP) Italy 5.2

[88] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 39, 46, National Citizens Panels (NCP) Lithuania 2.6, The Netherlands 1

[89] National Citizens Panels (NCP) The Netherlands 2

[90] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 7, 16, 17, National Citizens Panels (NCP) Germany and Italy 1.3

[91] See link with Working Group on Stronger Economy

[92] Changes WG 3A and 3B

[93] ECP2 Recommendation 32, 37, BE, FR and NL National Panels

[94] FR National Panel

[95] Change WG 8, shorter formulation

[96] ECP2 Recommendation 29

[97] ECP2 Recommendation 19, 32, BE, FR National Panels and DK representative of national events

[98] BE National panel

[99] Change WG 7B

[100] BE National panel

[101] Final Kantar Report, pag. 85

[102] ECP2 Recommendation 39, BE National Panel 3

[103] Change WG 10A, shorter formulation

[104] DK representative of national events

[105] Change WG 54C

[106] DK representative of national events

[107] DK representative of national events

[108] Change WG 15 A, compromise formulation

[109] ECP2 Recommendation 24, 36, 38, BE National Panel

[110] Change WG 16 C

[111] ECP2 33, BE FR and NL National panels)

[112] ECP2 26

[113] Change WG 17

[114] BE National Panel

[115] Change WG 18A

[116] ECP2 Recommendation 25

[117] Change WG 18B

[118] ECP2 Recommendation 31, BE and NL National Panels

[119] Changes 19A to 19A, reformulation to fit text

[120] Change WG 21, compromise

[121] BE and FR National Panels

[122] Change WG 23B

[123] ECP2 Recommendation 27, BE National Panel

[124] Change WG 25C

[125] ECP Recommendations 14

[126] ECP Recommendation 18; N.B. citizens representatives explained it should be carefully implemented and used

[127] Changes WG 28 E,G,H

[128] ECP2 Recommendation 16, NL National Panel 20, National Panel was divided on " transnational lists"

[129] Based on ECP2 Recommendation 16, Discussion in WG

[130] ECP2 Recommendation 19 and MDP

[131] European Economic and Social Committee

[132] Change WG 32B

[133] ECP2 Recommendation 36, BE and FR National Panels

[134] FR National Panel ("electing the President of the European Commission by universal suffrage"), MDP (Final Kantar Report: Group of contributions discusses the direct election of the Commission President by citizens)

[135] Change WG 34C

[136] BE National Panel (3.2), FR National Panel (11),- MDP (Final Kantar Report: "Regarding the European Parliament, contributors most often call for it to be granted real powers of legislative initiative")

[137] MDP (Final Kantar Report: "Regarding the European Parliament, (…) There are also calls for it to be granted fiscal powers")

[138] MDP (Final Kantar Report: "According to another contribution, parties should become more accessible to people from different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds")

[139] Committee of the Regions in WG

[140] Change WG 38, compromise formulation

[141] ECP2 Recommendation 20

[142] ECP4 Recommendation 21

[143] Change WG 43

[144] ECP2 Recommendation 34, NL National Panel

[145] Discussion in WG based ECP2 Recommendation 34, NL National Panel, MPD (Final Kantar Report: "Increased transparency and greater involvement of the citizens is supported" in EU decision-making process is also supported

[146] Change WG 44A.

[147] WG discussion(presentation by National Parliaments and Committee of the Regions)

[148] Change WG 45C

[149] Change WG 46B

[150] ECP2 Recommendation 15

[151] Discussion WG based on need expressed in ECP2 15 to "clarify EU institutions functions", MDP (Final Kantar Report: "There are also (…) suggestions to deepen the bicameral legislature in the EU"

[152] Change WG 48B

[153] ECP2 recommendation 15

[154] Discussions in the WG

[155] Change WG 52A

[156] EESC, compromise formulation

[157] ECP Recommendation 35, FR National Panel, plus changes WG combined 51C,D

[158] Change WG 53D

[159] Discussion in WG, National Parliaments

[160] Discussion in WG, CoR and EESC; Final Kantar Report, pag. 85

[161] Change WG 58B

[162] Change WG 59B

[163] Discussion in the WG, Social partners and several other members

[164] Change WG 63A, compromise formulation

[165] Citizens' recommendations in which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 4 (ECP4) 6, 7, 9, 28, 30; Lithuania 9

[166] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based : European Citizens' Panel 4 (ECP 4) 8, 27, Lithuania 10, The Netherlands 3

[167] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 4 (ECP 4) 10, 35, 38

[168] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 4 (ECP 4) 29, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40; Italy 3.8 and 4.4 (p.15) and 5.6 (p.11), Lithuania 2 and 3, The Netherlands 1 and 2.

[169] Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 4 (ECP 4) 7 and 32, France Change 13.

[170] French NCP Change 6.

[171] ECP 1 recommendation no 37.

[172] ECP recommendations no 3. French NCP Change 6.

[173] ECP 1 recommendation no 41.

[174] Covered in more detail by WG on European democracy. See ECP 2 recommendation no 24, Belgian NCP recommendation no 1.1, 1.2 and 2.12 and Italian NCP recommendation on “inclusion policies”.

[175] Italian NCP recommendation-on “inclusion policies”.

[176] Covered in more detail by WG on Digital Transformation. See ECP 1 recommendations no 8 and 34.

[177] Italian NCP recommendation on “Encouraging young people to study science subjects”.

[178] ECP 1 recommendations no 33 and 48. Covered also by WG on Digital Transformation. See ECP 1 recommendation no 47 on healthy use of internet.

[179] ECP 1 recommendation no 5.

[180] ECP 1 recommendation no 15 and 18.

[181] Italian NCP recommendation on “Europe in the world”

[182] ECP 1 recommendations no 18 and 41 and Italian NCP recommendation on 'Investing in the training of trainers'.

[183] ECP 1 recommendation no 17, allocated as a whole to the WG on digital.

[184] ECP 1 recommendation no 15. German NCP recommendation on 'Information platform for an EU-wide exchange of knowledge and experiences'.

[185] Belgian NCP, recommendations 6.1. French NCP, Change 7.

[186] Belgian NCP, recommendation 7.2.

[187] ECP 1 recommendation no 4.

[188] Suggestion to complement ECP 1 recommendations no 1 and 30 covered by the WG on Stronger Economy, Social Justice and Jobs.

[189] Suggestion to complement ECP 1 recommendation no 25 covered by the WG on Stronger Economy, Social Justice and Jobs.

[190] ECP 4 recommendation no 28. Dutch NCP (‘Our vision of culture, youth and sport’), recommendation no 1. French NCP, Change 6.

[191] ECP 1 recommendation no 6.

[192] Dutch NCP (‘Our vision of culture, youth and sport’), recommendation no 2.

[193] ECP 1 recommendation no 36. French NCP, Change 6. Belgian NCP, recommendations no 2.10 and 2.11. German NCP, ‘Creating more exchange opportunities for students in Europe’. Dutch NCP (‘Our vision of culture, youth and sport’), recommendations no 1 and 3. Italian NCP, recommendation on 'Acting as a confluence between East and West, promoting cultural exchanges and joint cultural initiatives'

[194] ECP 1 recommendations no 32 and 38. Dutch NCP (‘Our vision of culture, youth and sport’), recommendation no 3

[195] Italian NCP recommendation on “Europe in the World"

[196] French NCP, Change 7. Belgian NCP, recommendations no 2.5, 6.1 and 8.7. Italian NCP, recommendation on 'Enhancement of European values, cultural traits as well as regional specificities'.

[197] Dutch NCP (‘Our vision of culture, youth and sport’), recommendation no 2.

[198] Italian NCP recommendation on “overcoming the 20th century production model”

[199] ECP 1 recommendation no 29.

[200] ECP 1 recommendation no 36.

Stream 3: Redirecting our economy
and consumption
26
Substream 3.1: Regulating overproduction and overconsumption

Annexes

ANNEXES

I - Recommendations of the four European Citizens' Panels

Conference on the Future of Europe

European Citizens' Panel 1:

"Stronger economy, social justice and jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation"

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE PANEL (TO BE TAKEN FORWARD TO THE PLENARY)

Stream 1: Working in Europe

Substream 1.1 Labour Market

1. **We recommend the introduction of a minimum wage to ensure similar quality of living across all Member States. We acknowledge the existing efforts in the EU directive COM(2020) 682 to standardise the way of living. The minimum wage needs to secure a minimum net income to achieve an essential objective: everyone in need should have more money to spend. The minimum wage should take into consideration the following aspects:**
    - **The EU should ensure the effective implementation because currently not all Member States apply worker protection adequately.**
    - **Special attention should be put on monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living.**
    - **The minimum wage must factor in the purchasing power in different countries. A regular review cycle is necessary to adjust for the changing cost of living (e.g. by inflation).**

    We recommend this because a minimum wage enhances social justice in the labour market and improves the concrete living conditions of employees in all Member States. This is especially important in the context of a fast changing working environment, e.g. by digitalisation.

2. **There is already an EU regulation (EU´s Working Time Directive - 2003/88/EC) in place. However, it is not sufficient to ensure a healthy work life balance. As a first step, we recommend that the existing framework needs a review if it is adequate for the current circumstances. Secondly, the EU should establish a stricter monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation in all Member States. Special attention needs to be paid to different sectors that have different levels of stress and burdens, both psychologically and physically. However, at the same time, other sectors rely on more flexibility from their employees to adjust for specific corporate needs.**

We recommend this because an improved work-life balance is important because it enhances social cohesion and contributes to a level playing field among employees. Also, it positively affects the individual well-being of employees.

Substream 1.2 Youth and Employment

3. **We recommend the harmonisation of the level of all different education programs in the EU with acceptance of the national content. Accordingly, we recommend that the professional degrees are validated and mutually recognised in all EU Member States.**

   We recommend this because we want to facilitate European labour mobility and reduce the administrative burden.

4. **We recommend that high school students (from 12 years old on) should have an insight into their future labour market by giving them the opportunity to have several high quality observatory visits in profit and non-profit organisations. We propose to encourage companies to accept observing students by granting them subsidies. In remote areas where there is less opportunity, local schools, governments, organisations and companies must work closely together to realise that those observatory visits are also effective.**

   We recommend this because we want youngsters to gain insight into the different possibilities in the labour market so that they can make a better choice for their studies and their professional future and understand the importance of the right study. It also teaches them what responsibility is and that they should have respect for the labour market. It will help youngsters with the integration in the labour market. It is a win-win situation for both sites.

5. **We recommend that practising soft skills should be integrated in all the courses in the curricula in schools. By soft skills we mean: listening to each other, encouraging dialogue, resilience, understanding, respect and appreciation for others, critical thinking, self-study, remaining curious, result-oriented. Teachers should be trained in the transmission of these skills by collaborating closely with social workers and/or psychologists. Other suggestions for execution: organise exchange programs for students between schools, organise participation in sports and cultural events cross-schools etc.**

We recommend this because soft skills are basic skills needed, which are lost in the digital age and are absolutely necessary in the future life of our youth. Therefore we stress bringing them in the curriculum so it helps them to be resilient and helps them to avoid and overcome mental issues they might experience in their future life. Social skills strengthen inter-human relations and therefore help people find their place in society.

6. **We recommend that in case of a serious crisis (e.g. health crisis, war, etc.) well prepared plans with detailed scenarios are ready to deploy in a flexible way to minimise the impact on our youngsters in their studies, vocational training, mental wellbeing etc. By impact we mean: higher cost of studying or training, obliged prolongation of studies, internships that could not be carried out, increase of mental health problems. The scripts have to be rolled out to minimise the impact on youngsters and their transition to the labour market.**

   We recommend this because the position of the youngsters is very vulnerable in times of crisis.

Substream 1.3 Digitalization at Work

7. **We recommend that the EU introduces or reinforces existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' [= working online and remotely, e.g. home office or from another location connected online]. Further, we recommend that the EU legislates to incentivise companies to be socially responsible and to keep high-quality 'smart working' jobs within the EU. The incentives can be financial and/or reputational, and should take into account existing internationally recognised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. For this to happen, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all interested stakeholders to explore and strengthen such legislation.**

   We recommend this because we need to promote high quality 'smart working' jobs and avoid their relocation to lower-cost, non-EU countries. The Covid-19 pandemic and the global economic trends increase the urgency to protect jobs in the EU and regulate ‘smart working’.

8. **We recommend that the EU guarantees the right to digital training for all EU citizens. In particular, young people's digital skills could be boosted with the introduction of an EU certification in schools that would prepare them for the future job market. We also recommend specific training at the EU level to re-train and up-skill workers to remain competitive in the job market. Lastly, we recommend the EU raises more awareness about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and to help them find jobs in the EU, e.g. EURES.**

   We recommend this because certified digital skills are fundamental for people to enter the job market and for workers to re-skill and stay competitive.

Stream 2: An Economy for the Future

Substream 2.1 Innovation and European Competitiveness

9. **We recommend that the EU creates opportunities for different entities (universities, corporations, research institutes, etc.) to invest in research and innovation aiming to develop:**
   - **new materials, intended to serve as more sustainable and biodiverse alternatives to those currently in use,**
   - **innovative uses of existing materials (also based on recycling and state-of-the-art techniques which have the smallest environmental footprint).**

   We recommend this to be an ongoing, long-term commitment from the EU (at least until 2050).

   We recommend this because we live on a planet with finite resources. If we want to have a future, we need to protect the climate and look for planet-friendly alternatives. We also want the EU to become a leader in this field with a strong, competitive advantage in the international arena. The intention of the recommendation is to produce innovative results that can be applied broadly and implemented across various fields and countries. It would also positively impact the economy and the labour market by creating new job opportunities in the field of sustainable innovation. It could contribute to combating social injustices by replacing current, exploitative production means with new, more ethical ones.

10. **We recommend that the EU makes a long term, ongoing commitment to largely increase its share of sustainably sourced energy, using a diverse range of renewable sources that have the lowest environmental footprint (based on a holistic life-cycle assessment). Furthermore, the EU should invest in improving and maintaining the quality of electrical infrastructure and the electrical grid. We also recommend that access to energy and energy affordability are recognised as a basic right of citizens.**

    We recommend this because:
    - Diversifying energy sources (including solar, wind, hydrogen, seawater, or any future sustainable methods) would make the EU more energy-independent,
    - it would lower electricity costs for EU citizens,
    - it would create jobs and restructure the energy market (especially in regions that were thus far dependent on fossil fuels),
    - it could encourage scientific development of innovative techniques of energy sourcing,
    - the quality of the electric infrastructure and the electrical grid are as important as energy sources, allowing for smooth, efficient, and affordable distribution and transport of energy.

11. **We recommend that the EU actively promotes greener production processes, through subsidising or otherwise rewarding companies that invest in lowering the environmental costs of their production. Furthermore, we require an effort to recultivate post-industrial sites and establish protected green zones around existing sites. Companies should be required to finance these efforts, at least in part, from their own pocket.**

    We recommend this because production processes are an important element in the supply chain. Making them more environmentally friendly could greatly reduce our climate impact. We believe companies and industries should be held accountable for how they produce their products (including recultivation and environmental protection measures). Making production processes greener also prepares companies for the future and makes them more resilient (which protects jobs).

Substream 2.2 Sustainable Economy / Substream 2.3 Taxation

12. **We recommend that plastic containers are abandoned and to generalise reusable ones. There should be incentives for consumers and companies, so it will not be more expensive to buy goods in bulk ("en vrac" in French or "sfuso" in Italian) for a consumer as opposed to packaged ones. Companies contributing to this transition should have fiscal benefits and those that do not should pay more taxes. For those products that cannot be reused, they should be recyclable and/or biodegradable. A public or oversight institution to monitor everything is required, to set the rules and to share them with everyone. It is recommended to educate, communicate - also through social media - about these actions to both companies and consumers to change their behaviours in the long term. Companies should be encouraged and helped to find the best solutions with their own waste (construction companies for example).**

    We recommend this because we all have to be responsible for our actions. So we have to rethink all production processes. Recycling requires a lot of resources (water, energy), so it cannot be the only answer. This is why we propose to commercialise bulk goods. Recycling should only be used for easily recyclable materials. And we know with the Finnish example that it is possible to recycle a very large part.

13. **We recommend having the same fiscal rules in Europe and harmonising fiscal policy across all the EU. Tax harmonisation should allow leeway for individual Member States to set their own tax rules but still prevent tax evasion. It will end harmful fiscal practices and tax competition. Taxes should concern commercial transactions in the location where they occur. When a company sells in a country they should pay taxes in this particular country. These new rules would aim to prevent delocalisation and ensure that the transactions and production take place between European countries.**

    We recommend this to protect and develop jobs, economic activities in Europe and with equity between the Member States. It will bring a common understanding within Europe of the fiscal system. It intends to end the absurd monopoly situation of giant companies who do not pay enough taxes compared to smaller companies. It will also bring the money where commercial activities are carried out.

14. **We recommend getting rid of the system of planned obsolescence of all electronic devices. Change should happen both on an individual and commercial level, to guarantee that we can own, repair, and upgrade in the long term. We recommend the promotion of refurbished devices. Through regulation, it would be compulsory for companies to guarantee the right to repair, including upgrades and software updates, and to recycle all devices in the long term. It is also recommended that every company should use standardised connectors.**

    We recommend this because in the modern world, products tend to last 2 years, we want them to have a much longer lifespan of about 10 years. This proposition will have a positive impact on climate change and ecology. It will also reduce costs for consumers and reduce consumerism.

15. **We recommend helping everyone to learn about our environment and its connection to everyone's individual health through education. Educational courses will help everyone to define their own personal strategies to integrate these topics into their lives. This education should start at school with specific subjects addressing all ecological issues, and we should continue to be educated throughout our entire lives (at work for instance). It will contribute to reducing waste and protecting the environment and human health. This education will promote local consumption of healthy and non processed products, sourced from local producers. Those who do not act to reduce waste will have to take a free training course on these issues. To enable this lifestyle adaptation, prices need to be fair for the producer and the consumer. Consequently, we propose that small, local and environmentally friendly producers will have tax exemptions.**

    We recommend this because we believe that many people do not yet feel concerned by these issues. This is why we need education about this for everyone. Furthermore, local and healthy products tend to be unaffordable for many. We have to ensure that locally made products are more widely available to all.

Substream 2.4 Agriculture / Substream 2.5 Digital Infrastructure

16. **We recommend the implementation of a common European easy-to-understand labelling system for consumption and nutrition products (the information would contain allergens, country of origin, etc), transparency about ongoing approval processes, digitalisation of product information through a standardised European app which would allow for more user friendly access and would provide additional information on products and production chain. We also see the need for a truly independent body that regulates food standards across the EU, that has legislative powers, so as to be able to apply sanctions.**

    We recommend this because EU citizens should expect the same standard of food. The integrity of food products is a necessity to ensure the safety of citizens. These recommendations have been made to enhance the approval monitoring and transparency of food production in a harmonised way.

17. **We recommend infrastructure to be a state asset to prevent the rise of telecommunications and internet service monopolies. It should be a right to have access to the internet, it should be a priority to bring internet connection to 'whitezones / dead zones' (areas with no internet access). Children and families are a priority when it comes to accessing the internet and hardware, particularly in terms of education, and especially in times of a pandemic. An initiative is needed to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training.**

    We recommend this because we must ensure that the digital transformation is done in an equitable manner. Access to the internet is fundamental to democracy and is a right of all European citizens.

18. **We recommend local insects to be respected and protected against invasive species. We also propose to incentivise and advocate for new construction developments to have obligatory green spaces. We call for the introduction of biodiversity as a mandatory subject in schools through the use of curricular activities, e.g. through practical activities. It is important to highlight awareness for biodiversity through the use of media campaigns and incentivised 'competitions' across the EU (local community scale competitions). We recommend the establishment of binding national targets across the EU Member States for reforestation of native trees and local flora.**

We recommend this because biodiversity is key for the environment, the quality of life and to combat climate change.

Stream 3: A Just Society

Substream 3.1 Social Security

19. **We recommend promoting social policies and equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory.**

    We recommend this because there are big disparities between Member States regarding social policies that need to be reduced to achieve a decent life for all citizens, and to carry out the care and support needed by vulnerable people for various reasons (health, age, sexual orientation, etc.).

20. **We recommend promoting research in social matters and health in the EU, following priority lines that are considered to be of public interest and agreed on by the Member States, and providing the appropriate funding. We need to reinforce collaboration across fields of expertise, across countries, centres of studies (universities, etc.).**

    We recommend this because there are many areas in which we need to advance and deepen our knowledge. The pandemic experience shows us an example in which research is essential to improve life and in which public-private and government-to-government collaboration is essential and financial support is necessary.

21. **We recommend the EU should have stronger competences in social policies to harmonise and establish minimum rules and pension benefits across the EU based on a thorough diagnosis. Minimum pension needs to be above the poverty line of the country. The retirement age should differ based on categorisation of professions with mentally and physically demanding professions being able to retire earlier. At the same time, there should be a guaranteed right to work for the elderly who wish to continue working on a volunteer basis.**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing. The European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

22. **We recommend a set of agreed measures to encourage an increase in the birth rate as well as to ensure appropriate childcare. These measures include, among others, affordable and accessible childcare (at the workplace, overnight, reducing the VAT on child equipment), housing, stable work, supporting motherhood, specific support and protection of work for young people and parents and supporting mothers and fathers with access to knowledge at the return to work.**

    We recommend this because the low birth rates in the EU stand out which further contributes to the ageing of the European population and on which immediate measures should be taken. The proposed set of measures aims to ensure stability for young families necessary to provide for children.

23. **We recommend to guarantee social and health care for the elderly at home as well as in nursing homes. In addition, there is a need for improved support for those who take care of elderly (relatives).**

    We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing, the European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

24. **We recommend the EU should support palliative care and assisted death [euthanasia] following a concrete set of rules and regulations.**

    We recommend this because it would reduce the pain of the patients and families and it would ensure a decent end of life.

Substream 3.2 Equal Rights

25. **We recommend the EU to support targeted access to decent social housing for citizens, according to their specific needs. Financial effort should be shared among private funders, landlords, housing beneficiaries, Member State governments at central and local levels, and the European Union. The aim should be to facilitate the construction/repairing of the existing social housing stock, including by cooperative association, rental, and purchase. The support should be granted based on clear criteria (e.g., the max. surface/person to be subsidised, incomes of the beneficiaries etc.).**

    We recommend this because improved housing access would ensure that EU citizens benefit from tangible equal rights. It would help to ease social tensions. While the EU is mainly called upon to oversee the support mechanism, national and local authorities should more actively solve the housing problems.

26. **We recommend that the EU improves the regulation and uniform implementation of support measures for families with children in all Member States. Such measures include: increasing the length of parental leave, childbirth and childcare allowances.**

    We recommend this because we think that the measures would alleviate the demographic problem that the EU is facing. They would also improve gender equality between parents.

27. **We recommend that the EU takes action to guarantee that all families enjoy equal family rights in all Member States. Such rights include the right to marriage and adoption.**

    We recommend this because we think all EU citizens should enjoy equal rights, including family rights. The family is the basic form of social organisation. A happy family contributes to a healthy society. The recommendation aims to ensure that all citizens enjoy family rights regardless of their gender, adult age, ethnicity, or physical health condition.

Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports

28. **We recommend that the 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy is strongly prioritised and incentivised as an urgent matter that is effectively addressed by Member States. The EU should (a) define indicators (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and (b) put an Ombudsman in place to get feedback directly from citizens.**

    We recommend this because we think that gender equality is far from what we would like to see in the EU. There should be harmony in gender equality and civil rights at European level, so that they are achieved in all countries, and not only in the ones with a stronger compromise with the topic. We value the presence and contribution of women in power positions, and in any kind of profession, in order to have a diverse and fulfilling EU. Women are disadvantaged in many situations (even in the case they have good/ higher education or other privileges), so such a strategy is strongly needed.

29. **We recommend that the EU promotes and raises awareness of sports and physical activity in all Member States due to its health benefits. Sport and physical activity should be included within social, physical and mental health, education and labour policies (i.e. promote sports and/or physical prescription by doctors and, when done, guarantee access to sports facilities; 1 hour of working time/week for physical activity, etc.).**

    We recommend this because it is an investment in the long term. Investing in sport and physical activity reduces costs and burdens to health services. For example, sport and physical activity as a health intervention would shorten treatment periods and make the treatment more effective. This is already being implemented successfully in some countries like Germany. Sports are a way to build values like commitment, effort, self-esteem, respect or companionship. Sedentary lifestyles are now more common than previous generations due to more desk jobs, and/or change habits in leisure among others.

30. **We recommend that the EU should obligate every Member State to have a defined minimum wage related to the cost of living in that state and is considered a fair salary that can allow minimum life conditions, over the poverty line. Each Member State must monitor this.**

    We recommend this because it is not fair that you cannot reach the end of the month if you are working. Fair salaries should contribute to life quality at a social level. Unfair wages have a high cost for the states (security, tax avoidance, higher social costs, etc.).

31. **We recommend tax harmonisation in the Member States within the EU (to avoid tax havens within EU, and to target offshoring within Europe), and a tax incentive to discourage offshoring of jobs outside of Europe.**

    We recommend this because we are worried about the impact of offshoring jobs outside of Europe, and this would prevent tax competition between Member States of the EU.

Stream 4: Learning in Europe

Substream 4.1 European Identity / Substream 4.2 Digital Education

32. **We recommend promoting multilingualism from an early age, for example, starting in kindergarten. From elementary school onwards, it should be mandatory that children reach a C1 level in a second active EU language other than their own.**

    We recommend this because multilingualism is a tool that connects people and is a bridge to other cultures, as it makes other countries and their cultures more accessible. It strengthens European identity and intercultural exchange. It is important to get to know the other cultures in the context of the European Union. Therefore, being able to converse in two languages at a great level would help create a common European identity and understanding of other European cultures. The EU must ensure that there is close cooperation between itself and educational institutions to develop successful educational outcomes. In addition, there needs to be a dedicated program (e.g. digital platforms, expanded Erasmus+ programs, etc.) to exclusively promote multilingualism. The current European Schools can serve as a model in this regard. The EU should establish more such schools and actively promote them.

33. **We recommend that the EU raises more awareness about the dangers of the internet and digitalisation for young people through the creation of a mandatory subject in elementary school. The EU should create tools and establish common training spaces for young people to learn together.**

    We recommend this because the current initiatives or programs in this area are not sufficient. Moreover, many EU citizens are not aware of existing EU initiatives in these areas. Children are not sufficiently aware of the dangers of the Internet, so we should do much more to promote and raise awareness amongst the younger generation.

34. **We recommend that the EU put effort into making technology more accessible to the older generation by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. The EU should guarantee the right to use digitalisation for those who wish it and propose alternatives for those who do not.**

    We recommend this because the EU should ensure that older people can participate in the digital world and that no one is discriminated against. Simplified tools should be introduced for generations that are not as experienced with the use of certain technologies in order to integrate them into today's world. We recommend that initiatives that already exist be better promoted, so that citizens are aware of those opportunities. The EU should not discriminate against the older generations concerning the use of computer tools. (As a side note, this means that citizens should be able to live their lives without being obligated to go through an internet network). The EU should organise and make free permanent assistance available to older generations to facilitate access to digital tools.

Substream 4.3 Cultural Exchange / Substream 4.4 Environmental Education

35. **We recommend that the EU creates a platform on which teaching material about climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues will be made available for educational purposes. This information should be fact-based, checked by experts, and tailored to every Member State. The platform:**
    - **Should include lessons for multiple target groups; for example people who live in an urban or a rural context, for all age groups, and for all levels of prior knowledge,**
    - **Must be available to all Member States and should be easily accessible,**
    - **In its implementation it should include a plan for promotion; this should be done in collaboration with relevant companies,**

- **Could be made available together with a funding program to support the usage of, and implementation, of the information on the platform. This funding should also provide support for field trips to show relevant real life examples.**

We recommend this because people of all ages need access to fact-based information on how to address climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues. Important concepts, e.g. the ecological footprint, must be understood by everyone, particularly young people, since what we learn as children is used throughout our lives. These topics are complex and misinformation is widespread. We need a source that is trustworthy and the EU has the credibility and resources to provide this. This is also important because knowledge levels and easy access to credible information differs across Member States.

36. **We recommend that the EU prioritise making exchange programs accessible for all (age groups, Member States, levels of education, and people with different financial capabilities) and allow for exchanges or internships between sectors, countries, educational institutions, cities, and companies. The EU should be responsible for initiating, mediating, and funding cultural and social exchanges across the EU - both physically and digitally. The EU must actively promote these initiatives and target people who are not already aware of cultural and social exchange programs. The Conference on the Future of Europe, in which people were randomly selected, is the perfect example of a European exchange. We want more of this - but also initiatives of a smaller scale, as well as exchanges within sports, music, (social) internships, etc.**

We recommend this because it is important to create a feeling of togetherness and cohesion, and to advance tolerance for all our beautiful differences/different perspectives, as well as for the development of individual skills. In the process this will enable the development of friendships, mutual understanding, and critical thinking. We would like to promote the engagement of all members of our communities, even those that have not been involved in such initiatives to date.

Substream 4.5 Quality, Finance and Access to Education / Substream 4.6 Harmonisation of Education

37. **We recommend that all Member States agree and adopt a certified minimum standard of education in core subjects commencing in primary school. This is to ensure that all citizens have equal access to a standard quality of education, ensuring fairness and equality.**

We recommend this because:

- The presence of a minimum standard would give parents, teachers and students greater confidence in their education systems while leaving capacity for initiative and diversity.
- If implemented our recommendation would reinforce and strengthen a common European identity, fostering togetherness, unity and sense of belonging.
- Implementation of this recommendation would generate greater cooperation and exchange between schools across the EU and this would improve relations between teaching staff and pupils and assist greatly with exchange programmes.

38. **We recommend that English is taught, to a certifiable standard, as a core subject in primary schools across all EU Member States in order to facilitate and strengthen the ability of European citizens to communicate effectively.**

We recommend this because:

- This would provide greater unity and equality through increasing citizens' abilities to communicate with each other and support a stronger common European identity.
- This would allow for a broader, flexible and more accessible labour market allowing citizens the confidence to work and communicate in all other Member States providing greater personal and professional opportunities.
- A commonly held European language could be achieved in a very short period of time were this to be implemented.
- The use of a common language expedites information sharing which would benefit cooperation, reacting to crises together, aid humanitarian efforts and bring Europe and Europeans closer.

Stream 5: An Ethical and Safe Digital Transformation

Substream 5.1 Democratisation of Digitalisation / Substream 5.2 Cyber Security

39. **We recommend that the EU should have more powers to deal with illegal content and cyber criminality. We recommend the strengthening of capacities in Europol/the European Cybercrime Centre including:**
    - **Increased financial resources and manpower**
    - **Ensuring punishment in similar ways in each country**
    - **Ensuring that enforcement should be quick and effective**

    We recommend this to guarantee freedom on the Internet, while ensuring that discrimination, abuse and harassment are punished. We support the idea of having a European public body because we do not want to leave the regulation of online platforms solely to private companies. Online platforms have to take responsibility for the content that is distributed, but we want to make sure that their interests do not come first. The regulation of content and the prosecution of those responsible must be effective and swift, so that it also has a deterrent effect on the criminals.

40. **We recommend that the EU should invest in high-quality and innovative digital infrastructures (such as 5G being developed in Europe) in order to ensure Europe's autonomy and prevent dependence on other countries or private companies. The EU should also pay attention to investment in underdeveloped regions of the EU.**

    We recommend this because digital infrastructure plays a vital role in Europe's economy and in facilitating everyday life in Europe. Europe therefore needs high quality digital infrastructure. If Europe is dependent on others it may be vulnerable to negative influences by private companies or foreign countries. Europe should therefore invest in digital infrastructures to improve its autonomy. It is also important to ensure digital inclusion by making sure that less digitally developed regions receive investment.

41. **We recommend that the EU promotes education on fake news, disinformation, and online safety across Europe's schools. It should draw on examples of best practices from across the EU. The EU should establish an organisation specifically to promote this work and to provide recommendations to education systems. It should also promote non-formal education as well as innovative and creative teaching techniques (e.g. participative games).**

We recommend this because introducing lessons on online safety and digital safety literacy (dealing with online scams, false information etc.) at school are important to give everyone the tools to protect themselves from online threats. It is important to target the younger generation as they are very exposed to online threats. Schools can also communicate with parents to promote good practices. This course can draw from examples of best practice across Europe (e.g. such as Finland) while also being adaptable for each country's needs.

Substream 5.3 Data Protection

42. We recommend further limiting the misuse of data by 'data giants' through better enforcement of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and creating more standardised mechanisms throughout the EU and by ensuring that even non-European companies that operate in the EU comply with it. The improvement should require clear and short explanation of terms of use to avoid ambiguity, provide more information on how and by whom it will be used, avoiding default consent to re-use and resell of data. It should ensure that data is permanently deleted when a citizen requests it. It also should improve enforcement of consistent compliance around profiling of individuals based on their online activities. We propose two types of sanction: a fine proportional to the company's turnover, limitations of company's operations.

We recommend this because currently there is very limited transparency on what kind of data is collected, how it is processed, and to whom it is sold to. We need to further limit the abuse of power by data giants and make sure that consent citizens give for data processing is well-informed.

43. We recommend creating an independent pan-EU agency that would have to clearly define intrusive behaviour (e.g. spam) and create guidelines and mechanisms for how citizens can opt-out and revoke data, especially from third parties. It must have a mandate to identify and sanction fraudsters and non-compliant organisations. It should work on ensuring compliance with the EU regulations for non-EU based entities operating in the EU. It would be funded by the EU institutions and composed of a mixed council of independent bodies (i.e. experts from universities and entities representing professionals). It should have a rotation praesidium. We propose two types of sanctions: a fine proportional to the companies' turnover, limitations of companies' operations.

We recommend this because there is no central agency with a strong mandate that can help citizens especially when they have an issue and need help, advising, or support. There are no clear and mandatory rules for companies to follow and sanctions are either not enforced or negligible for the companies.

44. **We recommend creating an EU certification system that would reflect compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in a transparent way and it should ensure that information on data protection is presented in an accessible, clear, and simple way. This certificate would be mandatory and visible on websites and platforms. This certificate should be issued by an independent certifier at European level, possibly existing or specially created, which is not linked to national governments or the private sector.**

    We recommend this because there is currently no or little transparency about how well data is protected by each company and users / customers cannot make informed choices.

45. **We recommend better explaining GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and improving communication around it by creating standard text on compliance that uses simple and clear language understandable by everyone. This text should present a core message and/or core principles. The process of providing consent should be more visual (i.e. like an App that asks explicit permission for access on the phone). It should be accompanied by an information campaign (including on TV) and consistently providing mandatory courses (at least those who work with data) and advising those who need assistance.**

    We recommend this because at the moment, the language of GDPR is too vague and technical, the amount of information is overwhelming, and is not accessible for everyone. The communication is also not similar across different countries and it often excludes different cohorts mainly elderly people and non-digital natives.

Substream 5.4 Healthy Digitalisation

46. **We recommend that the EU addresses the problem of 'fake news' through two means:**
    - **Legislation for social media companies to implement machine-learning algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact-checked information. We recommend that the algorithms are kept in check by experts to ensure their well-functioning;**
    - **The implementation of a digital platform that rates the information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) independently from political and economic interests, and informs citizens about the quality of the news without applying any kind of censorship. The platform should be open to public scrutiny and adhere to the highest standards of transparency, and the EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used for the intended purposes.**

    We recommend this because different types of media need to be addressed and we believe that sanctions or removing content could lead to censorship and infringe on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. We recommend that experts check and monitor the proper functioning of the algorithm to ensure its proper working. Finally, we recommend that the platform should be apolitical and independent to ensure transparency and freedom of expression. Furthermore, since it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, providing these tools to citizens will help to diminish their effects in Europe.

47. **We recommend that the EU implements different actions in order to ensure a healthy use of internet:**
    - **First of all, the EU must address the lack of infrastructures and devices that prevents citizens from accessing the Internet.**
    - **Then, we also recommend that the EU encourages the Member States to implement training about the internet and its risks for all age-groups. This could be done by introducing classes in schools for children and young people, and creating different programs and curricula to reach adult and elder citizens. The content of these classes should be decided at the European level by a group of independent experts.**
    - **Finally, we demand that the EU takes all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people, ensuring that essential services can also be accessed in person.**

- **The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because there is a lack of infrastructure and hardware (e.g. devices) in some places in Europe, and connection needs to be ensured before educating citizens, as we know there are certain regions and profiles that have limitations on internet access. We recommend classes in order to help children achieve digital literacy, to include other programs to help older generations in this digital transformation and to take the needed measures to reassure that elderly population's rights are not diminished by the digital transformation.

48. We recommend that the European Union promotes the education of citizens in every Member State to improve critical thinking, scepticism and fact-checking in order to teach them how to evaluate independently whether a piece of information is trustworthy or not. This should be implemented in basic education as a specific class and it should also be offered in other public spaces for citizens of all ages that willingly want to profit from this training. The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.

We recommend this because we think that it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, so this training will help the citizens to recognise them by themselves. By doing so, the effects of fake news on society and on the citizens themselves will be lessened. This would also give the individuals more agency, rather than depending on the institutions to acquire reliable information.

Annex: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL AND NOT ADOPTED

Stream 3: A Just Society

Substream 3.2 Equal Rights

We recommend that the EU creates a mechanism to ensure the monitoring and enforcement of minority rights (e.g., a portal or office where people might lodge complaints).

We recommend this because we believe that every individual can express their opinion and has the right to seek and receive help. Such an office is necessary in order to reduce the tension between minorities and the majority.

Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports

We recommend that the EU should raise awareness of physical activity by "role modelling" through public figures (e.g. Parliament events should include some form of physical activity or gesture for a few seconds like stretching, walk the talk or jumping).

We recommend this because engagement from public figures on physical activity will raise awareness.

Stream 5: An Ethical and Safe Digital Transformation

Substream 5.3 Data Protection

We recommend creating a Web ID that will store personal and sensitive data but will make it available only to the authorities and the police. Online platforms and sellers will use online code associated with a Web ID and the data that is relevant for a given activity. The default setting for data sharing through this ID should be non-consent. The data should be only given to the parties directly involved and not a 3rd party. If the data is given to a 3rd party a citizen should be able to easily opt out. The data should be available only for a limited time or a specific transaction. The authorisation to use data should have expiration or clear definition on what actions that can be taken by a company with this data.

We recommend this because at the moment companies can harvest all the data including personal and sensitive data and can use it for many purposes without disclosing how and why exactly. So, the actors get more information than they actually need to provide us with services and then can re-sell or re-use other data without our consent. At the same time it will guarantee accountability of internet users while preserving their relative anonymity.

Conference on the Future of Europe

European Citizens' Panel 2: "European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security"

Recommendations

Photo © Union européenne, 2021 – EP/Kenton Thatcher

Conference on the Future of Europe
European Citizens' Panel 2:
"European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security"

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE PANEL (TO BE TAKEN FORWARD TO THE PLENARY)

Stream 1 Ensuring rights and non-discrimination

Substream 1.1 Non-discrimination / Substream 1.2 Gender equality

1. "We recommend that the EU provides criteria on anti-discrimination in the labour market (quotas for youth, elders, women, minorities). If companies fulfil the criteria, they get subsidies or tax breaks".
We recommend enhancing employee's awareness about:

- **supranational and national institutions (e.g. trade unions).**
- **mechanisms which ensure companies respect existing rules on non-discrimination in the workplace.**
- **qualification programmes for social groups that suffer discrimination in the job market (youth, elders, women, minorities).**

We recommend the adoption of a two-stage EU law. First, provide subsidies to hire employees from certain categories susceptible to discrimination. Second, the law should oblige employers to employ such groups for a minimum period."

This is because the EU is responsible for maintaining a balance between free market interests and the protection of vulnerable categories, which should be legally safeguarded. Heterogeneous groups are desirable for companies as they offer diverse qualifications. Subsidies are an additional incentive to be provided to companies.

2. "We recommend the EU creates an incentive programme that facilitates the creation of affordable kindergartens and playgrounds in big and small companies. Shared facilities are also a viable option for smaller firms to get the subsidy.
We recommend the EU forces companies to create kindergartens in a manner proportional to the number of employees."

We recommend this because uniting family life and professional life improves job performances, reduces unemployment, and brings parents, especially women, in a situation that enables them to continue their career. Stressing the social dimension, the proposed solution guarantees the safety of the children and reduces parental anxieties.

Substream 1.3 Protecting human rights and the rights of nature and animals

3. "We recommend to safeguard animals' wellbeing and sustainability in farming by amending directive 98/58 EC *concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes*. More detailed minimum criteria must be defined. It should be specific, measurable, and time bound. The minimum criteria should be set in a way that leads to higher animal wellbeing standards and at the same time enables a transition towards a climate and environmental sustainability and ecological agriculture".

We, as citizens, believe that it is important to have stronger minimum standards to be harmonized within the EU regarding animal farming. We are aware that the transition might pose problems in some agricultural sectors that benefit from subsidies, and for those are in transition to ecological and sustainable farming. However we find it very important to ensure that this transition happens.

4. "We recommend to promote more environment and climate-friendly agriculture in Europe and world-wide by taxing all negative emissions, pesticides and extreme use of water, etc... , based on their environmental burden. Custom duties on all agricultural goods that are imported into the EU must eliminate competitive advantages of third countries without the same standards as the EU. To promote animal-friendly agriculture, we recommend that emissions caused by long range transport of animals should be taxed".

By establishing such a system we believe it is possible to support the transition towards a climate and environmental-friendly agriculture.

5. "In the actual context of many fake news, we recommend to promote more independent, objective and balanced media coverage by: 1. Developing at EU level a minimum standards directive for media independence. 2. Promoting at EU level the development of media competences for every citizen".

The EU must produce a directive to ensure the independence of the media and freedom of speech.

6. "We recommend to stop subsidising agricultural mass-production if it does not lead to a transition towards a climate, environmentally sustainable and ecological agriculture. Instead we recommend to redirect the subsidies to support a sustainable transition".

Instead of subsidising the agricultural sector of mass farming, the subsidies should be redirected to farms that are in transition to comply with the new minimum standards for animal welfare.

Substream 1.4 Right to privacy

7. "**We recommend that entities that process personal data shall be licensed at EU level. These entities shall also be subject to independent, external annual data protection audit. These entities shall be punished for data protection violations proportionally to their annual turnover in a stricter way than under the current regulation. The license should be lifted after two consecutive violations, and immediately after a serious violation".**

We recommend all this because current regulations (GDPR) are not sufficient and entities need to be better monitored and sanctioned to make sure they do not violate data protection and the right to privacy.

8. "**We recommend strengthening the EU competence in: 1) data protection education, 2) data protection raising awareness and 3) protecting personal data of minors. We recommend providing clearer and stricter rules about processing data of minors in the GDPR, including consent rules, age verification and control by legal guardians. We also recommend to introduce in the GDPR a special category for sensitive minors' data (e.g. criminal record, health information, nudity) so that minors are protected from any form of abuse and discrimination".**

This recommendation is needed because minors are especially vulnerable to data protection and privacy violations and currently there is no sufficient data protection awareness among the general population, especially minors, teachers and legal guardians. They all need to learn how to use online and offline data related services and how to protect childrens' privacy rights. Moreover, legal guardians often may consent to the processing of children's data without being fully aware or informed and children may fake parental consent. Last but not least, this recommendation is needed because a proper EU-wide data protection awareness campaign targeted specifically to minors, legal guardians and teachers does not exist, despite its crucial importance.

9. "**We recommend introducing standardized privacy policies and easily understandable, concise and user-friendly consent forms that clearly indicate what data processing is strictly necessary and what is optional. We recommend that removing consent should be easy, fast and permanent. We recommend forbidding entities to limit their services more than necessary if there is no consent to optional data processing".**

We recommend this because current EU rules are not precise enough, withdrawal from consent is lengthy, temporary and complex, and because entities do not have interest in offering their services to citizens who reclaim their data protection rights.

Stream 2: Protecting democracy and the rule of law

Substream 2.1 Protecting rule of law

10. **"We recommend that the conditionality regulation (2020/2092, adopted on 16 December 2020) is amended so that it applies to all breaches of the rule of law rather than only to breaches affecting the EU budget"**.

The conditionality regulation allows for the suspension of EU funds to Member States breaching the rule of law. However, under the current formulation it only applies to breaches that affect, or risk affecting, the EU budget. Furthermore, the current phrasing of the conditionality regulation is self-protective of the EU's budget and of the EU's institutions rather than the citizens of the Member States concerned. Therefore, we recommend changing the current text of the regulation so that it covers all violations of the rule of law.

11. **"We recommend that the EU organises annual conferences on the rule of law following the publication of the annual Rule of Law Report (the Commission's mechanism for monitoring compliance with the rule of law by the Member States). Member States should be obligated to send socially diverse national delegations to the conference that include both citizens and civil servants".**

This conference would foster dialogue among EU citizens on rule of law issues as well as dialogue between citizens and experts drafting the annual Rule of Law Reports. We believe that in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and sharing the participants can take best practices and ideas back to their home countries. Furthermore, the conference would bring awareness and understanding to the principle of the rule of law and to the findings and process behind the annual Rule of Law Report. It would also capture the attention of the media, as well as allow citizens to share their experiences and compare them against the findings in the Report.

Substream 2.2 Protecting and strengthening democracy / Substream 2.4 Media and disinformation

12. "We recommend that the EU enforces its competition rules in the media sector more strictly to ensure that media pluralism is protected in all Member States. The EU should prevent large media monopolies and political appointment processes for media outlet boards. We also recommend that the upcoming EU Media Freedom act entails rules on preventing politicians from owning media outlets or having a strong influence on their content".

We recommend this because enforcing EU competition rules fosters a pluralist media landscape where citizens have a choice. Since the Commission is currently developing a law (Media Freedom Act) for the integrity of the EU media market, this law should also reflect that media outlets should not be owned or influenced by politicians.

Substream 2.3 Security

13. "We recommend the EU institutions to play a stronger role with all the tools at their disposal, including national centres for cybersecurity and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), to protect individuals, organizations and institutions against new threats coming from cybersecurity breaches and the use of Artificial intelligence for criminal purposes. We further recommend that the directives coming from Europe and its agencies are correctly implemented and disseminated in all Member States".

We recommend this because citizens feel helpless and are not aware of what is done by the European Union to combat these threats. We recommend this because these threats are a serious national and European security concern. We recommend this because Europe should be a true innovator in this field.

14. "We recommend that, in its relationship with external countries, the European Union should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders. We recommend that only after achieving this, the European Union can be an ambassador of our democratic model in the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue".

We recommend this because we have to look inwards before looking outwards. Because Europe can and should support Member States to strengthen their democracies. Because it is also by leading by example and supporting external countries' efforts towards democracy that we protect ourselves.

Stream 3: Reforming the EU

Substream 3.1 Institutional reform

15. "We recommend changing the names of EU institutions to clarify their functions. For example, the Council of the European Union could be called the Senate of the European Union. The European Commission could be called the Executive Commission of the European Union".

We recommend this because it is currently hard for citizens to understand the roles and functions of each institution of the European Union. Their names do not reflect their functions. Citizens cannot be expected to distinguish the Council of the European Union, the European Council and the Council of Europe. It is important to avoid overlap.

16. "We recommend adopting an election law for the European Parliament that harmonizes electoral conditions (voting age, election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their financing). European citizens should have the right to vote for different European Union level parties that each consist of candidates from multiple Member States. During a sufficient transition period, citizens could still vote for both national and transnational parties".

We recommend this because the European Union needs to build a sense of unity, which could be achieved by a truly unified election of the European Parliament. This common election will hold accountable the Members of the European Parliament and to focus the election campaign on shared European topics.

Substream 3.2 Decision-making

17. "We recommend to create an online platform where citizens can find and request fact-checked information. The platform should be clearly associated with EU institutions, should be structured by topics and should be easily accessible (e.g., including a telephone hotline). Citizens should be able to ask critical questions to experts (e.g., academics, journalists) and get factual answers with sources".

Free access to factual information is of highest value for our society, so as citizens are well informed and protected against fake news and disinformation. We need a credible and independent source of information that is not influenced by political, economic and national interests. Moreover, the platform can establish a bridge (i.e., a direct relationship) between citizens and the EU.

18. “We recommend that there should be an EU-wide referendum in exceptional cases on extremely important matters to all European citizens. The referendum should be triggered by the European Parliament and should be legally binding”.

There should be more direct influence of EU citizens on important decisions on EU-wide matters. However, referendums should only be held in exceptional circumstances because the costs are too high to hold them regularly. We are aware that this recommendation might require a treaty change and the adaptation of national constitutions.

19. “**We recommend creating a multifunctional digital platform where citizens can vote in online elections and polls. Citizens should be able to give their reasoning behind their vote on important issues and legislative proposals coming from European institutions. The platform should be secure, widely accessible and highly visible to each and every citizen”.**

The objective of this platform is to increase participation in European politics and facilitate citizens' access to consultation and voting processes. Existing tools and processes are not visible enough, and this is why we need a new integrated tool for these different functions. More participation leads to better decisions, more trust among European citizens, and to a better functioning of the European Union overall.

20. “**We recommend that the voting systems in the EU institutions should be reassessed focusing on the issue of unanimous voting. Voting 'weight' should be calculated fairly, so that small countries' interests are protected”.**

Unanimous voting poses a significant challenge to decision making in the EU. The large number of member states makes it very difficult to reach agreement. If necessary, European treaties should change to address the issue of unanimity.

Substream 3.3 Closer integration

21. "**We recommend the EU to make public investments which lead to the creation of appropriate jobs and to the improvement and harmonisation of quality of life across the EU, between Member States, and within Member States (i.e. at the regional level). There is a need to ensure supervision, transparency and effective communication towards citizens in the implementation of public investments and to allow citizens to track the entire process of investment. Investments into quality of life include education, health, housing, physical infrastructures, care for the elderly and people with disabilities, taking into account the needs of every Member State. Additional investments should strive to establish a good balance between appropriate work and personal life in order to allow a healthy lifestyle".**

We recommend this because harmonising the level of life across the EU will improve economic progress across the EU, which will lead towards a unified EU. This is a fundamental indicator towards further integration of the EU. Although some of these mechanisms are already in place, we feel there is still room for further improvement.

22. "**We recommend establishing a common basis, according to a set of economic indicators and indicators on quality of life, for all Member States, with the same opportunities and with everyone being at the same level to reach a common economic structure. It is important that the establishment of a common basis follows a clear and realistic timeline set by institutions at the recommendation of experts. Experts should also be consulted on how such a common economic structure should look like. It is also important that indicators defining the common basis are further defined with help of experts".**

We recommend this because if we have a just EU, we will have a more united Europe. To be just, we need to offer equal opportunities and a common basis to all of the EU. A common economic structure can only be reached once a common basis is established.

23. "**We recommend taxing big corporations and income from big corporations to contribute to public investments, and to use the taxation to invest into education and development of each country (R&D, scholarships - Erasmus etc.). It is also important to focus on eliminating the existence of tax havens in the EU".**

We recommend this because it will help to prevent tax evasion and creation of tax havens and to help with compliance of legislation.

Stream 4: Building European identity

Substream 4.1 Education on democracy

24. "**We recommend that education on democracy in the European Union should strive to improve and achieve a minimum standard of knowledge across all Member States. This education should include, but not be confined to, democratic processes and general information on the EU which should be taught in all EU Member States. This education should be further enriched by a set of differing concepts teaching the democratic process, which should be engaging and age appropriate".**

This recommendation and the reasons which justify it are important because, if implemented, it will lead towards a more harmonious and democratic life in the European Union. The justifications are as follows: young people would be educated on democratic processes; this education could limit populism and disinformation in public debate; lead to less discrimination; and finally educate and involve citizens in democracy beyond just their duty to vote.

25. "**We recommend that existing and emerging translation technologies such as artificial intelligence are further developed, improved and made more accessible so as to reduce language barriers and strengthen common identity and democracy in the European Union".**

This recommendation and the reasons which justify it are important because, if implemented, it will help to build a common European identity by improving communication between citizens of all Member States.

26. "**We recommend that verifiable information be made easily accessible, in understandable terms, to citizens via a mobile device application in order to improve transparency, public deliberation and democracy. This app could disseminate information regarding, for example, legislation, discussions within the EU, treaty changes etc".**

This recommendation and the reasons which justify it are important because, if implemented, it will facilitate communication in terms of more informed deliberation between citizens of the respective Member States, via an app which could have many different functions. This app should be designed to be relevant to all, as well as to stimulate further curiosity and make technical information more accessible and engaging. The app should be understood as a supplementary source, which disseminates information officially verified directly by the EU to improve trust, transparency in public debate and to help to build a common European identity.

Substream 4.2 European values and identity

27. "**We recommend that the EU creates a special fund for online and offline interactions (i.e. exchanges programmes, panels, meetings) of both short and longer duration between EU citizens, in order to strengthen the European identity. The participants should be representative of the society from within EU that would include targeted groups based on various criteria, ie. demographic, socio-economic and occupation criteria. The goals of this fund need to be clearly specified in order to stimulate the European identity and the fund needs to be evaluated on a regular basis".**

We recommend this because these kinds of interactions enable citizens to share ideas, and longer exchanges enable them to understand the different cultures and to share experiences, including professional practices. An EU fund is needed because it is important that everyone can participate, including those who generally do not participate.

28. "**We recommend that the EU invests in countering disinformation swiftly, by supporting existing organisations and initiatives, such as the Code of Practice on Disinformation and the European Digital Media Observatory, and similar initiatives in the Member States. The counter-measures could include fact-checking, creating awareness about disinformation, providing easily accessible statistics, appropriately sanctioning those who spread disinformation based on a legal framework, and tackling the sources of disinformation".**

This recommendation is important because misinformation and disinformation, coming from within and outside of the EU, create conflicts among EU citizens, polarise the society, put democracy at risk and damage the economy. Given the complexity of the topic, significant human and financial resources are needed.

29. "**We recommend 1) to increase the frequency of online and offline interactions between the EU and its citizens (ie. by asking citizens directly about EU matters and by creating an user-friendly platform to ensure that every citizen can interact with EU institutions and EU officials), and 2) in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policy-making process, to voice their opinions and to get feedbacks, we recommend to create a charter or a code of conduct or guidelines for EU officials. Different means of interactions should exist so that every citizen can participate".**

We recommend this because several means to reach EU institutions exist (online platforms, representatives bodies), but they are not known, not effective and not transparent. There are huge differences in accessibility between countries. More frequent and better quality interactions will lead to a sense of ownership of EU citizenship.

30. "**We recommend that European identity and values (ie. rule of law, democracy and solidarity) should receive a special place within the migrants' integration process. Possible measures could include creating programmes or supporting already existing (local) programmes, to encourage social interactions between migrants and EU citizens or involving companies in the programmes supporting the integration of migrants. At the same time, similar programmes should be initiated in order to create awareness among EU citizens about migration-related issues".**

This recommendation is important because social interaction programmes can support migrants in their new life and enable non-migrants to have insight in the daily life of migrants. If migrants live in ghettos, there is no possibility to integrate them into the society of the country and of the EU. A common policy is needed because once migrants enter EU territory, they can go to every country within the EU. Local initiatives should be supported because local governments will use the funds more effectively in comparison to national level.

Substream 4.3 Information about EU

31. "**We recommend that the EU provides more information and news to European citizens. It should use any means that are necessary while respecting freedom and independence of the media. It should provide media outlets with resources as well as a broad and reliable information about EU activities and policies. The EU should guarantee that the information is broadcasted evenly across all Member States by National and European media and should ensure that Member States encourage public broadcasters and public news agencies to cover European affairs".**

We recommend this because based on our personal experience and based on the data from Eurobarometer, the majority of European citizens are informed through the traditional media (press, radio and television) and the information currently offered in these channels about the EU is very scarce. The media, particularly the public, have a public service function, so reporting on EU issues that affect the European population is essential and indispensable to fulfill that function. We recommend that the information issued in the different Member States about the EU be the same in order to promote integration and avoid different information on different issues in each country. Using the already existing media channels is more feasible, and less expensive than creating a new channel and achieves the same outcome. The pre-existing channels also have the advantage that they are already known by citizens. No citizen should need to choose between different channels to be able to access different (national or European) content.

32. "**We recommend the EU to create and advertise multilingual online forums and offline meetings where citizens can launch discussions with EU representatives, no matter the topic and no matter the geographical scope of the issue raised. Those online forums and offline meetings should have a defined short-term time limit in which responses to the questions are received. All the information about these spaces should be centralized in an integrated official website with different features; such as a frequently asked questions space, the possibility to share ideas, proposals or concerns with other citizens and with a mechanism to identify the most supported ones. In any case, access to it should be easy and a non-bureaucratic language should be used".**

We recommend this because it will create a direct channel between European citizens and European representatives to talk and engage together, giving the citizens an easy access to information about the EU and making them more aware of the existing information. It will create a more transparent and open EU and will help citizens to share their problems and thoughts, receive answers and policy solutions and allow them to engage and share perspectives and experiences with other citizens.

33. "**We recommend the EU institutions and representatives to use a more accessible language *and avoid using bureaucratic terms in their communications while, at the same time, maintaining the quality and expertise of the given information.* The EU should also adapt the information it provides to citizens with different communication channels and audience profiles (e.g. newspapers, television, social media). The EU should make a special effort to adapt communication to digital media in order to increase its outreach capacity to young people".**

We recommend this because having understandable information will allow the EU to reach more European citizens and not only the engaged ones. By having specific new and modern tools to target specific audiences, citizens will better understand EU activities and policies, particularly the young people who are not feeling close or attached to the EU.

Stream 5: Strengthening citizen participation

Substream 5.1 Citizen participation

34. "**We recommend that independent citizen observers should be present during all EU decision making processes. There should be a forum or permanent body of citizens representatives in order to carry out the function of broadcasting relevant and important information to all EU citizens as defined EU citizens. Those citizens would engage with all other European citizens in the spirit of top-down / bottom-up connection, which would further develop the dialogue between citizens and the institutions of the EU".**

Because it is obvious that citizens deserve to be kept informed about any and all issues, and to make sure that politicians cannot not hide certain issues from citizens that they would rather they did not know. This would bridge the divide between citizens and elected representatives by establishing new avenues of trust.

35. "**We recommend that the EU reopens the discussion about the constitution of Europe with a view to creating a constitution informed by the citizens of the EU. Citizens should be able to vote in the creation of such a constitution. This constitution in order to avoid conflict with the member states should prioritize the inclusion of human rights and democracy values. The creation of such a constitution should consider previous efforts that never materialized to a constitution".**

Because this constitution would engage young people with politics at the EU level and counteract increasing forces of nationalism. Because it would provide a common definition of what is meant by democracy in Europe, and make sure that this is implemented in an equal way amongst all member states. Because the EU has shared values regarding democracy and human rights. Because this would enable citizens to be included in the decision making process, and allow citizens to identify more as being from the EU - having participated in the process.

36. "**We recommend that politicians are more responsible in representing the citizens that they are elected to represent. Young people in particular are specially alienated from politics and are not taken seriously whenever they are included. But alienation is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged more than what they currently are".**

Because the definition of what democracy is needs to be refreshed. We need to remind ourselves what democracy really is. Democracy is about representing the people (EU citizens). Because young people are fed up and disillusioned with politicians who they view as elites who do not share their views. That is why people should be included more than they currently are in novel and engaging ways. The education system, then social media, and all other forms of media could carry out this role throughout the lifecycle and in all languages.

Substream 5.2 Citizen participation

37. "**We recommend that the EU should be closer to citizens in a more assertive way, which means involving the Member States in the promotion of citizens' participation in the EU. The EU should promote the use of the mechanisms of citizens' participation, by developing marketing and publicity campaigns. The national and local governments should be obliged to be involved in this process. The EU should guarantee the effectiveness of participative democracy platforms".**

We recommend this because the platform that already exists needs to be made stronger and efficient: there needs to be more feedback to the EU from the citizens and vice versa. There is not enough debate within the EU, both between the citizens and governments. Because the citizens do not engage in submitting petitions either because they do not know that the process exists or they do not believe in the success of such a petition.

38. "**We recommend that the EU creates and implements programmes for schools about what is being done in the EU in terms of the existing mechanisms of participation. These programmes should be included in the school curricula about European citizenship and ethics with content adequate to the age. There should also be programmes for adults. There should be lifelong learning programmes available to citizens to further their knowledge about the possibilities of EU citizen participation".**

We recommend this, because it is important for the future of our children. The citizens want to know how to express their voice. It is important that they know the exact mechanisms and how they can be used, so that their voice is heard by the EU. It is important for the equal inclusion of all European citizens. As European citizens, we need to know how to use our rights. By virtue of being European citizens, we are entitled to this knowledge.

Substream 5.3 Citizen participation

39. **“We recommend that the European Union holds Citizen’s Assemblies. We strongly recommend that they are developed through a legally binding and compulsory law or regulation. The citizens' assemblies should be held every 12-18 months. Participation of the citizens should not be mandatory but incentivised, while organised on the basis of limited mandates. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativity criteria, also not representing any organisation of any kind, nor being called to participate because of their professional role when being assembly members. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. Decision-making will be in the hands of citizens. The EU must ensure the commitment of politicians to citizens' decisions taken in Citizens’ Assemblies. In case citizens' proposals are ignored or explicitly rejected, EU institutions must be accountable for it, justifying the reasons why this decision was made”.**

We recommend the implementation of Citizens’ Assemblies because we want that citizens feel closer to EU institutions and that they contribute directly to decision-making hand to hand with politicians, increasing the feeling of belonging and direct efficacy. Furthermore, we want political parties and their electoral programs to be accountable to citizens.

Annex: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL AND NOT ADOPTED

Stream 1 Ensuring rights and non-discrimination

Substream 1.1 Non-discrimination / Substream 1.2 Gender equality

"We recommend the EU to actively include minorities in policy-making regarding key aspects of state institutions (e.g. police and NGOs). We recommend the EU should establish an advisory board, directly elected by minorities. The composition should be predominately by minority representatives with NGOs also present. It should have a formative role in training civil servants to care for the needs of minorities. This body should have a veto right on minority issues".
We recommend this because the voices of minorities are not heard enough. They should speak on their own behalf, self-determined and at a professional level which is why we combined representation by voting and expertise.

Stream 2: Protecting democracy and the rule of law

Substream 2.2 Protecting and strengthening democracy / Substream 2.4 Media and disinformation

"**We recommend establishing an agency for monitoring audiovisual media, print and digital media at the European level. This agency should monitor that national media outlets follow an impartial and objective process in the production of their content. To prevent disinformation, the agency should provide a scoring system on the reliability of national media outlets. This scoring system should be easy to understand for citizens".**

We recommend this because we need evaluation of the media and their reliability, but also media diversity in EU countries. An EU agency would be most objective in ensuring this. Moreover, a scoring system enables citizens to make informed choices and incentivises media outlets to provide reliable news. If the scoring system proves insufficient for ensuring the reliability of media outlets, the agency should also obtain the competence of imposing sanctions.

Stream 5: Strengthening citizen participation

Substream 5.1 Citizen participation

“**We recommend that there should be a citizen's representative body created to discuss and inform decision-making in a significant way - whenever there is an issue being decided upon at EU level which is of major significance to European citizens (as decided by citizens - potentially via survey). This should be a diverse group of approximately 100 citizens from all EU countries with equal representation for each country. This should be a revolving group where members are periodically changed”.**

Because it is important to avoid issues such as corruption that may arise from a permanent representative body, and that it is vital such a body has equal representation from all countries to avoid unfair decision-making power. Because operating in this way would avoid challenges associated with constantly assembling or using technology from afar.

Conference on the Future of Europe

Conference on the Future of Europe

European Citizens' Panel 3: "**Climate change and the environment / Health**"

Recommendations

Photo © Union européenne, 2021 – EP/Kenton Thatcher

Conference on the Future of Europe
European Citizens' Panel 3:
"Climate change and the environment / Health"

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE PANEL (TO BE TAKEN FORWARD TO THE PLENARY)

Stream 1: Better ways of living

Substream 1.1 Healthy lifestyles

1. **We recommend that the EU provides subsidies for organic farming, including incentives for organic pesticides, to make organic goods more affordable. Furthermore, education for farmers in organic and sustainable farming needs to be supported by the EU and mono-culture farming should be avoided. Small organic farms, non-intensive farms and those with short supply chains should be given support to become more competitive.**

   Subsidising organic products would improve their affordability. We should help supermarkets with shorter supply chains and support smaller farmers with opportunities to sell their products. This enables access to fresher produce. Furthermore, the low prices of non-organic products do not reflect their harm.

2. **We recommend that innovation in vertical farming be supported by investments from the EU.**

   Vertical farming allows us to save land space, which could be used for forestry instead. It also does not require pesticides, allowing us to produce more organic food. Furthermore, it is not impacted by bad weather conditions, which is increasingly common as a result of climate change, and allows for shorter supply chains.

3. **The EU should set minimum standards for food quality, as well as food traceability and the use of seasonal food in school canteens. Healthy ingredients for school canteens should therefore be subsidised to ensure affordable, high-quality food for pupils.**

   We form habits at a young age, which shape our attitudes towards health, good habits should be encouraged in schools and pupils can bring these teachings home. This is also a question of social-justice: everyone in the EU should have the right to good food in schools.

4. **We recommend investing in new bike lanes and in improving existing ones to make cycling safe and attractive. Ensure that training on road traffic rules for all age groups is widely available across Europe, especially for e-bikes and for those without drivers' licenses. The producers of e-bikes should be required to provide information about the use and risks of e-biking. Give legal protection to cyclists in case of accidents with vehicles (see Dutch regulation). We support dedicated car-free zones in cities (without harming commercial areas). Overall, give priority and further rights to cyclists and pedestrians over motorized vehicles while guaranteeing road safety and accordance with traffic rules.**

   This is important because cycling has benefits for individual and public health, air quality, noise levels, climate and inner city traffic. Cyclists and pedestrians need to feel safe, taking risks from the increased use of e-bikes into account. Bike lanes are sometimes lacking or in bad quality.

5. **We recommend making the production of food part of public education. Subsidize and support the creation of gardens in schools, if feasible, and urban gardening projects for public and private spaces. The need for space, water and support infrastructure needs to be part of urban planning frameworks. For example, former parking lots could be used for greening, vertical gardening on buildings, or there could be mandates to include green spaces for receiving building permits. Share innovative and best practices across all member states.**

   Gardening projects promote the resilience of cities and inhabitants, bringing together people of different ages and social groups. More green space improves quality of life, air quality, mental and physical health and the environment.

Substream 1.2 Environmental education

6. **We recommend that the EU adopts a directive requiring urban development programmes to fulfill specific environmental requirements, with the aim to make cities greener. The directive must apply to private and public property and spaces, such as new buildings being developed. The directive must impose minimum standards to ensure buildings and spaces are as green as possible. "Green", here, refers to the use of renewable energy sources, reduced energy consumption, low levels of CO2 emissions and the inclusion of plants in architectural projects.**

   Greener cities actively contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change and reducing emissions, such as CO2 and ozone, which negatively affect citizens' health. Investing in greener cities contributes to the sustainable development of communities which has long-term economic and social benefits.

7. **We recommend that the EU, with the assistance of the member states, develops, adopts and implements a common European charter targeting environmental issues, in their complexity. The charter will provide a framework for member states to develop regular information and training campaigns, disseminated across all available media channels and a new dedicated information portal. These campaigns should be held across the EU and at all levels to foster environmental awareness among all citizens.**

   A lack of coordination between member states is hindering the effectiveness of existing campaigns and slowing efforts to fight the global challenge that is climate change. A common charter will foster synergies between member states' action plans ensuring efforts are more impactful. In addition, it would ensure coherent and consistent information is communicated to citizens about the impact of daily actions such as their chosen means of transportation and waste treatment.

Stream 2: Protecting our environment and our health

Substream 2.1 Healthy natural environment

8. **We recommend a graded unified labelling system showing the entire ecological footprint for every available product purchased within the EU. Products from outside the EU need to respect this labelling system in a transparent manner. The system should be based on clear labelling criteria on the products themselves and use, for example, a QR code that gives more in-depth information about the product.**

   This information about the lifecycle of the product is fundamental for all citizens within the EU to empower consumers in their purchasing actions. In consequence, EU citizens will be taking responsible decisions to contribute to the protection of their environment.

9. **We recommend that more financial investment should be made to explore new eco-friendly sources of energy and until then additional investment into existing optimal solutions of energy production. We also recommend informing and educating the European public about specific sources of energy in full transparency. We strongly recommend considering the entire ecological and social impacts of the energy production process for current and future generations.**

   We have very high levels of carbon emissions and other toxic substances from energy production that degrades the climate and air quality. To be in line with the European directives and the recommendations of the IPCC reports and the COP 26 goals, more research and investment are needed to achieve climate-neutral energy production.

Substream 2.2 Protecting our biodiversity

10. **We recommend a drastic reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in all types of farms, by enforcing the application of higher common standards, by accelerating the research on the natural alternatives and by supporting the adoption of the new solutions, including the training for farmers.**

    Although progress has been made in alternative fertilizers and pesticides, most of them are not yet usable by big farms. Therefore a more consistent effort is necessary to generate new solutions. The research should be encouraged by both public expenditures and by higher standards in the use of pesticides and fertilizers. The results of the research need rapid diffusion at EU scale.

11. **We recommend the extension of the protected areas for the conservation of biodiversity (including mammals, birds, insects and plants), and enhancing the rule of law regarding human intervention in these areas. The protected areas will be seen not only as islands, but as a continuum with greener urban areas, following harmonised EU standards.**

    Because of deforestation, biodiversity is being heavily affected. One of the main ways of protecting land biodiversity is by creating protected areas. However, it is difficult to maintain protected areas near polluted cities, or to avoid human interference when the surroundings are not nature friendly. We need to make the living areas greener and integrated with their surrounding nature.

12. **We recommend redirecting the generic subsidies for agriculture mainly towards projects related to the development of sustainable agriculture, including the respect for nature and the workers. The beneficiaries should comply with clear environmental standards, and be strictly monitored.**

    We believe that only sustainable agriculture should be encouraged, which means redirecting the funds now used for generic subsidies. Moreover, the efficiency of the funds used can be increased by focusing on transformational projects and innovative solutions, rather than on annual payments. The ecological impact of agriculture activities and the projects should be better monitored. The human rights of the labour workers also need to be considered as part of sustainability.

13. **We recommend that the EU ensures a loyal competition for environment-friendly agricultural products by establishing stricter standards for both EU and the imported products, by ensuring their traceability, labelling and quality control.**

    The lower productivity of the sustainable agricultural products affects their cost competitiveness. The imported products should comply with the same strict standards regarding the ecological impact of their production. We need authorities capable of ensuring the traceability of the imported agricultural products.

14. **We recommend rapid and massive reforestation and afforestation in the EU, by maximizing the use of land. A special focus should be given to the reforestation of exploited or destroyed forests and the afforestation of the areas with degraded soil. New more responsible solutions should be promoted for a better utilization of the wood, e.g. replacing plastics and other chemical materials, ensuring higher energy efficiency from biomass, recycling of wood products.**

    Reforestation has a clear positive impact on the environment and the biodiversity at large. At the same time, we need to use less wood for fire, but for high added value products, as for instance the replacements for plastics the use of wood is principal.

Substream 2.3 Safe and healthy food

15. **We recommend the swift and progressive elimination of non-sustainable forms of food packaging, including plastic packaging and those of other non-biodegradable materials. We propose achieving this through providing financial incentives to companies which change to fully biodegradable forms of packaging, investing in research into alternatives and introducing penalties for companies that do not use biodegradable packaging.**

    Plastic waste, particularly microplastics, is increasingly abundant and degrades slowly. Its consumption harms the quality and safety of food while endangering the health of humans and animals. Moreover, existing European law aimed at reducing non-biodegradable packaging is insufficient.

16. **We recommend that intensive animal farming is phased out gradually, including the elimination of disrespectful living conditions of animals. We propose introducing common norms for animal farming (e.g. maximum number of animals, appropriate outside space) and stronger investment into non-intensive methods (extensive and sustainable farming) by providing financial incentives and training to farms to support this change.**

    Phasing out intensive farming will reduce levels of environmental pollution and enhance natural preservation. Furthermore, phasing out intensive animal farming will reduce the amount of medicine necessary to tackle animal diseases and increase the quality of our food. Intensive animal farming also fails to respect the well-being of animals but more sustainable forms of farming exist, such as extensive farming. and subsidies are necessary to help farmers pursue these forms.

17. **We recommend tightening controls on the prohibition of the unnecessary use of antibiotics and other animal drugs in feed additives for animals: make it a reality! We propose that the use of antibiotics is only authorised in farming when absolutely necessary to protect the health and well-being of animals, instead of in a preventive way. In addition, it is necessary to invest further into research for more efficient antibiotics, developing alternatives while building upon existing research into antibiotics.**

    Human resistance to antibiotics is decreased as a result of eating food from animals that have been given antibiotics. Furthermore, time is needed to create suitable alternatives to existing antibiotics and to ensure that farmers are aware and ready to use them. We recognise that European Directives exist on antibiotics but these have not been implemented in the same way across member states. Lastly, animal drugs are misused for doping purposes and so stronger legislation on the topic will increase animal well-being and boost their quality of life.

18. **We recommend that European legislation requires declarations on the use of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in the production of food: the type, quantity and exposure of the final product used. All food products including these substances must have detailed labels on their packaging displaying this information and the reasons for their use. Additionally, we have to accelerate research into the effects of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors on human health.**

    Food products currently lack traceability, particularly with respect to hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors. We think that transparency is necessary in food production to ensure accountability. Also, consumers should know the full contents of their food and be able to choose freely what they eat. In addition to that, there is insufficient research into the impact on humans (and the potential risks) of the consumption of food products with hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors.

19. **We recommend discouraging the consumption of processed foods by taxing unhealthy food and investing the funds raised into healthy food. We propose introducing a European-wide scoring system for healthy food based upon best practices in member states to label food and inform consumers of the health properties of food.**

    In this way, the funds raised can be used as a resource to develop awareness-raising measures and promotional campaigns, prioritise healthy food in education and make unhealthy food less visible in supermarkets. Also, investing in healthy food increases the general health of the population, therefore reducing levels of public spending needed to tackle health issues resulting from unhealthy eating. Moreover, we think taxation and subsidies will incentivise the production of healthier food products from companies.

Stream 3: Redirecting our economy and consumption

Substream 3.1 Regulating overproduction and overconsumption

20. We recommend that the EU takes more actions that enable and incentivise consumers to use products longer. The EU should combat planned obsolescence by lengthening products' warranty and setting a maximum price for spare parts after the warranty period. All member states should introduce a tax break on repair services as is the case in Sweden. Manufacturers should be required to declare the expected lifespan of their products. The EU should provide information on how to re-use and repair products on an internet platform and through education.

Our throw-away and single-use based society is not sustainable because it generates too much waste. By implementing the proposed measures we will move towards a society that reuses, repairs and reduces the products it consumes, thereby reducing overconsumption

21. We recommend that the EU enforces stricter environmental manufacturing standards and ensures fair working conditions throughout the entire production chain. The EU's production standards should be more sustainable, harmonised across member states, and applied to imported goods. These should also include social standards, like a living wage for workers producing the goods and good working standards in factories. Products that do not comply with these standards should face consequences.

It is important to establish homogenous environmental and social manufacturing standards in Europe to ensure that all products offered are produced in a sustainable way. These measures are crucial to redirect our economy and change the production patterns of companies.

22. **We recommend that the EU and member states introduce measures to limit advertising for products that damage the environment. Products with a low sustainability score should have a mandatory disclaimer in all forms of advertising that shows that they are harmful for the environment. For products that are not sustainable at all the EU should ban advertising.**

    Advertisements promote consumption, products that harm the environment should not be promoted. In that way people will be less inclined to buy environmentally harmful products.

23. **We recommend that the EU puts in place and expands the infrastructure of deposit-return schemes for all primary packaging made of glass, plastic, aluminium, et cetera in a homogenous way across the EU. Whenever possible, manufacturers should re-use the returned containers by sterilizing them, rather than just recycling the material. In addition to food and drink containers, the scheme should also include other kinds of bottles and containers, like shampoo bottles.**

    At the moment consumers throw away too much packaging that pollutes and destroys our eco-systems. Deposit-return schemes help to reduce waste by motivating citizens to bring packages back instead of throwing them away. By expanding the scheme we use less resources and reduce the amount of waste we produce.

Substream 3.2 Reducing waste

24. **We recommend that an enhanced implementation of circular economy policies is promoted at the European level, targeting both corporations and citizens, in the form of financial incentives for those that comply with it.**

    Because in case production companies reduce their personnel or even default/close down, lots of people will end up unemployed. By retraining the unemployed, we will be promoting environmentally safe practices whilst also curbing unemployment and promoting the modernisation of a diversified economy.

25. **We recommend that the EU regulates the use of environmentally-safe packaging (i.e., packaging made out of biodegradable or recyclable products, or more endurable products, where possible) and/or the use of packaging that takes up less space, which will also contain in the form of a QR-code the information pertinent to the packages' recycling and/or disposal process once it has been used.**

Because this recommendation will lead to less packaging, less production of waste and hence less pollution, therefore cleaner environment and ultimately a reduced carbon footprint. Additionally, the tax burden on producers will be reduced.

Substream 3.3 Fair products, equal access, and just consumption

26. **We recommend the European Union to establish a legal framework to ensure affordable, and better access to local and quality food products for all European consumers.**

Because currently there is no shared understanding, at the EU level, of what is local and quality food. This gap needs to be filled.
Importation of low quality products has a direct negative impact on the environment. In order to tackle climate change, we need to fight all of its causes, including importation of low quality products: there is a need to reduce transportation distance, and favour seasonal products.
This recommendation is promising because it could also apply to non-alimentary products.

27. **We recommend the European Union to encourage research and development, with funding schemes, in order to introduce more sustainable and affordable products within the European market. Also, the European Union must organise consultations with citizens, at all decision-making levels including the local level, in order to identify their needs regarding sustainable products.**

We consider there is a lack of research for sustainable products, and there is an urgent need to have more funds allocated to research, to allow Europeans to have access to sustainable and more affordable sustainable products.
Citizens must participate in the decision-making process. The agenda of research and innovation actions must be defined together with citizens.
Citizens need to be informed on the follow-up and receive feedbacks.

28. **We recommend the European Union to find a regulation mechanism for fashion products entering the common market. This mechanism would aim at encouraging better consumption thanks to an indicator guaranteeing that the product meets sustainable criteria.**

The fashion sector, which is overproducing low quality products outside the European borders, does not follow ethical norms, and is not sustainable.
We need to find a fair mechanism which will allow better consumption for consumers. Yet, it is important not to increase taxes, which will have negative impacts on European consumers, reducing their purchasing power.
The consumer should know in the conditions in which the products they purchase are made, and if they meet sustainable quality norms.

Stream 4: Towards a sustainable society

Substream 4.1 Renewable energy now

29. **We recommend that the EU takes measures to make CO2 filters mandatory, especially for the coal plants, in a transition period, as long as we still depend on conventional energy. In addition, we recommend that the EU provides financial aid to member states that do not have financial resources to implement CO2 filters. The support is conditional on compliance to EU climate policies connected to the Paris Agreement, the Green Deal and any new climate law.**
This is a concrete step to take alongside continued investment in research of the safe energy production and to support EU Member States to progressively achieve already adopted common reduction goals.

We know that the use of combustible fuels creates greenhouse gasses, and the EU Member States must reduce this type of energy to comply with the Paris Agreement. Since we cannot stop CO2 emissions right away, and since we still depend on coal, we have to take both short-term and long-term measures.
Because CO2 reduction is a common interest that affects all citizens, both in the Member States and beyond the EU, the EU as an institution has its own responsibilities, and the institution makes recommendations and enables solutions as Member States cannot achieve the goals alone.

30. **We recommend reducing the intensive industrial breeding of animals to reduce the production of methane as well as water pollution. For that purpose, the EU reviews its common Agricultural Policy to direct its subsidies towards sustainable and locally based agriculture, among others supported by a labelling scheme for consumers to recognize sustainable meat products. In addition, we encourage the EU to invest in methods to re-use waste material from animal production and other industries.**

    Population is increasing, which means more demand on meat in the future. Therefore, we need to reduce meat consumption.
    We believe that since methane makes greenhouse gasses, animal farming is the most obvious place to start reducing.
    We all know that it is necessary to consume less meat, and therefore a consequence is that we reduce the number of cattle.

31. **We recommend that although it is a cost-intensive process to generate green hydrogen, as 75% energy should be produced in order to get 25% hydrogen, there are multiple positive sides to this type of energy. The best solution can be to produce energy without CO2 while we develop green hydrogen. Wind energy should be used for the production of green hydrogen and the EU should make more investments and increase the production of wind energy, as well as storing the energy for future purposes.**

    Green hydrogen is flexible and we can store it, and when there is a demand we can use that energy. Because there is no CO2 pollution.

Substream 4.2 Supporting change

32. We recommend that the EU sets up a coercion and reward system to tackle pollution like water, soil, air, and radiation. Issuing fines for polluters, in combination with the mandatory support of an expert organisation, specifically designed to help entities to eliminate pollution and restore the ecosystem. This expert organisation should have a leading role in preventing and controlling the level of pollution.

Because it is important to emphasize the responsibilities of the polluters and stimulate entities to reduce pollution with a strive for zero pollution. It is crucial to have a healthy planet since it is directly linked to our well-being and our future existence.

33. We recommend the EU to set up a special website/platform verified by multiple experts -with regularly updated and diverse scientific environmental information- that is easily accessible and transparent to all citizens. This website/platform is linked to a forum where citizens and experts can interact. We also strongly advise to initiate a media campaign to promote this website/platform (for instance through social media such as YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn).

All citizens must have independent scientific-based sources of information to understand climate change issues (its consequences and needed steps to reverse it), as well as to cope with fake news. The media campaign will make them aware that this platform/website exists. It is also important that the information provided by the website/platform is understandable for all citizens, with access to the source material for those who want to dig into the topic.

34. We recommend that the EU reduces the amount of imported goods that don't meet EU standards in terms of ecological footprint.

Because, in doing so, we make sure that goods imported in the EU have a greener footprint. The aim is to decrease global pollution. It is also important to show countries what standards should be met if they want to export goods to the EU.

35. **We recommend that the EU encourages, promotes and facilitates dialogue on climate change between all levels of decision-making, from the very local level (citizens) to the global level (national, international and intercontinental), to satisfy concerns of all involved parties.**

Because dialogue and consensus are the optimal way to cope with the climate change challenges: if the parties understand each other, there is more willingness to find a common ground.

Substream 4.3 Environmentally friendly transport

36. **We recommend that the EU financially supports European member states in order to improve the connectivity of rural areas. It should be done by developing a European public transportation network based on affordable prices (prioritising railways) and with incentives for public transportation usage. To this end, internet connectivity within a short and realistic time frame should also be developed in rural areas.**

We recommend that because there is no access equality to public transportation and internet connectivity between rural and urban areas. A common European project would be strengthened as all citizens would feel they have the same rights. Enhanced public transportation network and internet connectivity would trigger population to settle in rural areas. This process would reduce pollution as less people would live in crowded cities.

37. **We recommend the improvement of existing transportation infrastructures that may be in disuse or those that can still be improved from an ecological point of view (to implement electric trains). Such process should be done with the intention of not damaging environmentally protected areas.**

Improving existing infrastructure would avoid spending too many resources and cause damage to protected areas important for biodiversity conservation. Having more railway infrastructure would trigger a reduction in CO2 emissions and an increase in population mobility from urban to rural areas.

38. We recommend that the EU promotes the purchase of electric vehicles complying with good standards regarding battery life. It could be done by EU incentives applying to all EU member states and by improving electric infrastructures. At the same time, it should invest in the development of other non-polluting technologies, such as biofuels and hydrogen for those vehicles whose electrification is difficult to achieve, such as boats and lorries.

We recommend it because electricity is the fastest way to reduce emissions of vehicles, accompanied by other energy sources such as hydrogen and biofuels. Indeed, the fastest, economic and feasible solution is electricity, followed by biofuels. In the longer-term green hydrogen should play a complementary role to cover transport modes that can not be electrified.

Stream 5: Caring for all

Substream 5.1 Reinforce the healthcare system

39. We recommend that the European Union safeguards common health standards, but also pushes for decent minimum wages, a maximum number of working hours and same training standards, for the same certifications, for healthcare professionals across the European Union.

If we do not have common healthcare standards, common wages and common training for healthcare workers, differences between the Member States could lead to unbalanced situations across the European Union. Standardization of healthcare could help in having a stronger, more efficient and more resilient system (i.e. Covid crisis example about stability of our systems). It would also facilitate knowledge and information sharing in the healthcare professional sector.

40. We recommend that the European Union ensures that treatments across the EU are of equal quality and of fair local cost. This could be ensured, for instance thanks to an extension of the competences of the European Medicines Agency (EMA), or the creation of a new specialized European procurement agency, which would be competent to negotiate and obtain more suitable prices for medicines for all the Members States. The risk of pharmaceutical industry monopolies must be minimized.

Equal medical provisions and treatments guarantee equal rights of all European citizens in the EU in health matters. Enlarged purchase capacities ensure better procurement deals. Nevertheless, this must not lead to monopoly structures and pharmaceutical lobbying. A Covid crisis management has been a good example of collaborative health management by the European Union as a whole.

41. We recommend the creation of a European healthcare database, in which medical records would be made available in cases of emergencies or illnesses. Participation should be optional, and personal data protection must be ensured.

Access to data and data use permit prompt response to life threatening situations. Hacking or misuse are major threats of such a European healthcare database system, hence the data needs to be secured, while participation remains optional, and security-related threats obviously need to be prevented.

42. We recommend that the European Union further develops and synchronizes already existing health research and innovation programs, as it is done in the framework of the existing Horizon Europe program. Academic outcomes and results should be made freely available in all member states.

The EU-level scientific cooperation could enrich scientific capacities and knowledge of individual researchers. Knowledge sharing could, for example, lead to early diagnosis and better treatments reducing severe and fatal illnesses across Europe. It would also foster European self-sufficiency in terms of medication and equipment.

43. We recommend that the European Union increases its budget dedicated for joint research and innovation projects in the area of health (without budget cuts in other EU health-related programs). This would also strengthen European scientific and research institutions overall.

Health-related research and investments will in the long-run strengthen preventive medicine and decrease health-related costs. More funding could prevent the European brain drain to other developed countries with higher R&D health-specific budgets. This funding should not be coming from already existing healthcare financial resources.

Substream 5.2 A broader understanding of health

44. We recommend that a health week be established as a European Union initiative across all Member States, on the same week, on all health issues with a special focus on mental health. During this week, all main topics on mental health will be collectively covered and promoted, together with other already existing initiatives, such as those from the Mental Health Europe organization.

We recommend this because all European citizens should feel accepted and included, especially if they suffer from mental health issues. Moreover, there is need to normalize and improve awareness of mental health conditions, and also to prevent related-social issues such as discrimination. Furthermore, as mental health issues have increased with the pandemic and are likely to continue, this initiative becomes even more important.

45. **We recommend that female sanitary products stop being considered as luxury products when it comes to taxation, as they are essential products. We also recommend that hormonal contraception products used for medical reasons, such as in the cases of fibromyalgia and endometriosis, get taxed as a regular medical treatment. We also recommend that the European Union encourages the harmonisation of medically assisted reproductive treatments for all women (single or married) across all Member States.**

    In certain European countries sanitary female products are taxed as luxury products, and that is unfair. Certain hormonal contraceptives are used for medical purposes and therefore should be taxed accordingly. Because women's reproduction treatments, such as In Vitro Fertilization and egg freezing methods, have different eligibility conditions in different Member States, and the European Union must make an effort to harmonise it.

46. **We recommend that the European Union takes a strong stance in influencing all Member States to include in their school curricula, as appropriate, issues on mental health and sexual education. To help Member States adopt such issues in school curricula, the European Union should developed and make available a standard program on mental health and sexual issues.**

    There is a need to decrease discrimination and taboos regarding mental health issues. There is also a need to avoid misinformation and unscientific approaches. Furthermore, sexual education is fundamental for a healthy life and community, and prevents problems such as teenager pregnancies.

47. **We recommend that the European Union develops a better communication system of all its initiatives on mental health, namely the Public Health Portal on good practices, within Member States and for all citizens. Members of the European Parliament could present these good practices to each other, in order to make them better known across Member States.**

    Citizens are not well informed about the European Union's initiatives, and because with the sharing of good practices we can learn from each other.

Substream 5.3 Equal access to health for all

48. We recommend that the EU sets and promotes minimum standards for quality dental care, including prophylaxis, for all EU Member States. Free of charge dental care should be available for children, low-income groups and other vulnerable groups. In 15-20 years time, the EU should guarantee that affordable dental care is available to everyone.

We recommend this because currently dental care is not affordable to many people living in the EU. Lack of dental care and dental prophylaxis harms their health and life prospects. The EU should start by setting a minimum standard for dental care and by requiring free of charge dental care to children and low-income groups. Eventually, everyone should be entitled to quality dental health care.

49. We recommend to include Health and Healthcare among the shared competencies between the EU and the EU Member States. In order to include this new shared competence, there is a need to amend Article 4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

We recommend this because currently the European Union does not have enough competencies to legislate on healthcare. Covid-19 pandemic has proven the necessity of a stronger EU presence in health policies. This Treaty change will allow the EU to do more to guarantee healthcare for all EU citizens and to issue binding regulations and decisions.

50. We recommend that the EU makes courses on providing first aid available to all EU citizens free of charge. The EU could consider making such courses obligatory for students and for workplaces (both in public and in the private sector). These courses also need to be practical, recurrent and adapted to students' age. There should also be a minimum number of defibrillators available in public places in all EU Member States.

We recommend this because many people in the European Union are not prepared to act when a person needs help and they do not know first aid techniques. That is why many lives are lost. In some public places defibrillators are not available.

51. We recommend that the European Union ensures that private health care providers do not unfairly benefit from public funds and do not drain resources from public health systems. The European Union should issue strong recommendations to Member States to increase funding to public healthcare.

We recommend this because the European Union and the European Union Member States have an obligation to guarantee access to healthcare to all their citizens. Besides, a stronger public healthcare system also means being better prepared for future pandemics.

Annex: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL AND NOT ADOPTED

Stream 1: Better ways of living

Substream 1.1 Healthy lifestyles

We recommend that the EU issues a recommendation to all member states about best practices on banning or restricting alcohol and tobacco advertising in all forms of media for all age groups, but with an emphasis on young audiences. The EU should ensure enforcement of laws that restrict sale of these products to minors. All member states should implement laws, with penalties, relating to smoking in public areas, especially educational facilities, and create designated smoking areas.

Unhealthy lifestyles cannot appear in advertising and should be less visible in public life. Furthermore, alcohol and tobacco are some of the most used harmful substances and this recommendation will prevent abusive consumption of these substances.

We recommend that the EU supports member states in including lessons on cooking in a sustainable, healthy and tasty manner in national curriculums. The EU can support this through healthy cooking guides both online and in print. This should be advertised proactively on traditional and social media in order to reach a young audience. We should also educate parents so that they learn what the best way is to use food in order to adopt a healthy lifestyle. There should be stimulating and enriching research in this field.

Cooking and nutrition courses in school would improve the health of youth and discourage fast-food consumption. Education of children allows them to bring what they have learned back to their parents. Furthermore, educating parents on healthy lifestyles would set a good precedent for children.

We recommend intensifying the European Commission's public campaign "HealthyLifestyle4All" about healthy lifestyles, and the benefits of social activity with concrete examples and using a holistic approach. Information campaigns should be defined on well structured target groups, and appropriate means of communication should be chosen for each of the targeted groups. It is important to furthermore provide rewards and incentive systems to promote positive behaviour. The campaigns should include influencers, celebrities or authorities. They shall highlight the double benefits on both health, and the environment and climate. Furthermore, subsidies for free public sport should be available in all member states.

Healthier lifestyles have a positive effect on the healthcare system by reducing health problems. Physical health has an impact on mental health and happiness. Current campaigns are not known enough. The inclusion of role models and influencers make it more effective and more motivating.

We recommend an information campaign about healthy food and nutrition. The EU should promote higher taxes for meat and sugar to be adopted in member states. It should explore options to differentiate healthy from unhealthy food and put it in different VAT brackets. We recommend putting very clear warning signs on very unhealthy foods (such as tobacco products). In addition, we recommend a European-wide nutrition score, with relevant information and a QR code for consumers to make better-informed decisions. Explore options to make healthy food cheaper than junk food and to make it more attractive for farmers to produce healthy products.

Healthy food is the basis for healthy living. Both production and consumer sides need to be addressed. Production of healthy products also has positive effects on the environment and can help support local farmers. If there is more production of healthy food, prices will decrease, demand increase.

Substream 1.2 Environmental Education

We recommend that the EU establishes a funding scheme to incentivise the inclusion of a long-term environmental education programme in national education systems for children in elementary and secondary school. This funding scheme should include funds earmarked for parents in need of financial assistance.

Current educational systems do not contain enough practical elements promoting direct and profound interactions between children and the environment. Existing programmes, elaborated from a short-term perspective, are heterogeneous and fail to promote the needed change in attitudes. Parents should be aided to ensure all children can equally benefit from the programme and none are excluded for financial reasons.

Stream 2: Protecting our environment and our health

Substream 2.1 Healthy natural environment

We recommend instantly implementing the highest possible standard of water quality in the whole of the EU. To save water, we suggest a reward system that will be based on pricing water in a way that encourages and gives incentives to less consumption, e.g.: (1) by creating a dynamic system encouraging consumers to stay under the average amount of water consumption (i.e. an increase in water consumption by 10% will increase the price by 11%), (2) by creating an allowances' market system for water polluted by manufacturing companies, which is a similar system to the carbon permits market already in place.

This recommendation is justified by the fact that increasing prices are an incentive for all users to make more conscious decisions regarding their consumption. Considering the different realities of EU countries and aiming to have a socially fair system, we can support poorer populations in water management by co-investing in water infrastructure and research.

Stream 3: Redirecting our economy and consumption

Substream 3.1 Regulating overproduction and overconsumption

We recommend that the EU imposes fines on companies that dispose of unsold products generated by overproduction.

In some cases companies find it more profitable to throw away unsold products rather than recycling or reusing them. It is therefore important to discourage overproduction through fines so that this practice is no longer profitable for producers.

Substream 3.2 Reducing waste

We recommend that the EU develops and implements a waste-management policy for households/citizens, focusing on the actual amount of waste they generate, complemented by measures necessary for raising citizens' awareness about the benefits of reducing generation of waste and separate waste-collection. Measures targeting socially disadvantaged families (e.g. young families with children, elderly people, etc.) are to be implemented as well, in agreement with the 'no one is left behind' principle.

It aims at developing a unified approach to waste management in households, it also facilitates the protection of the environment through waste-reduction, it further stimulates circular economy and increases waste-collection efficiency. Last but not least, it raises people's awareness and their sense of environmental responsibility.

We recommend that the EU promotes free-market competition and stimulates the private sector to become more actively involved in the treatment of waste, including waste-waters, and the upcycling and recycling activities.

The EU is the right level to implement this recommendation because it complements the Waste Framework Directive and the Circular Economy Action Plan. Moreover, the implementation of the recommendation will increase innovative solutions in waste management and enhance the quality of waste management as well as the volume of treated waste because more companies will participate in these activities.

Substream 3.3 Fair products, equal access, and just consumption

We recommend relocating industries inside the European Union in order to provide high-quality fair products and tackle climate issues.

The European Union has a know-how that has to be promoted on its own market.
Because of delocalisation of industries outside the EU, notably in Asia, some professional competences are also delocalised. This recommendation entails the professional training of European workers.
We insist on the need to avoid delocalisation between different Member States, in order to avoid unfair competition.
We observed that massive delocalisation of industries over the world affects European industries. Thus, local production will lead to healthier citizens and environment.

Stream 4: Towards a sustainable society

Substream 4.3 Environmentally friendly transport

We recommend that big cities receive sanctions or subsidies depending on their performance on their public transportation with regards to the environment and pollution (electric vehicles, green public transport, pedestrianization, encouraging bike use, etc.). Penalties or subsidies that target local authorities, should be particularly applied based on changes implemented by cities on ecological transportation taking into account what their starting point is. It is the European Union, by means of its legislation, who should establish some performance indicators with regards to pollution measures and the proportional reduction. It should be done taking into account the starting points of each city.

We recommend this because cities have been affected by air pollution, which has raised some health issues. Developing green transportation would improve people's lives and health and reduce the greenhouse effect. Subsidies and sanctions are effective measures to promote changes and help adapt to different situations existing in different cities.

We recommend that EU legislation limits and regulates the use of short distance flights and cruise ships. Ecological alternatives to people when it comes to transport must be provided. One of such alternatives should be the standardisation of railway tracks in order to connect the European capitals. We also recommend the EU to give subsidies to change the transport of goods to make them more environmentally friendly, such as transport by train and boat (in short distance trips).

We recommend this because short distance trips are too frequent, polluting and easy to be substituted. Cruise ship limitation would reduce maritime pollution (a critical environmental problem) and the negative impact in coastal cities. Hence, we need to create more affordable alternatives compared to more polluting ones. Having the same railway track width would improve railways connections between European capitals.

Stream 5: Caring for all

Substream 5.2 A broader understanding of health

We recommend that the European Union, in line with its HealthyLife4All campaign also promotes initiatives such as sportive social events, sport activities in schools, bi-annual Olympiads open to all ages groups, and to all sports [not for professionals]. We also recommend the development of a free European sport app to incentivize collective sport activities. This app should help people connecting with each other through sports. Furthermore, these initiatives should be widely publicized and communicated.

In order to have a healthier European population, the European Union must promote sport and healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, very often the population is not aware of the relation between sport and a healthy life. The app is important because people are more prone to do sport if they do it collectively.

Conference on the Future of Europe

European Citizens' Panel 4: "**EU in the World / Migration**"

Recommendations

Photo © Union européenne, 2021 – EP/Kenton Thatcher

Conference on the Future of Europe

European Citizens' Panel 4:
"EU in the World / Migration"

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE PANEL (TO BE TAKEN FORWARD TO THE PLENARY)

Stream 1 Self-reliance and Stability

Substream 1.1 Autonomy of the EU

1. **We recommend that strategic products from European fabrication (such as agricultural products, semiconductors, medical products, innovative digital and environmental technologies) should be better promoted and financially supported to keep them available and affordable to European consumers and reduce dependencies from outside Europe to the largest possible extent. This support could include structural and regional policies, support to keep industries and supply chains within the EU, tax breaks, subsidies, an active SME policy as well as education programs to keep related qualifications and jobs in Europe. However, active industrial policy should be selective and focused on innovative products or those that are relevant to secure basic needs and services.**

   We recommend this because Europe has entered too many dependencies from outside Europe in key areas that have potential for diplomatic conflicts and could result in shortcomings of basic or strategically relevant products or services. As production costs in the EU are often higher than in other parts of the world, more active promotion and support of these products will enable and incentivise Europeans to buy competitive European products. It will also strengthen European competitiveness and keep future-oriented industries and jobs in Europe. Stronger regionalisation of production will also reduce transport costs and environmental damages.

2. **We recommend that the EU reduce dependencies from oil and gas imports. This should be done by actively supporting public transport and energy efficiency projects, a Europe wide high speed rail and freight network, the expansion of clean and renewable energy provision (in particular in solar and wind) and alternative technologies (such as hydrogen or waste-to-energy). The EU should also promote the cultural change from the individual car towards public transport, e-car sharing and biking.**

We recommend this because it creates a win-win situation both for the autonomy of Europe from external dependencies as well as ambitious climate and CO2 reduction targets. It will also allow for Europe to become a strong player in future-oriented technologies, strengthen its economy and create jobs.

3. **We recommend a law is passed at EU level in order to ensure that all EU production and supply processes and the goods which are imported, comply with qualitative, ethical, sustainable and all applicable human rights European standards; offering certification for products abiding by this law.**

   We recommend this as it helps both consumers and traders to be able to easily access information about the products they are buying/trading. This is achieved through checking the certification system; certification also helps to reduce the gap between cheap and expensive products available on the market. The cheap products will not meet the required standard and therefore cannot pass as being of good quality. Qualification for this certification would serve to protect the environment, saving resources and promoting responsible consumption.

4. **We recommend the implementation of a European-wide programme to support small local producers from strategic sectors across all Member States. These producers would be professionally trained, financially supported through subsidies and encouraged to produce (where raw materials are available in the EU) more goods fulfilling requirements at the expense of imports.**

   We recommend this because by supporting EU based producers in strategic sectors, the EU can reach economic autonomy across these sectors. This could only serve to strengthen the entire production process thus promoting innovation. This would lead to more sustainable production of raw materials in the EU, reducing transport costs and serving to protect the environment.

5. **We recommend to improve the implementation of human rights at a European level through: Raising awareness in countries that do not comply, at the required extent, with ECHR (European Convention of Human Rights) or the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; a strict control, coordinated by the EU and the Justice Scoreboard, of the extent to which human rights are respected among Member States and a strong enforcement of compliance through different types of sanctions.**

We recommend this because human rights have already been agreed upon by the Member States when ratifying the European Convention of Human Rights, now being necessary to increase the acceptance in each individual state in order to make sure human rights are actively known and implemented in these Member States.

6. **We recommend a revision and an intense communication campaign at a cross European level to be initiated in order for EURES (European Employment Services), the EU Immigration Portal and the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals to be better known by European citizens and more frequently accessed by EU companies in order to advertise and publicise their vacancies.**

   We recommend to not create a new online platform advertising job opportunities for European youth. There are more than enough similar initiatives which already exist at a European level. We believe enhancing what already exists is the key to promoting the existing workforce and employment opportunities at a European level.

Substream 1.2 Borders

7. **We recommend that a system for labour migration into the EU that is based on the real needs of the European labour markets is created. There should be a unified recognition system of professional and academic diplomas from outside and within the EU. There should be professional qualification offers as well as cultural and linguistic integration offers for qualified migrants. Asylum seekers with relevant qualifications should be given access to the labour market. There should be an integrated agency for which the European Cooperation Network of Employment Services could be the basis.**

   We recommend this because Europe needs qualified labour in certain areas that cannot be fully covered internally. Currently, there are not enough viable ways to legally apply for a work permit in the EU. A European wide recognition system for professional and academic diplomas will facilitate covering these needs and enable more simplified labour migration within and from outside the EU. Employment gaps could be filled more effectively and uncontrolled migration better managed. Opening the system of labour migration to asylum seekers could help accelerate their integration into European economies and societies.

8. **We recommend that the European Union expands its legislation to assign more power and independence to Frontex. This enables them to intervene in all Member States so that they can ensure the protection of all external borders of the EU. However, the EU should organise process audits on the organisation of Frontex, as full transparency is needed in the functioning of Frontex to avoid all kinds of abuses.**

   We recommend this because we find it unacceptable that Frontex can be denied access to the borders, particularly in situations where human rights are violated. We want to ensure that Frontex implements European legislation. Frontex itself must be controlled and checked to prevent inappropriate behaviour within the organisation.

9. **We recommend that the European Union organises, specifically for economic migrants, the possibility of screening citizens (on proven skills, background, etc.) in the country of departure; this is to determine who is eligible to come and work in the EU, depending on the economic needs/vacancies of the host country. These screening criteria must be public and consultable by everyone. This can be realised by creating an (online) European Agency for Immigration.**

   We recommend this because in this way people do not have to cross the border illegally. There would be a controlled flow of people who enter the EU, which results in a decrease in the pressure at the borders. At the same time, this facilitates the fulfilment of job vacancies in the host countries.

10. **We recommend that the European Union ensures that the welcoming policy and facilities at each border are the same, respecting human rights and guaranteeing the safety and health of all migrants (for example pregnant women and children).**

    We recommend this because we highly value the fair and equal treatment of migrants at all borders. We want to prevent migrants from staying too long at the borders and Member States becoming overwhelmed with the inflow of migrants. Member States must all be well-equipped to welcome them.

Stream 2: The EU as an International Partner

Substream 2.1 Trade and Relations in an Ethical Perspective

11. **We recommend that the EU enforces restrictions on the import of products from countries that allow child labour. This should be done through a blacklist of companies that is periodically updated according to current conditions. We furthermore recommend to ensure gradual access to schooling for children leaving the workforce and to promote consumer awareness on child labour through information made by official EU channels, e.g. campaigns and storytelling.**

    We recommend this because we recognize the link between the lack of access to schooling and the presence of child labour. Through this recommendation we want to raise awareness of the consumers, to reduce the demand for products made by child labour, so that the practice can eventually be abolished.

12. **We recommend that the EU establishes partnerships with developing countries, supporting their infrastructure and sharing competences in exchange for mutually favourable trade deals to aid them in the transition towards green energy sources.**

    We recommend this in order to facilitate the transition to renewable energy sources in developing countries through trade partnerships and diplomatic agreements. This would establish good long-term relationships between the EU and developing countries, and it would contribute to the fight against climate change.

13. **We recommend that the EU introduces a mandatory eco-score to be displayed on the front of all products that can be bought by the general consumer. The eco-score would be calculated according to emissions from production and transportation, as well as harmful content, based on a list of hazardous products. The eco-score should be managed and monitored by an EU authority.**

    We recommend this in order to make the EU consumer more aware of the environmental footprint of the products they buy. The eco-score would be an EU-wide scaling method, to easily show how eco-friendly a product is. The eco-score should include a QR code on the back of a product, providing further information on its environmental footprint.

Substream 2.2 International Climate Action

14. **We recommend that the European Union adopts a strategy in order to be more autonomous in its energy production. A European body integrating the existing European energy institutions should coordinate the development of renewable energies depending on the needs, capacity and resources of Member States while respecting their sovereignty. The institutions would promote knowledge sharing between them to implement this strategy.**

    We recommend it because the current dependency makes us vulnerable in situations of political tensions with countries we import from. We see it with the current electricity crisis. However, this coordination should respect every country's sovereignty.

15. **We recommend higher environmental standards for the export of waste inside and outside of the EU and more stringent controls and sanctions to stop illegal exports. The EU should incentivise the Member States more to recycle their own waste and use it for energy production.**

    We recommend it in order to stop environmental damage when some countries get rid of their waste at the expense of others, especially when this is done outside of any environmental standards.

16. **We recommend that the EU encourages the ongoing environmental transition in a stronger way by setting a goal of eliminating polluting packaging. This would involve promoting less packaging or more environmentally-friendly packaging. To ensure that smaller companies can adapt, help and adjustments should be provided.**

    We recommend it because we need to reduce the use of natural resources, especially raw materials from outside the EU. We also need to reduce the harm done by Europeans to our planet and its climate. Increased support to small companies is critical to ensure they can adapt without increasing their prices.

17. **We recommend that countries of the European Union, together, look into the question of nuclear energy more seriously. There should be increased collaboration around the assessment of the use of nuclear power and its role in the transition that Europe needs to achieve towards green energy.**

    We recommend it because the nuclear question cannot be solved by one country. There are currently over a hundred reactors in half of the Member States, and more are under construction. Since we share a common electricity grid, the low-carbon electricity they produce benefits all Europeans and increases our continent's energy autonomy. In addition, exposed nuclear waste or an accident would affect several countries. No matter what choice is made on whether to use nuclear energy or not, Europeans should discuss it together and build more converging strategies while respecting national sovereignties.

Substream 2.3 Promotion of European Values

18. **The EU should be closer to the citizens. We recommend that the EU creates and strengthens links with citizens and local institutions, such as local governments, schools, and municipalities. This should be done in order to improve transparency, reach the citizens and communicate better with them about concrete EU initiatives and general EU information.**

    We recommend this because current EU information is not accessible enough to all groups in society and does not reach ordinary citizens. It is often boring, difficult to understand and not user-friendly. This must change to ensure that citizens have a clear vision of the EU's role and actions. To spark interest, EU information needs to be easier to find, motivating, exciting and in everyday language. Our suggestions are: School visits by EU politicians, radio, podcasts, direct post, press, bus campaigns, social media, local citizen assemblies and creating a special task force to improve EU communication. These measures will allow the citizens to get EU information that is not filtered through national media.

19. **We recommend stronger citizen participation in EU politics. We propose direct citizens' involvement events, similar to the Conference on the Future of Europe. They should be organised on a national, local and European level. The EU should provide a coherent strategy and central directions for these events.**

    We recommend this because such participatory democracy events will provide correct information about the EU, as well as improve the quality of EU policies. The events should be organised in order to promote core values of the EU - democracy and citizen participation. These events would provide an opportunity for the politicians to show the citizens that they find it important that citizens are aware of current events and should be involved in shaping them. Centralised guidelines will give the national and local Conferences a coherent and uniform shape.

Stream 3: A Strong EU in a Peaceful World

Substream 3.1 Security and Defence

20. **We recommend that a future 'Joint Armed Forces of the European Union' shall predominantly be used for self-defence purposes. Aggressive military action of any kind is precluded. Within Europe, this would entail a capacity to provide support in times of crises such as in the case of natural catastrophes. Outside European borders this would provide the capacity to be deployed in territories in exceptional circumstances and exclusively under a respective legal mandate from the United Nations Security Council and thus in compliance with international law.**

    Were this recommendation implemented it would allow the European Union to be perceived as a credible, responsible, strong and peaceful partner on the international stage. Its enhanced capacity to respond to critical situations both internally and externally is thus expected to protect its fundamental values.

Substream 3.2 Decision-making and EU Foreign Policy

21. **We recommend that all issues decided by way of unanimity are changed to be decided by way of a qualified majority. The only exceptions should be the admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU as stated in Art. 2 of the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.**

    This will consolidate the position of the EU in the world by presenting a united front towards third countries and agilise its response in general and in particular in crisis situations.

22. **We recommend that the European Union strengthen its ability to sanction Member States, governments, entities, groups or organisations as well as individuals that do not comply with its fundamental principles, agreements and laws. It is imperative to make sure that the sanctions that already exist are quickly implemented and enforced. Sanctions against third countries should be proportional to the action that triggered it and be effective and applied in due time.**

    In order for the EU to be credible and reliable, it has to apply sanctions to those who infringe upon its principles. These sanctions should be readily and actively enforced and verified.

Substream 3.3 Neighbouring Countries and Enlargement

23. **We recommend that the European Union allocate a specific budget to develop educational programmes on the functioning of the EU and its values. Then it will be proposed to the Member States that wish that they can integrate them into their school curricula (primary, secondary schools, and universities). In addition, a specific course on the EU and its functioning could be offered to students wishing to study in another European country through the Erasmus programme. Students choosing this course would be given priority in the allocation of said Erasmus programmes.**

    We recommend this to strengthen the sense of belonging to the EU. This will enable citizens to better identify with the EU and transmit its values. Moreover, it will also improve transparency regarding the functioning of the EU, the benefits of being part of it, and the fight against anti-European movements. This should act as a deterrent to Member States leaving the EU.

24. We recommend that the EU makes greater use of its political and economic weight in its relations with other countries to prevent certain Member States from undergoing bilateral economic, political and social pressures.

We recommend this for three reasons. Firstly, this will reinforce the feeling of unity within the EU. Secondly, a unilateral response will provide a clear, strong, and faster answer in order to avoid any attempt by other countries to intimidate and engender repressive politics against EU members. Thirdly, this will reinforce the security of the Union and make sure that no Member States feel left out or ignored. Bilateral responses divide the EU and this is a weakness used by third countries against us.

25. We recommend that the European Union improve its media strategy. On the one hand, the EU should strengthen its visibility on social media and actively promote its content. On the other hand, the EU should continue to organise conferences such as Conference on the Future of Europe on an annual in person basis. In addition, we also recommend that the EU further encourage innovation through promoting an accessible European social media platform.

We recommend the above as it could not only reach younger people, but also generate more interest and involvement among European citizens through a more engaging and effective tool of communication. These events like the Conference on the Future of Europe should allow citizens to be more involved in the decision-making process and make certain that their voice is heard.

26. We recommend that Member States agree on a strong vision and a common strategy in order to harmonise and consolidate the identity and the unity of the EU before allowing the accession to other countries.

We recommend this because we believe it is essential to both strengthen the EU and consolidate the relationship between Member States before considering the integration of other countries. The more states integrate into the EU, the more complicated the decision-making process will become within the EU; hence the importance of reviewing these decision-making processes that are voted through the process of unanimity.

Stream 4: Migration from a Human Point of View

Substream 4.1 Remedy causes of migration

27. **We recommend that the European Union should participate actively in the economic development of countries outside the European Union and from where there is a high outflux of migrants. The EU, with the help of the relevant bodies (for example local NGOs, local politicians, field-workers, experts, etc.), should look for ways to peacefully intervene efficiently and actively in countries with important migration outflux that have previously agreed with the exact terms of cooperation with local authorities. These interventions should have tangible results with measurable effects. At the same time, these tangible results and effects should be clearly outlined in order for EU citizens to understand the development aid policy undertaken by the Union. In this sense, EU development aid actions should become more visible.**

    We recommend this because, even though the EU is working on international development, it needs to keep doing so and invest in transparency and visibility in the policy and actions that it undertakes.

28. **We recommend having a common European labour framework, thus harmonising working conditions throughout the Union (ex. minimum salary, working times, etc.). The EU should try to create basic common standards on labour to prevent migration from citizens that leave their countries of origin seeking better working conditions. As part of these standards, the EU should reinforce the role of trade unions at the transnational level. By doing so, the EU would be considering internal economic migration (EU citizens' migration) as a critical issue.**

    We recommend this because we have identified that a lot of people within the EU migrate due to economic reasons, since there is a disparity between the working conditions of European Member States. This leads to a brain-drain effect in countries which should be avoided in order for Member States to keep talent and workforce. Even though we support free movement of citizens, we think that EU citizens' migration between EU Member States, when happening involuntarily, is due to economic reasons. That's why it is important to establish a common labour framework.

Substream 4.2 Human Consideration

29. **We recommend the implementation of a joint and collective migration policy in the EU based on the principle of solidarity. We want to focus on the problem in regards to the refugees. A common procedure in all the Member States of the Union should be based on the best practice and customs that seemed to be successful in all the countries of the Union. This procedure should be pro-active and actively being executed both by the national authorities and the administration of the EU.**

    The problem in regards to the refugees concerns all the countries in the EU. Currently, the practices in the states are too diversified which has negative consequences for both refugees and the citizens of the Union. Therefore a coherent and consistent approach is required.

30. **We recommend that the EU increases its efforts to inform and educate citizens of the Member States about the topics related to migration. This aim should be achieved by educating children, as early as possible, from the beginning of primary school on the subjects such as migration and integration. If we combine this early education with the activities of NGOs and youth organisations as well as wide-reaching media campaigns, we could fully reach our goal. Additionally, a wide range of communication channels should be used, from leaflets to television and social media.**

    It is important to show the people that migration also has many positive aspects such as additional work force. We want to emphasize the importance of raising awareness on both processes, so that people understand the reasons and consequences of migration to abolish the stigma which comes from the fact of being perceived as a migrant.

Substream 4.3 Integration

31. We recommend that the Directive 2013/33/EU on minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers in Member States be replaced by a compulsory EU regulation, which will be uniformly applicable in all Member States. A priority should be that reception facilities and accommodation be improved. We recommend the creation of a specific monitoring body from the EU for the implementation of the regulation.

As the existent directive is not implemented in a uniform way in all Member States. Conditions such as the Moria refugee camps have to be avoided. Therefore, the recommended regulation should be implemented and have compulsory sanctions. As for the monitoring body, it should be strong and reliable.

32. We recommend that the EU ensures that every asylum seeker and refugee, during the process of the residence procedure, attends language and integration courses. The courses should be mandatory, free of charge and include personal assistance for the initial integration. They should start within two weeks after the submission of the residency application. Additionally, incentives and sanctions mechanisms should be established.

Learning the language as well as understanding the culture, history and ethics of the country of arrival is a key step to integration. The lengthy wait for the initial integration process has a negative impact on the migrants' social assimilation. Sanction mechanisms can help identify a migrants' willingness to integrate.

Stream 5: Responsibility and Solidarity across the EU

Substream 5.1 Distributing Migration

33. We recommend replacing the Dublin System with a legally-binding treaty to ensure just, balanced and proportionate distribution of asylum seekers in the EU on the basis of solidarity and justice. Currently, refugees are required to put forward their asylum requests in the EU Member State they first arrive in. This system transition should be as swift as possible. The EU Commission's proposal for a New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum from 2020 is a good start and should be put into legal form, since it includes quotas on distribution of refugees among EU Member States.

We recommend this because the current Dublin System does not respect the principles of solidarity and justice. It puts a heavy burden on the countries at the

border of the EU, where most asylum seekers first enter EU territory. All Member States have to take responsibility to manage refugee flows into the EU. The EU is a community of shared values and should act accordingly.

34. **We recommend the EU provide support to the EU Member States in order to process asylum requests both at a faster pace and according to joint standards. In addition, humanitarian accommodation should be provided for refugees. To take burden off the arrival countries, we recommend that refugees be relocated within the EU quickly and efficiently after their first arrival into the EU so that their asylum request can be processed elsewhere within the EU. For this, financial support from the EU as well as organisational support through the EU Asylum Agency is needed. People whose asylum requests were denied must be sent back to their countries of origin in an efficient manner — as long as their country of origin is considered safe.**

    We recommend this because asylum procedures currently take too much time, and they may differ from one Member State to another. By speeding up asylum processes refugees spend less time waiting for their final asylum decision in temporary accommodation facilities. Asylum seekers who are admitted can be integrated more quickly into their final country of destination.

35. **We recommend strong EU financial, logistical and operational support for the management of the first reception which would lead to a possible integration or repatriation of irregular migrants. Beneficiaries of such support shall be the EU border states who carry the burden of the migration influx.**

    We recommend strong support because some EU border states bear the greatest burden from the migrant influx due to their geographical location.

36. **We recommend that the mandate of the EU Agency for Asylum shall be strengthened to coordinate and manage the distribution of asylum seekers within the EU Member States to achieve a fair distribution. A fair distribution requires to take into account the needs of the asylum seekers as well as logistical and economical capacities of EU Member States and their needs in terms of labour market.**

    We recommend this because a centralised coordination and management of the distribution of asylum seekers which is regarded as fair, by Member States as well as their citizens, prevents chaotic situations and social tensions, thus contributing to greater solidarity between EU Member States.

Substream 5.2 Common Approach to Asylum

37. We recommend either creating an overarching EU institution or strengthening the EU Asylum Agency to process and decide upon asylum requests for the whole European Union based on uniform standards. It should also be in charge of a just distribution of refugees. This institution should also define which countries of origin are safe and which are not, and should be responsible for sending back rejected asylum seekers.

We recommend this because the current asylum policy is characterised by unclear responsibilities and different standards between EU Member States. This leads to inconsistent handling of asylum procedures across the EU. Furthermore, the EU Asylum Agency currently only possesses "soft" power. It can only advise Member States on asylum issues.

38. We recommend the establishment, without delay, of dedicated asylum centres for unaccompanied minors across all EU Member States. This should be done in order to accommodate and provide care to the minors according to their particular needs, at the earliest opportunity.

We recommend this because:
1) Many minors are likely to be traumatised (coming from areas of conflict).
2) Different children will have differing needs (according to age, health, etc.).
3) Were this recommendation implemented, it would ensure that vulnerable and traumatised minors would receive all necessary care at the earliest possible opportunity.
4) As minors are future European citizens and as such, if treated appropriately, should contribute positively to the future of Europe.

39. We recommend the establishment of a common, transparent system for dealing with the expeditious processing of asylum seekers. This process should provide for a minimum standard and should be applied across all Member States equally.

We recommend this because:
1) Were this recommendation implemented, it would lead to a faster and more transparent way of dealing with asylum claims.
2) A failure to expedite the asylum process leads to illegality and criminality.
3) Minimum standards as referred to in our recommendation should encompass respect for human rights, health and the educational needs of asylum seekers.
4) Implementing this recommendation would lead to access to employment and self-sufficiency, allowing a positive contribution to EU society. Regularising employment status prevents abuses of asylum seekers in the working environment. This could only benefit a more successful integration of all affected.
5) Extended stays in asylum centres have negative consequences in terms of the mental health and well-being of the occupants.

40. We strongly recommend a complete overhaul of all agreements and legislation governing asylum and immigration in Europe. We further recommend that an 'all of Europe' approach be adopted.

We recommend this because:
1) All current agreements are unworkable, impractical, and no longer fit for purpose since 2015 and up to the present day.
2) The EU should be the first "*agency*" that manages all other agencies and NGOs directly dealing with asylum issues.
3) The Member States affected are the ones that are left largely alone to deal with this issue. The 'à la carte' attitude of some Member States reflects poorly on the unity of the EU.
4) New targeted legislation would allow for a better future for all asylum seekers and lead to a more unified Europe.
5) Gaps in the current legislation are giving rise to conflicts and disharmony across Europe and are causing increased intolerance amongst European citizens towards migrants.
6) Stronger, relevant legislation would lead to a reduction in crime and abuses of the current asylum system.

Annex: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL AND NOT ADOPTED

Stream 1 Self-reliance and Stability

Substream 1.1 Autonomy of the EU

We recommend, where the developing countries request it, intervention programmes for economic development based on partnerships adapted to each state's needs and/or commercial agreements, after an initial study of their economic potential and thereafter granting economical support and ensuring professional training.

We recommend this because this leads to the development of industrial independence, creating workplaces which improve the overall migration situation/status; this can also serve to aid better commercial agreements in developing countries.

Stream 2: The EU as an International Partner

Substream 2.1 Trade and Relations in an Ethical Perspective

We recommend that the EU includes regulations that oblige companies to control their supply chain by periodically providing a full (auditing) report, and set conditions that reward and restrict import in accordance with ethical criteria. Depending on the size, the company should provide an internal and/or external audit report.

We recommend this in order to extend the ethical perspective when trading with the EU through monitoring of company activity in the supply chain across countries, incentivizing companies to behave in accordance to ethical criteria such as the use of dangerous products, labour rights and conditions, possible use of child labour, and environmental protection. This recommendation would not apply to online products bought directly by the consumer.

Stream 3: A Strong EU in a Peaceful World

Substream 3.1 Security and Defence

We recommend that the present European security architecture is re-conceptualized as a more efficient, effective, and capable supranational structure. This will ultimately result in the creation of the 'Joint Armed Forces of the European Union'. This development shall entail the gradual integration and subsequent conversion of national armed forces. This unification of military capacities and capabilities across the European Union is also supposed to foster an enduring European integration. The creation of the Joint Armed Forces of the European Union would also require a new cooperation agreement with NATO as well as non-European NATO Member States.

Following this recommendation, we expect military structures within the European Union to be more cost-efficient and capable of responding and acting where necessary. As a consequence of this integrated approach, the European Union should be better placed to act decisively in a coordinated manner in critical situations.

Stream 4: Migration from a Human Point of View

Substream 4.1 Remedy Causes of Migration

We recommend that the EU creates a protocol for action regarding the upcoming refugee crisis that will arise from the climate crisis. As part of this protocol, the EU must expand the definition of refugees and asylum seekers to be comprehensive and include the people affected by climate change. Since a lot of migrants will not have the chance to go back to their countries of origin due to its uninhabitability, another part of the protocol should make sure that institutions find new usages for areas affected by climate change in order to support the migrants that have left these territories. For example, flooded zones could be used to create wind energy farms.

We recommend this because we are all responsible for the climate crisis. Hence, we have a responsibility towards those who are most affected. Even though we have neither predictions nor concrete data about future climate refugees, climate change is something that will for certain affect millions of people's lives.

Substream 4.2 Human Considerations

We recommend the immediate enhancement and funding of legal, humanitarian roads and means of transport for refugees from crisis areas in an organised manner. The special system of Safety European Roads (SER) should be established and regulated by the special body created specifically for this purpose. This agency constituted by means of the legislative procedure would be empowered with its own special competencies enshrined in its rule of procedure.

Human trafficking and smuggling are serious issues that need to be dealt with. Our recommendation would certainly lead to the reduction of these concerns.

Substream 4.3 Integration

We recommend the introduction of a European directive which should ensure that each living area in every Member State cannot have more than 30% of inhabitants from third countries. This goal should be achieved by 2030 and European Member States must get support for the implementation of this.

We recommend this because a more even geographical distribution will lead to a better acceptance of migrants from the local population and therefore an improved integration. The percentage was inspired by a new political agreement in Denmark.

II — Recommendations of the National Citizens' Panels

This document presents a series of recommendations put forward by the 50 Belgian citizens part of the citizens' panels held in Brussels from October till December 2021. These panels were organised under the auspices of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs, Ms Sophie Wilmès, as the contribution of the Belgian federal government to the Conference on the Future of Europe. The topic of this panel was 'How to closer involve citizens in European democracy'.

To reflect the entirety of the citizens' input, this report puts forward all recommendations, including those that did not gain a simple majority during the concluding voting session on all recommendations. They are clearly recognizable thanks to the mention of the percentage in **red and bold**. While some recommendations contradict each other, with citizens remaining inconclusive about them, these recommendations are always in *italics.* For one single recommendation, the divide was so clear that the vote ended in an *ex aequo*. This is shown in **orange and bold** . The citizens' intention is to share the fact that opinions on these recommendations were divided. They therefore propose that the CoFE bodies and the EU institutions be vigilant in the implementation of these specific recommendations, as there is a form of divide based on the vote.

1. Communication

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
1. Communication on the EU is not satisfactory.	1.1 We propose that lessons on the European Union be integrated into the school curriculum from the third cycle of primary school. The aim is to reach all citizens and to improve knowledge of the European Union.	88.4%
	1.2 The European Union, and especially the Commission, should provide educational material on the functioning of Europe to the Ministries of Education of the member states. In addition to explaining the functioning, composition and powers of the institutions, this training should also include a brief overview of the history of European integration. Particular attention should be paid to the use of clear, understandable and accessible language, as well as to educational tools such as documentaries, clips or school TV programmes, in all 24 languages.	95.0%
2. The European project remains alien to citizens.	2.1 We propose that the European institutions ensure that their communication better explains what is within the EU's competences, but also what is not within its competences.	97.6%

	2.2 The European Union should incorporate familiar examples from the daily lives of Europeans into its communication. These explanations should be spread within the Member States through agreements between the European institutions and national public television channels so as to reach a wide audience.	80.5%
	2.3 In addition, nationals of all Member States should be regularly informed about the role of the European Union in the other Member States – through video clips, for example. The advantages and disadvantages of Europe would thereby be better put into perspective in the debates on the future of Europe.	85.7%
	2.4 In order to strengthen European identity, we propose that information be made available and regularly communicated on what Europeans' life would be like without the EU and its concrete achievements.	92.7%
	2.5 We also propose that Europe Day (9 May) be made a European public holiday for all EU citizens.	81.4%
	2.6 We recommend that the European institutions pay even more attention to the simplification, comprehensibility, and accessibility of information on priority topics dealt with at European level.	97.6%
	2.7 We recommend that the European Union provide a dashboard showing the resources allocated by the EU per country and priority topic. All this information should be available on the EU websites.	93.0%

	2.8 We recommend that the EU provide a clear presentation of legislative work in progress. All this information should be available on the EU websites.	90.7%
	2.9 We want the European institutions to be more accessible to Europeans. Their participation in debates during sessions of the European Parliament should be facilitated.	79.0%
	2.10 We recommend that participation in the Erasmus programme be extended to all students regardless of their educational background (vocational and technical training, work-study). Everybody should be able to participate in European exchanges.	79.5%
	2.11 We recommend that the working population should be able to benefit from European exchange programmes, regardless of sector of activity, also for local businesses. Everybody should be able to participate in European exchanges.	83.7%
	2.12 We recommend creating European citizenship courses for all European citizens.	83.7%
3. European legislation is not applied in the same way across Member States.	3.1 We recommend that the European Union make more frequent use of legislation that is directly applicable in the member states. This would reduce national differences in the implementation of European legislation, which undermines the European project. In this way, the EU will be better able to safeguard and promote the integrity of the achievements such as the internal market, the euro and the Schengen area.	81.4%

4. European democracy is threatened.	4.1 We recommend that communication from the EU on European democracy constantly and unambiguously recall what Europe means for Europeans.	78.0%
	4.2 The values and principles of the EU-Treaties, to which the Member States subscribed on accession, are irreversible. Their protection must continue to be ensured.	81.0%
	4.3 The protection of the values and principles of the Treaties is ensured by the European Court and cannot be called into questions by the Member States.	81.0%
5. Information on the EU is not easily accessible and understandable.	5.1 We recommend strengthening fact-checking on European issues. This information, disseminated and verified by the institutions, should be easily accessible to the European public and to the national media in each member state.	83.3%
6. National media often conveys a negative image of the EU.	6.1 The EU must also be more present in the everyday lives of Europeans by communicating more proactively. (For example, by sponsoring events, particularly cultural events, which bring citizens together and make them proud to be EU citizens. The production of reports and teasers would also allow Europeans to have access to contextualised information on the EU).	85.7%
7. Citizens do not know the people who represent them in the European Parliament.	7.1 We recommend MEPs make themselves better known in their home countries, especially outside of election periods. They must be more accessible. The motivations for their votes in the European Parliament should be made more easily accessible to European citizens on the European Parliament's website.	92.7%

	7.2 We recommend that national political parties ensure that younger candidates are also put on their lists for the elections of the European Parliament. Such a mandate should not be seen as a reward for good and loyal service in national politics.	74.4%
8. Communication from the EU is too uniform; it does not take into account the diversity of the population	8.1 To address a sufficiently broad and varied audience, we recommend that the EU take into account the educational level of the target group and any disabilities they may have, by means of inclusive communication, from the design stage. Furthermore, we also recommend that people and organisations (street educators, neighbourhood agents, social workers, civil society) are involved in the transmission of this communication.	73.2%
	8.2 To reach the working population, we recommend investing more in the use of existing communication channels to regularly provide appropriate information about the EU, for example through explanatory programmes. Furthermore, we recommend relying on ambassadors (both individuals and organisations) who promote the EU project.	83.7%

	8.3 To reach young people and students, we recommend that, in addition to existing channels such as education and relevant youth movements, ambassadors should be used, in particular to target influencers who can reach young people through social media. Another recommendation would be to organise a pan-European competition to create a cartoon character that appeals to young people and brings European messages to them.	69.8%
	8.4 For seniors, we recommend using the same channels as those proposed for the working-population. In addition, we recommend finding the right balance between digital and non-digital communication (print, radio, face-to-face events) to meet the needs of everyone, including those who are less comfortable in a digital environment as well as those who are less mobile in society.	85.7%
	8.5 We recommend that through the integration courses that already exist in many member states, the EU should commit itself to including "new Europeans" (people who through one or another legal immigration procedure reside in the EU) and should make them aware of the other traditional channels through which the EU communicates. Finally, we also recommend that a role be given to local associations.	76.7%
	8.6 Furthermore, we recommend taking the EU to the streets with inclusive communication. For example, (digital) billboards could be used, as well as traditional and new means of communication like QR codes.	62.8%

	8.7 Other recommendations would be to make the EU more visual (through short films or infographics), the creation of a European sports movement to create a bond/sense of belonging, and to make the European anthem better known.	68.2%

2. Disinformation

Issues	**Recommendations**	**Supported by (%)**
1. The risk of disinformation is increasingly present in the media.	1.1 We recommend a review of the media funding model, including mandatory publication of revenue sources, in a clear and accessible way. The funding model of the media leads it to sensationalise information, taking it out of context and transforming it into disinformation.	73.8%
	1.2 We recommend that media outlets be obliged to cite their sources and provide links to verify them. Otherwise, information should be labelled as unverified.	90.2%
	1.3 We recommend that the European regulator in charge of the fight against disinformation (see point 2) should also be in charge of accrediting fact-checking organisations.	85.4%
	1.4 We recommend the establishment of an independent authority in each member state to monitor media neutrality. This authority should be financed and controlled by the European Union.	75.6%
	1.5 We recommend disseminating information about the URLs of the official websites of the EU to reassure citizens about the origin of the information.	90.2%

2. Many citizens doubt the neutrality of the media.	2.1 We recommend that a European regulator in charge of fighting disinformation be created. This regulator's mission would be to set the criteria for a 'neutrality label' and to establish, if necessary, a system of sanctions or incentives linked to compliance with neutrality standards. Alternatively, adherence to an ethical charter could be considered. The label would be granted by the independent national authority and would take into account the measures applied by the media to combat disinformation.	87.5%
	2.2 We recommend the installation of a European 'hotline' allowing citizens to report any disinformation concerning European political and economic competences.	82.1%
3. Citizens are not aware of the risks of disinformation to which they are exposed.	3.1 We recommend that platforms be required to publish clear and understandable information about the risks of disinformation to which their users are exposed. This information should be automatically communicated when an account is opened.	85.7%
	3.2 We recommend mandatory media literacy training, starting at an early age and adapted to the different levels of the education system.	74.4%
	3.3 We recommend that the European Union launch repeated campaigns on disinformation. These campaigns could be identified by a logo or a mascot. The EU could oblige social networks to relay them by broadcasting advertisements.	87.5%
4. The means to fight disinformation are insufficient.	4.1 We recommend that clear and easy-to understand information be published about the algorithms organising the messages received by users of social media platforms.	83.3%
	4.2 We recommend that users have a simple way to disable algorithms that reinforce behavioural biases. The obligation to provide users with access to other sources that present different views on the same topic could also be considered.	80.0%
	4.3 We recommend that the European Union support the creation of a social media platform that meets its own standards of neutrality and tackles disinformation. Alternatively, new functionalities could be added to the multilingual digital platform created to support the Conference on the Future of Europe.	56.4%

3. Citizens' panels

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
1. The difficulty of ensuring the representativeness of a citizens' panel. In the end, only a small part of the population is involved.	1.1 We recommend following what the most recent scientific work on deliberative democracy suggests in terms of sampling, design and scientific validation of the selection method to ensure the best possible representativeness.	89.7%
	1.2 We recommend that there be enough people around the table to ensure a diversity of opinions and profiles, including – but not limited to – people who are directly concerned with the topic.	90.2%
	1.3 We recommend adding the criterion of parenthood (i.e. does the person have children or not?) to the governmental sampling criteria, in addition to more traditional criteria such as gender, age, place of residence or level of education.	**33.3%**
	1.4 We recommend establishing quotas by geographical area, i.e. specifying that a European citizens' panel must be made up of x people per European geographical area (to be determined) in order for this panel to be truly qualified as European and to deliberate legitimately.	73.2%
	1.5 We recommend using population registries (or their equivalent, depending on the country) as the main database for sortition to give everyone an equal opportunity to be selected, and to generate interest in a topic among the population.	70.0%
	1.6 We recommend that participants be compensated to recognise the value of their investment and to attract people who would not participate if they were not compensated.	87.5%

	1.7 We recommend informing participants in advance through presentations by experts - in a relatively minimal way without too much information or too much complicated information - to ensure that even those without prior knowledge feel comfortable participating in the discussions.	82.9%
	1.7.2. We recommend that the theme of the citizens' panel be communicated in advance so that people know what topic they will be discussing.	78.6%
	1.8 We recommend that citizens not be obliged to participate.	97.6%
2. The difficulty of organising panels at the European level.	2.1 We recommend that the European citizens' panel meetings be held in a hybrid format (face-to-face/virtual). This would allow people who cannot physically travel to participate.	70.0%
	2.2 We recommend that the EU, for greater ease of access and organisation, delegate the organisation of citizens' panels on European issues to the national level.	69.0%
	2.3 We recommend that a single topic be chosen for each panel organised at the European level. This way, all participants can discuss the same topic, no matter where they come from in Europe.	80.5%
3. Preventing the citizens' panel from being used for purposes other than those declared.	3.1 We recommend that any citizen should be able to submit a topic for discussion, and therefore that this right should not be reserved for politicians or lobbyists.	82.1%
	3.2 We recommend that the right of initiative belong to the European Parliament, so that it defines the topic to be discussed and subsequently adopts the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations.	63.4%

4. The difficulty in deciding how best to organise the process to best represent citizens.	*4.1.1 We recommend setting up one or more permanent European citizens' panel(s), which would take on specific tasks alongside Parliament. The panel(s) would be renewed regularly. This would make it possible to bring citizens together over the long term and to take the time necessary for such debates to take place. This time allows for nuanced debates and consensus-building. Alongside this permanent panel, ad hoc citizens' panels would debate topics chosen by the permanent panel. We propose following the model of the German-speaking community of Belgium.*	*54.8%*
	4.1.2 We recommend setting up one or more non-permanent European citizens' panel(s), which would only meet to discuss a specific topic for a set period of time.	*58.5%*
	4.2 We recommend not organising European citizens' panels for urgent issues, as sufficient time is needed to ensure the quality of debates.	63.4%
5. Too often, citizens who participate in participatory democracy initiatives such as citizens' panels do not receive feedback on the follow-up given to their work, in the short or the long term.	5.1 We recommend giving feedback to citizens on the follow-up given (or not given) to the recommendations issued after European citizens' panels. If the recommendations are not followed up, the relevant European institutions should give reasons for their decision (e.g. lack of competences). To this end, we recommend that regular summaries be drafted throughout the process following a panel.	97.5%
	6.1 We recommend organising citizens' panels also with children from a young age (e.g. 10 to 16 years old) to raise their awareness of participation and debate. This can be organised in schools.	59.5%

4. Referenda

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
	0.1 We recommend that it should be possible to organise referenda at European level on European issues.	73.3%
1. Referendum culture varies strongly from one Member State to another.	1.1 We recommend commissioning research on how to create a common referendum culture in Europe.	70.7%
	1.2 We recommend that an independent panel examine whether it is appropriate to hold a European referendum on a specific issue.	77.5%
2. The wording of the question asked in a referendum can have a negative impact, as can the fact that the answer is only 'yes' or 'no', which often polarises debates and societies. The choice of subject is also sensitive.	2.1 We recommend the creation of a scientific committee that would be in charge of determining how to ask the questions that would be the subject of a European referendum in the most neutral way possible.	87.2%
	2.2 We recommend asking multiple choice questions, going beyond the simple alternative of 'yes' or 'no' to provide nuance, even attaching conditions to both 'yes' and 'no' (i.e. 'yes if…', 'no if…').	65.0%
	2.3 We recommend that blank votes not be included in the calculation of any majority, whether a simple or absolute majority. There must nonetheless be enough votes (the quorum must be respected).	75.0%
	2.4.1 We recommend that a question asked in a European referendum can be on any subject within the competences of the European Union.	87.5%
	2.4.2 We recommend excluding subjects that could be a source of conflict between member states.	**39.0%**
	2.5 We recommend that technical and difficult questions can also be asked, worded clearly, because people have the capacity to be sufficiently informed.	77.5%

3. Referenda are not a democratic tool if only the political sphere can decide to organise one.	3.1 We recommend that the European Parliament have the right of initiative to organise European referenda, and that it should then be able to implement the results (the European Commission and the Council should follow, without the possibility of blocking it).	67.5%
	3.2 We recommend that the initiative to organise a referendum can also come from the citizens themselves (following, for example, similar rules as the European Citizens' Initiative).	77.5%
	3.3 We recommend that the practical organisation of a European referendum be the responsibility of a neutral body.	75.0%
4. The binding or non-binding nature of a referendum must be clearly defined.	4.1.1 We recommend that the result of a European referendum should only be binding if certain conditions are fulfilled in terms of rate of participation.	92.7%
	4.1.2 We recommend that the results of a referendum should only be binding if certain majorities are reached (51/49, 70/30). These conditions should be determined before each referendum.	72.5%
	4.2 We recommend that the result of a European referendum should be binding if the initiative to organise it was taken by citizens (who would have managed to collect a certain number of signatures for this purpose) but non-binding if the initiative was taken by a political institution.	**47.5%**
	4.3 We recommend that the result of a European referendum be binding only for certain issues, but not for those where the consequences of the vote could be very serious.	**40.0%**
5. The public is often poorly informed before being asked to vote in a referendum. At the same time, it is important to control the information provided to avoid negative influences (domestic or foreign) on the vote.	5.1 We recommend that before any European referendum, the population be clearly informed on the impact of the result of the vote on their daily lives through pamphlets, as is done in Switzerland, and/or through information sessions	97.5%
	5.2 We recommend that a scientific committee be created for each European referendum to guarantee the neutrality of the information provided.	87.2%

6. Although a referendum invites the whole population to directly participate (in contrast to a citizens' panel), there is always a certain proportion of people who do not vote.	*6.1.1 We recommend that voting in a European referendum be mandatory.*	***43.6%***
	6.1.2 We recommend that voting in a European referendum be voluntary.	*52.5%*
	6.2 To reduce the number of non-voting people, we recommend allowing electronic voting in addition to paper voting (or even in addition to other means of voting, such as postal voting). Electronic voting is particularly interesting for people going on holiday, and it also encourages people who are less interested in voting because the constraint of travelling to the voting location is removed.	90.0%
7. Too often, citizens who participate in participatory democracy initiatives such as referenda do not receive feedback on the follow-up given to their work, in the short or the long term.	7.1 We recommend giving feedback to citizens on the follow-up given (or not given) to the decision taken by citizens in a European referendum.	92.5%

5. Existing instruments

5.1 Elections

Issues	**Recommendations**	**Supported by (%)**
1. Different rules exist between the different member states.	*1.1 We propose that voting be compulsory for the elections of the European Parliament, but with sufficient information for citizens to understand the reasons.*	***50.0%***
	1.2 Our recommendation is to make the rules for elections of the European Parliament as uniform as possible in all countries, including the minimum age.	87.2%

2. There is no sufficient diversity of MEP's for criteria such as age, origin, gender.	2.1.1 We propose that MEPs should be of all ages and backgrounds	82.1%
	2.1.2 We propose that MEPs should deliberately choose a European career, and not just because they are at the end of their career.	82.5%
	2.1.3 We propose to strive for balanced gender distribution, for example by alternating genders on the electoral lists. The EU must establish these criteria and respect them in the composition according to the quota. If a candidate refuses their mandate, the following candidate by preference and with the same gender takes over the mandate.	82.5%
	2.1.4 We recommend that candidates on European lists exercise their mandate if elected.	89.2%
3. We vote for the European Parliament and have no say in the composition of the Commission	3.1 We propose that there should be a treaty change whereby the largest party group in the European Parliament can appoint the President of the European Commission.	**48.6%**
	3.2 We recommend that the composition of the European Commission be made more transparent, according to some basic rules, so that the composition reflects citizens' voice and citizens know how the selection was made.	88.9%
4. There is a lack of knowledge of the candidates for the European elections, nor of their program or the political group they'll be part of in the European Parliament	4.1 We propose that the European candidates should present themselves, their objectives and their programme in a more concrete way locally and through different channels of communication.	84.2%

5.2 European Ombudsman

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
1. The non-English webpage only contains information in English on the first two pages. This causes an obstacle to citizens who are not proficient in English.	1.1 We propose to put information on the homepage in all European languages and, if it translation is not possible, to post news in English elsewhere on the site.	89.2%
2. The Ombudsman is not involved in the sanction and possible damages for the complainant.	2.1 We propose that the Ombudsman should be part of the process of finding and implementing the solution, sanction or compensation, and should have a voice in the process.	71.1%
3. The delay to validate the subscription to the website can be very high. This can take up to 24 hours, discouraging the citizen who does not pursue further.	3.1 We propose installing a system for immediate validation.	**47.4%**
4. When a complaint is filed the question is asked whether all possible procedures have been tried. The citizen does not know all of them and cannot respond to the question.	4.1 We propose to include a link to a simple presentation or explanation of the other procedures.	89.5%
5. The website of the Ombudsman is well made but does not have a proper European 'image', what raises questions with the citizen (am I in the right place, is this website credible?).	5.1 We propose to revise the website's graphic design and to bring it more in line with that of the EU. A first tip would be to raise the European flag to the top of the page. It must be clear at the first "click" that the citizen is on the site of the Ombudsman.	78.4%

5.3 Public consultation

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
1. The consultation website has changed, and the citizen is sent in first instance to an outdated site. You have to undertake a search to find the URL of the new site.	1.1 We propose to delete the old site and reference the new site first.	81.6%
2. The roadmap (English) and advices (language of the 'citizen editor') of a consultation are not translated into the language of the citizen reading	2.1 We strongly recommend that the roadmap be translated into the language of the citizen. Having the roadmap only available in English blocks any citizen who does not speak English from participating.	81.6%
	2.2 We propose to put a tab or icon "Automatic translation" on each individual submission, which would link to an open-source translation engine such as Google Translate or DeepL.	65.8%
3. You have to subscribe to receive information on the follow-up of the process.	3.1 We propose to send the follow-up of the process automatically to every person who responds, with the possibility to unsubscribe.	89.5%
4. We don't know whether the number of opinions in one direction influences the commission, or if they are perceived as on point of view (weighted or not). If the number of opinions in one direction is being accumulated, we are worried that the weight of lobbyists/activists/big enterprises in the consultation and thus actions undertaken by the EU compared by the voice of citizens/NGO's.	4.1 We recommend providing clear information on the subject on the website.	81.6%
	4.2 If the number of opinions in one direction has an impact, we recommend that a system is put in place to filter out lobbyists, activists or big business so that they are not given undue weight.	60.5%
	4.3 We recommend the creation of artificial intelligence software that classifies the different opinions and counts the opposing or favourable opinions.	**47.4%**

	4.4 We propose to organise meetings between citizens and (activist) associations: places where citizens can express their opinions, in the form of "Europe Houses" that can help spread citizens' views at European level. These should exist at different locations and at the local level.	62.2%
5. The opinion form is unclear: there are both an open question and a questionnaire. What is the role of each document, what has to be completed?	5.1. This information should be clarified on the website.	81.6%
6. There are too many levels of competences for what concerns the instruments.	6.1 We propose the creation of a dispatching centre to direct requests to the appropriate level of authority.	78.9%

5.4 European Citizens' Initiative

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
1. Citizens without internet are harder to reach.	1.1 We suggest that local authorities or libraries, which are independent of government, could be involved in the dissemination of initiatives and collection of signatures, both electronically and on paper. The EU should draw up an inventory of this network per country and make it available to the citizens starting the ECI.	71.1%
2. The number of countries to participate is too low to create sufficient support.	2.1 We propose to raise the number of countries from which signatures are collected to 13 in order to have more support for the proposal. The number of signatures should be respected in proportion to the number of inhabitants.	64.9%
3. The cost and effort to gather the signatures is high.	3.1 We propose that there should be EU funding to support these initiatives.	71.1%
	3.2 We propose that a body be set up to facilitate coordination between countries.	75.7%
4. The procedure is complex for citizens.	4.1 We propose the creation of a helpdesk to assist citizens in completing the procedures.	83.8%

5. It is unclear what the result of a citizens' initiative is.	5.1 We propose that the European Commission should be obliged to discuss and work on the follow-up to the proposal, not simply respond and acknowledge receipt. If the Commission decides to not act on the proposal, it must justify this.	100.0%
	5.2 We propose to organise a citizens' consultation when a European Citizens' Initiative is received to ask for their opinion on it before the Commission follows it up. This would avoid having only extreme opinions or votes and include the opinion of people who did not sign the ECI. In addition, if all citizens give their opinion, the suggestion will have more weight at EU level and in its follow-up.	55.3%

5.5 Right to petition

Issues	Recommendations	Supported by (%)
1. The European Commission takes the final decision, no certainty on the outcome.	1.1 We propose that the European Parliament's recommendation be followed up by the Commission.	81.1%
2. There is a lack of transparency on the process and motivation for the decision	2.1 We propose that the person who submits the petition be kept informed about the progress and decisions at regular intervals. Reasons should also be given for the final conclusion.	94.4%
3. It is hard for citizens to address the need for new legislation.	3.1 Our recommendation is that a petition should also be used as a tool to demonstrate the need for new legislation.	78.4%

Conference
on the **Future**
of **Europe**

L'avenir est entre vos mains

Contribution citoyenne à la Conférence sur l'avenir de l'Europe

This document is a translation of the summary report on the 'French citizens' contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe', organised by France. The full version of the report in French is available at: https://participation-citoyenne.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2021-11/20211126%20-%20COFE%20-%20Rapport%20final.pdf

Contents

Introduction 114
Presentation of the main results 118
Presentation of the regional conference panels 120
Commitments and methodological approach 122
Part 1: presentation of the outcome of the regional conferences on the future of Europe 130
Part 2: presentation of the outcome of the 'Parole aux Jeunes' ('Young People Have Their Say') consultation 148
Conclusion 152

Introduction

The Conference on the Future of Europe is an unprecedented exercise in citizen participation, providing an opportunity to consult the citizens of the 27 Member States of the European Union in order to put them back at the centre of the decisions being made for the years and decades to come. In this way, EU citizens are invited to make their voices heard, by proposing changes and specific actions that will enable Europe to define a new ambition and address the global challenges it faces today.

The French government supports the initiatives of the three-presidency team of the Conference on the Future of Europe, in particular by encouraging its citizens to make a substantial contribution to the online platform and to organise events throughout the country.

In parallel with these European initiatives, the government wanted to carry out a participatory exercise at national level.

With the support of the Ministry with responsibility for Relations with Parliament and Citizen Participation (MRPC) and the expertise of the Interministerial Centre for Citizen Participation (CIPC), the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) organised a citizen-focused exercise based on strong methodological approaches (see 'Commitments and methodological approaches' below). To implement the programme, the MEAE used a consortium comprised of Roland Berger, Wavestone, Missions Publiques and Harris Interactive. The regional prefectures also played a key role in organising the 18 conferences throughout the country.

The participants in the consultation were asked a single question: '***As French citizens, what changes do you want for Europe?***' (see Annex IV 'Mandate for participation').

This national exercise took the form of 18 regional conferences in the 13 metropolitan regions and the five French overseas regions, held over three weekends in September and October 2021 and each involving between 30 and 50 randomly selected citizens (746 in total). A summary of these 18 regional panels was then produced at a national conference held on 15 to 17 October 2021 at the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) in Paris, involving 98 volunteers from among the citizens who had participated in the regional conferences.

In addition, in order to highlight the views of young French people ahead of the European Year of Youth in 2022, an online consultation entitled '*Parole aux Jeunes*' ('Young People Have Their Say') was organised by the MEAE in partnership with Make.org. More than 50 000 young people aged 15 to 35 shared their ideas and priorities for Europe in 2035.

This report sets out the main results of the two consultations carried out by the government.

Methodology of the consultation

The recruitment of citizens to take part in the regional conferences combined a random selection of participants by drawing lots from their telephone numbers, and targeted selection from among certain groups in order to ensure the panel was as representative as possible of the diversity of each area.

At the regional panels, the participants shared their views by alternating group work, with tables of six to eight citizens assisted by a facilitator, and presentations in plenary. Experts were present during the discussion time to answer citizens' questions and provide clarification, while making sure to maintain a neutral stance.

Citizens were first invited to discuss their current perception of Europe. They then shared their **aspirations for Europe in 2035**, in their groups and afterwards in plenary. These discussions made it possible to identify between three and eight aspirations per region. For each of these aspirations, the citizens then outlined the **changes** that they thought were needed to achieve this vision for Europe, accompanied by specific proposals to be implemented. The process resulted in a total of 515 changes and 1 301 specific proposals at national level.

A regional summary report was produced for each regional conference and provided to all participants ahead of the national conference.

The national summary conference involved 98 citizens drawn by lot from among the participants in the 18 regional conferences. In order to ensure diversity on the national panel, six citizens were drawn by lot from among the volunteers from the regional conferences in metropolitan France and Réunion, and four citizens from the overseas conferences, with each regional draw making sure to maintain a gender balance and include a range of ages (see Annex II).

In preparation for the national conference, the 515 changes identified at the regional conferences were analysed and combined when the underlying intention appeared to be similar or related, so as to form 14 groups of changes reflecting a common aspiration for Europe (see part 6). These 14 aspirations for Europe served as the basis for the work of the 98 participants in the national conference, whose task was to build on the work done in the regions and compare the aspirations for Europe, the changes and the proposals with the help of some twenty experts, in order to arrive at a list of priority changes. Finally, each group selected three key changes, the first of which was voted on by all 98 citizens, establishing a final ranking of the 14 priority changes. A summary report consolidates all of the work done at this conference.

The online consultation for young people (‘Parole aux Jeunes’) took place from May to July 2021 with the support of Make.org. More than 50 000 participants took part and submitted almost 3 000 proposals for Europe. Based on all the young citizens’ reactions, 35 main ideas were identified, of which 22 were widely favoured and 13 gave rise to controversy among the participants (see Part 11 below).

Starting point and duty to follow up

This report will be submitted to the Government by the citizens on 29 November 2021, in the presence of the French elected representatives who are members of the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe. It will be submitted to the three-presidency team of the Conference during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

At the end of the national synthesis conference at the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC), and in order to meet the high expectations of the randomly selected citizens, a citizens’ follow-up committee was set up to represent the participants’ right to follow up. This committee, composed of 15 members — 14 representatives of the regional conferences and one representative of the ‘Parole aux Jeunes’ consultation — will be tasked with informing citizens about the outcome of their proposals. At each meeting of the Conference Plenary, one or more of the members of the Follow-up Committee will participate as a representative of the French exercise to highlight the proposals set out in this report, while building a common position with all the European citizens represented.

All of the documents from the French consultation — mandate for participation, regional summaries, national summary, guarantors’ report and final report — will be public and accessible to everyone on the French State’s platform for citizen participation:

Presentation of the main results

L'avenir est
entre vos mains

Overview of the French contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe

Citizens drawn by lot were asked the question:
'As French citizens, what changes do you want for Europe?'

TOP 10 PRIORITY CHANGES FOR EUROPE IN 2035

1. Encourage **energy restraint**, consuming less and eliminating excess

2. Strengthen the European Union's **common defence and security**

3. Promote **collective economic performance** through autonomous, competitive industry developed and promoted by the EU

4. Establish **citizen power** at several levels: participation, decision-making, control

5. Move towards a **federation of European states** with strong powers in common areas of interest

6. Offer **exchange programmes** at all stages of life

Source: Changes that received the most votes at the national conference on the future of Europe (15-17 October 2021).

7. Share European cultures through **gatherings and events that bring people together**

8. Harmonise **healthcare** and make it accessible to all Europeans through a common healthcare policy

9. Develop and oversee **strategic sectors** at European level to ensure our sovereignty

10. Improve the **protection of ecosystems and environments** and create **protected areas** at the heart of urban, peri-urban and rural areas

'Young People Have Their Say' online consultation

On 9 May 2021, the Minister of State with responsibility for European Affairs launched a consultation called **'Parole aux Jeunes'** ('Young People Have Their Say'), conducted by Make.org, which ran from May to July 2021.

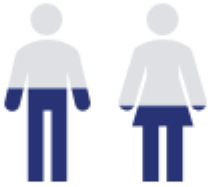
50 000 young people aged 15 to 30 responded to the question: **'What are your priorities for the Europe of tomorrow?'**, submitting 2 918 proposals.

The **most popular ideas** among the young French people who took part in this online consultation were included in France's contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe (see part 11 of the report for more details).

Presentation of the regional conference panels

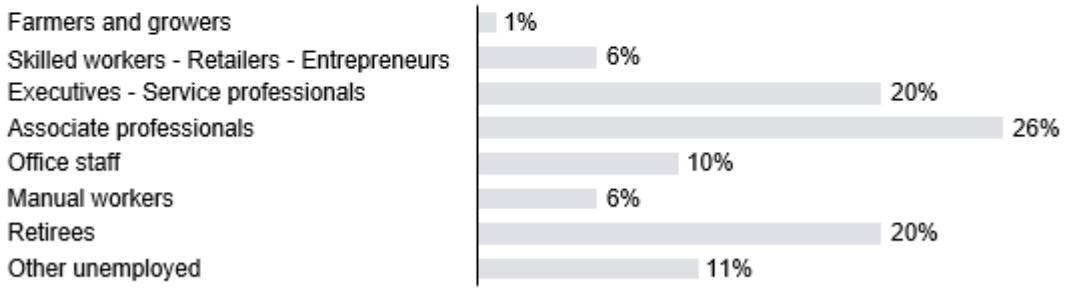
A diverse panel of 746 citizens

Overview of the participants in the 18 regional conferences



60% 40%

aged 18-24	aged 25-34	aged 35-49	aged 50-64	aged 65+
10%	**15%**	**28%**	**29%**	**18%**



Conferences on the future of Europe all over France

18 regional conferences, 13 in metropolitan France and 5 in overseas regions

Commitments and methodological approach

a. State commitments on participatory democracy

The French component of the Conference on the Future of Europe is underpinned by the commitments the State has signed up to on participatory democracy, which are based on three principles: **transparency, neutrality and the duty to follow up**.

A participatory approach requires the organiser to adhere to a rigorous methodology. The method of citizen participation should enable citizens to participate under the best possible conditions and to express their views in a free and reasoned manner.

Transparency

The team organising the conference undertook to make all the information relating to the consultation — listed below — accessible to citizens:

- The framework for consultation;
- The commitments made vis-à-vis citizens;
- The purposes of the consultation;
- The results of the consultation.

The methodology of the Conference on the Future of Europe was thus established with the constant objective of ensuring transparency for citizens. The methodology for recruiting randomly selected citizens, the methodological approach and the handling of citizens' views were clearly set out. Participants also received a summary of their regional conference by email at the end of the conference. In addition, all working documents and proceedings will be made public at the end of the forum on the State Citizen Participation Platform[1].

[1] www.participation-citoyenne.gouv.fr

Neutrality

During a consultation, the organising team must ensure it remains neutral when facilitating exchanges and drafting summaries of the results. Stakeholders — moderators, facilitators, experts — should not express their own views or try to steer the debate in a subjective way.

The objective of neutrality was pursued at all preparatory stages of this consultation, for instance by ensuring absence of bias in selecting participants, total freedom of expression during discussions, and citizens' input being free of influence from the sponsor or stakeholders. This need for neutrality was reflected in an objective and transparent process to recruit participants, consistent methodological approach (reverse expertise, no thematic framework for debates) with special attention being paid to the attitude of the various stakeholders (moderators, facilitators, experts). Lastly, the organising team made sure that all contributions were taken into account and that there was no screening of citizens' proposals.

A **panel of 3 guarantors**, appointed by the Presidents of the National Assembly and the European Parliament and by the Government, also ensured that all opinions expressed were respected and taken into account.

Duty to follow up

Citizens, irrespective of whether or not they participated in the consultation, have the right to be informed of what has been adopted from their proposals and their opinions, and for what reasons. This is known as the **duty to follow up**.

It is defined by the Interministerial Centre for Citizen Participation (CIPC) and the Interministerial Directorate for Public Transformation (DITP) as the public decision-maker's commitment to provide citizens with a clear and comprehensible response to the planned follow-up to the consultation. In practical terms, the duty to follow up means providing feedback to citizens to explain how their contributions are taken into account and have an impact on the administration's decisions and practices.

The Government took up this duty to follow up at the Conference on the Future of Europe and announced an ambitious follow-up mechanism at the end of the national conference; this is described in the following section of this report (see 'Methodological approach').

b. Methodological approaches

These three State commitments were reflected in the consultation methodology in the form of **seven strongly-focused methodological approaches**.

1. Territorialisation and proximity to citizens

The national component of the Conference on the Future of Europe took the form of 18 regional conferences, in the 13 metropolitan regions and the five French overseas regions, followed by a national conference in Paris. The aim of organising these panels at local level was to **be as close to citizens as possible to gather their views**. This approach also enriched the consultation by revealing the lines of consensus and disagreement among the regions on different issues.

2. Diversity of citizen profiles and random selection

A recruitment target of 50 citizens per regional conference was set ahead of the process, with the exception of the overseas conferences of Martinique, Mayotte, Guadeloupe and Guyana, for which the target was 30 to 40 citizens, and the conference of the Grand Est region, at which five German citizens from the three bordering *Länder* were also present. The citizens invited to participate in the regional conferences were drawn by lot through **random selection** of telephone numbers.

In order to be eligible, the randomly selected citizens had to be over 18 and either French or permanent legal residents in France. Each regional citizens' panel needed to be **representative of the diversity of the regional population** and to bring together a **variety of views on Europe**. The details of the methodology used for the recruitment by random selection are set out in Annex II.

3. Transparency of the process

A **panel of three guarantors**, appointed by the Minister of State for European Affairs, the President of the National Assembly and the President of the European Parliament, monitored the entire process to ensure that it was neutral and conducted properly. In particular, the guarantors: verified that citizens were genuinely being recruited by random selection; made recommendations regarding the choice of experts; and ensured, through on-the-spot visits, that the discussions were being conducted well. At the end of the programme, the guarantors will publish their opinion on the consultation. This document will be made available online on the state citizen participation platform.

The following will also be published on the State citizen participation platform: summaries of the 18 regional conferences; the document summarising all of the changes outlined during the regional conferences; the summary of the national conference; and lastly the final report submitted to the government.

4. An open discussion with no fixed agenda

A single question was put to the citizens participating in the national consultation: '*As French citizens, what changes do you want for Europe?* '.

The approach taken and the methodology put in place allowed citizens to decide for themselves on tabling the desired changes, without being constrained by a specific subject or a predetermined normative framework.

The aim was to thus allow the citizens at the regional conferences to enjoy total freedom as regards the subjects they wished to discuss. For the national component of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the MEAE therefore chose to develop an approach that would complement the European exercise, which is structured around nine topics: climate change and the environment; health; a stronger economy, social justice and jobs; EU in the world; values and rights, rule of law, security; digital transformation; European democracy; migration; education, culture, youth and sport; other ideas[2].

The discussion topics for the regional conferences were therefore determined by the citizens themselves, not by the sponsor of the exercise.

5. Reverse expertise

In order to minimise any influence on participants in the process of identifying their aspirations for Europe, the decision was made **not to provide any information or expertise in advance** (for example, on the current EU project, its competencies or the functioning of the institutions), but to take questions raised by the citizens themselves as the starting point. This methodological approach is based on the principle of '*reverse expertise*', according to which **collective reflection** takes place on the basis of the experiences and opinions of citizens, who then question experts in order to support their discussions and consolidate their working hypotheses.

To achieve this objective, **experts** were mobilised in the various regions (three, on average), including from academia and from the Europe Direct Information Centres in the areas concerned. They were present on the Saturday and Sunday of each weekend to answer citizens' questions, speaking only at their request. **Fact-checkers** were also contactable to quickly check any factual questions from citizens.

During the national summary conference at the CESE, 19 high-level experts from academia, think-tanks and the diplomatic corps were present in the working groups. These experts each accompanied a group throughout the weekend, allowing them to examine the changes outlined by the regions in more depth.

6. Collegiality and responsive governance

The whole process was **co-developed** by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), supported by the participative strategy of the Interministerial Centre for Citizen Participation (CIPC) within the Interministerial Directorate for Public Transformation (DITP) and the Ministry with responsibility for Relations with Parliament and Citizen Participation (MRPC). The process was implemented by a consortium comprised of Roland Berger, Wavestone, Missions Publiques and Harris Interactive, which was responsible for steering the process, organising the conferences, drawing lots to select the citizens, and drafting the reports and summaries, working together with the regional prefectures on the local arrangements for the regional conferences.

Specific governance was put in place in the form of a project team headed by the MEAE and comprising the CIPC, the MRPC and the consortium.

7. Duty to follow up and link with the European exercise

At the national conference, it was announced that there were several components of the French institutions' **duty to follow up** once the exercise for the Conference on the Future of Europe had been conducted, including:

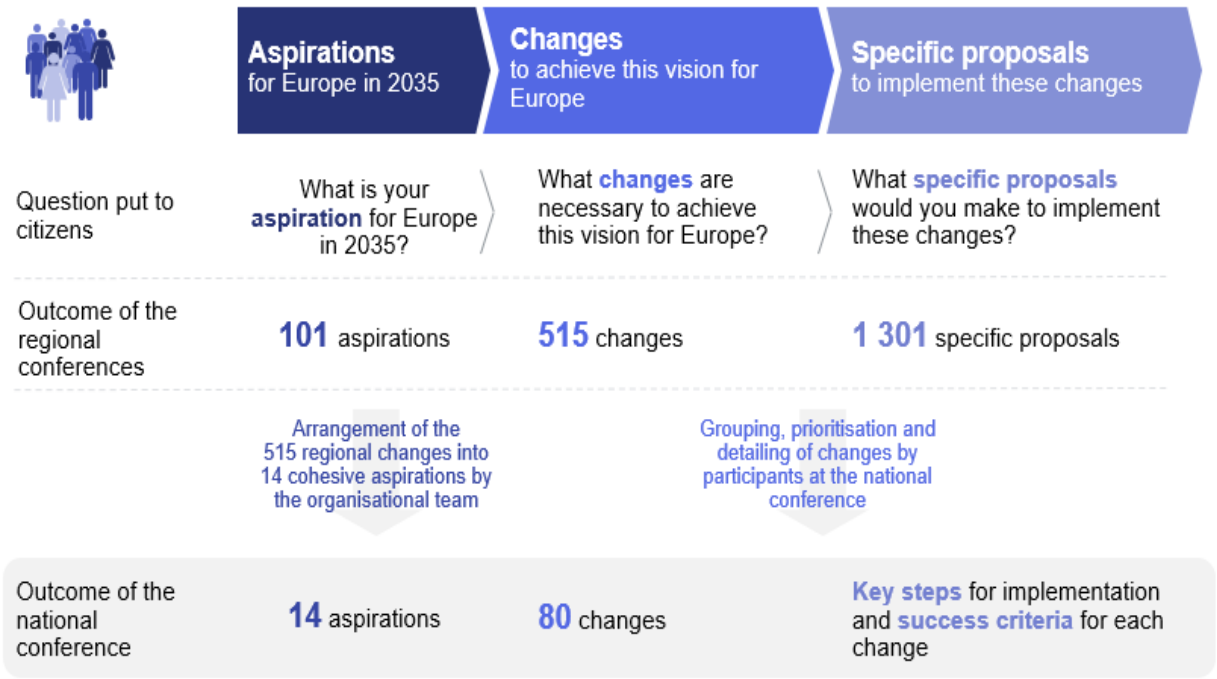
- **publishing all the information** on the process, this document, and the summary reports from the regional and national conferences, in a transparent and fully accessible manner, on the new citizen participation platform launched upon presentation of the final report to the government;
- organising an **event to present the government** with the final report from the national component of the Conference on the Future of Europe in November 2021;
- establishing a **citizens' follow-up committee** to ensure that the proposals made during the process are followed up. This committee will be made up of 15 citizens, including 14 participants from the regional conferences and one participant in the '*Parole aux Jeunes*' online consultation;
- **submitting the French contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe to the European institutions** in January 2022.

The French citizens' proposals will be put forward for discussion by all the Member States and the European institutions. As the country holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022, it will be incumbent on France to be the voice of its citizens while also seeking to establish a common European position.

Part 1: presentation of the outcome of the regional conferences on the future of Europe

At each of the 18 regional conferences, citizens described their aspirations for Europe in 2035, individually and then in groups. Three to eight groups of aspirations emerged in each region, totaling **101 visions for Europe across the whole of France**. The citizens then outlined changes that they thought were needed to achieve this vision for Europe, accompanied by specific actions. The process resulted in a total of **515 changes** and **1 301 specific actions** for the whole of France.

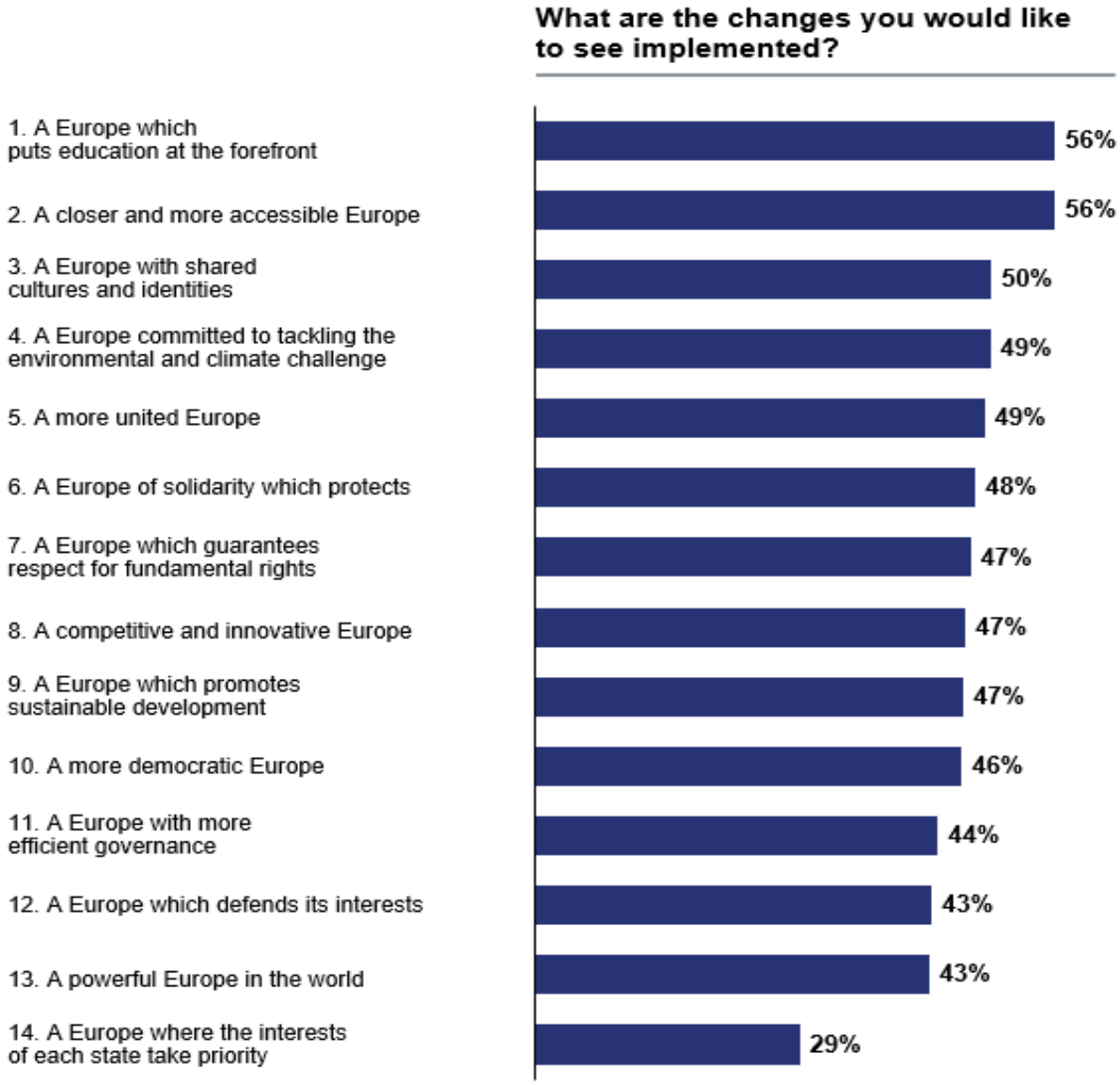
In the weeks between the regional conferences and the national conference, the project team worked on arranging the 515 changes into cohesive groups. All of the changes put forward by the regions were subject to a lexicological analysis, and combined when the underlying intention seemed similar or related, so that working groups with a common aspiration for Europe could be established for the national conference. Finally, **the changes identified by the regions were grouped into 14 separate aspirations for Europe**.



(a) Ranking of the 14 aspirations for Europe

At the end of each regional conference, the participating citizens voted to express their support for the changes identified by the different working groups.

On the basis of the groups established prior to the national summary conference, it was possible to determine – as a result of the votes on the changes in each region – which aspirations for Europe were the most popular among the citizens. For example, '*a Europe which puts education at the forefront*' and '*a closer and more accessible Europe*' were widely favoured, with changes that were supported by an average of 56 % of citizens at the regional conferences.



Aspirations for Europe ranked by popularity

(b) Presentation of the 14 priority changes from the national conference

At the national summary conference, the 100 citizens taking part each worked on one of the 14 groups of aspirations. At the end of the discussions, each group selected **one priority change to be made by 2035** which reflected their aspiration for Europe. The 14 priority changes were then voted on by the 100 citizens on the last day of the national conference. The result of the vote is set out below, in descending order of the number of votes received for each change.

The most popular change among the 100 citizens at the national conference was '*Encourage energy restraint, consuming less and eliminating excess*'.

For each priority change, the citizens of the group concerned gave a definition of the change, proposed specific actions to implement that change and set out the criteria for success by 2035.

Change 1 – Promote energy restraint, consuming less and eliminating excess

Associated aspiration for Europe: A Europe committed to tackling the environmental and climate challenge

What does this change cover?

Key words: Development of renewable energy sources, reduction in energy consumption

The aim of this change is to encourage a reduction in energy consumption in Europe and the development of renewable energies. Its prioritisation by citizens expresses their desire for Europe and its inhabitants to take **resolute action** in the face of the environmental and climate challenge.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

This change consists in the development of ambitious **research programmes** on renewable energy sources and the **deployment of European investment funds** taking direct shareholdings in companies in the sector.

For citizens, this change would be successful if it resulted in **binding targets** for lower energy consumption and **key indicators of moderation**, such as a reduction in the EU car fleet or in meat consumption. The ambition is also to successfully establish **consumption quotas per sector**, taking account of fluctuations in the consumption of businesses and respecting the confidentiality of their data.

Change 2 – Strengthen the European Union's common defence and security

Associated aspiration for Europe: A powerful Europe in the world

What does this change cover?

Key words: European army, strategic autonomy

This change is in line with citizens' unanimous desire to achieve **autonomy** in the area of defence and security in Europe, so as not to depend on foreign powers.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

For citizens, the success of this change would be reflected above all in the appointment of a **European Commissioner** for Defence and Security.

In the field of defence, the creation of a **permanent army**, which is responsive and can be deployed throughout the world, would enable Europe to protect its borders and intervene, if necessary, at the request of third countries.

As regards security, citizens consider that Europe should guarantee **security of supply** and protect its **strategic research**, in priority sectors such as the space sector, cybersecurity, the medical sector and the environment. Better **protection of the external borders** should also help to curb illegal immigration and trafficking.

Change 3 – Promote collective economic performance through autonomous, competitive industry developed and promoted by the EU

Associated aspiration for Europe: A Europe which defends its interests

What does this change cover?

Key words: European preference, protection of know-how, development of European champions

This change aims to achieve three objectives: strengthening a policy of a **'European preference'** within the Union, ensuring the **protection of essential goods and know-how**, and creating '**European champions**'.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

Achieving these objectives, first of all, means implementing a policy of a **'European preference'** in the context of calls for tender, and the introduction of a **carbon tax** on imports.

The protection of know-how would result in increased control of takeovers and foreign investment, and the expansion of **relocation aid**.

Finally, the creation of 'European champions' means encouraging European **industrial alliances** in strategic sectors and boosting public venture capital investment.

Citizens see the criteria for the success of this change as the development of European industrial alliances in key sectors, increasing the number of business relocations and improving Europe's trade balance.

Change 4 – Establish citizen power at several levels: participation, decision-making, control.

Associated aspiration for Europe: A more democratic Europe

What does this change cover?

Key words: increase voter turnout, a European satisfaction barometer, mainstream citizen consultations

Through this change, citizens propose to develop a *'full civic experience*' for Europeans, by increasing their **involvement** at all stages of the decision-making process. This change reflects citizens' desire to **make their voices heard** and to influence public policies affecting their daily lives.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

For citizens, the main task is to develop and perpetuate citizens' participation initiatives**.** To this end, action can be taken on several fronts: the constitution of a **permanent consultative assembly**, enshrining **citizen power** in the European treaties and the creation of a **label** certifying laws which have emerged from citizen consultation.

The criteria for the success of this change would be upward movement in indicators such as **voter turnout**, **interest** and **trust** expressed in the European Union and the **use of European websites**. An increase in the number of decisions taken following a citizens' consultation and the increased use of **European Citizens' Initiatives** (ECIs) also emerge as hallmarks of success.

Change 5 – Move towards a federation of European states with strong powers in common areas of interest

Associated aspiration for Europe: a more united Europe

What does this change cover?

Key words: unified institutions, elected President, strengthening EU competences

This change reflects the desire of our citizens to **unify** European political institutions. Envisaged is a federation of states with the aim of **strengthening** the shared or exclusive **competences** of the European Union, without, however, moving towards a federal state.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

Internally, this change could involve increasing **civic participation**, creating **European ministries** within the Member States and, in the longer term, **electing** the President of the European Commission by **universal suffrage**.

Externally, the strengthening of Europe's voice abroad would be **embodied** by a **single representative of Europe** on the global stage.

This federation of states would also benefit from an increased **European budget**, with the aim to reach 10 % of GDP (currently 2 %).

Change 6 – Offer exchange programmes at all stages of life

Associated aspiration for Europe: a Europe which puts education at the forefront

What does this change cover?

Key words: educational exchanges, Erasmus

This change is broadly supported and reflects the importance for citizens of encounters and experiences abroad as a powerful source of European sentiment. The aim is to move from "*academic knowledge to an* ***approach*** *to Europe* ***based on lived and felt experience***" and to understand education in the broad sense as **life-long learning**.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

The success of such a change depends primarily on the introduction of **wider mobility opportunities**, including, *inter alia*, educational exchanges, twinning, travel and professional mobility. Citizens consider that these opportunities must be accessible to all, especially people with low incomes or disabilities. For example, the Erasmus programme could include all Europeans, regardless of age or income. These programmes should be devised so as to be **diverse, inclusive and accessible**, with simplified administrative procedures.

Beyond mobility, the importance of **encouraging closer links between education systems** (diploma equivalence, etc.) and of making Europe more attractive to prevent the drain of talent to third countries was also mentioned.

Change 7 – Share European cultures through gatherings and events that bring people together

Associated aspiration for Europe: a Europe with shared cultures and identities

What does this change cover?

Key words: European festival, European public holiday, European Expo

The aim of this change is to **create and maintain a European spirit** through common experiences, events and festivities.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

Citizens envisage **fun, unifying and popular** events that can be shared by as many people as possible. To this end, they should involve **all target groups** (including children, school children, young people and Erasmus students) and take place in **various locations** (retirement homes, schools, public administrations, prisons, etc.).

In particular, two events were envisaged to bring Europeans together: a **European Expo** to represent all Member States and a **revamp of Europe Day** on 9 May, including an educational event "*so that we do not forget the peace linked to Europe and its values*". At the same time, European representatives could meet the continent's schoolchildren in their schools in order to strengthen citizens' closeness to and understanding of Europe from an early age.

Change 8 – Harmonise healthcare and make it accessible to all Europeans through a common healthcare policy

Associated aspiration for Europe: a Europe of solidarity which protects

What does this change cover?

Key words: universal health coverage, harmonisation of care services, a fundamental right to health

To ensure access to healthcare for all Europeans and meet the "*need for protection and solidarity*", a **supranational healthcare system** was unanimously proposed. It would be based on fair funding between Member States and draw on the best EU schemes. Such a change reflects the desire of citizens to see Europe take a more active role in the protection of its inhabitants, especially in the field of health, where action so far is considered too timid.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

To implement this change, the principle of **universal European social security** was approved by a majority. However, it was not possible to decide how this system would be implemented. While some argue for '*a centralisation of data allowing [European] healthcare workers to access a patient's entire medical history*', others perceive that measure as *'a further loss of liberty, and a means of control*'.

However, **transparency** and the **harmonisation of regulatory requirements** across the continent in this field, as well as a **European Healthcare Plan**, were identified as prerequisites for any significant change.

Change 9 – Develop and oversee strategic sectors at European level to ensure our sovereignty

Associated aspiration for Europe: A competitive and innovative Europe

What does this change cover?

Key words: development of European champions, control of foreign investment, digital and energy autonomy

Oversight at European level of sectors considered strategic, such as health, food, energy, digital, defence, transport and new materials, meets the **need for sovereignty** identified by citizens. Such oversight would limit competition between European companies, encourage the **emergence of continental champions** and **reindustrialise Europe** by means of a European preference.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

In order to achieve this sovereignty, a **European authority** could be tasked with overseeing these sectors by issuing authorisations for takeovers of European companies by foreign competitors and by ensuring that imported products meet the same standards as EU products. In the medium term, **30 % to 50 %** of what is consumed in Europe in these strategic sectors should be **produced in Europe**, and up to **70 %** in the long term. Meeting these criteria would ensure **self-sufficiency** and **international influence** and even lead to the **export** of the European industrial model.

Change 10 – Improve the protection of ecosystems and environments and create protected areas at the heart of urban, peri-urban and rural areas

Associated aspiration for Europe: A Europe which promotes sustainable development

What does this change cover?

Key words: environmentally sustainable urbanisation, respect for and conservation of soil

The aim is to **limit the negative impact of urbanisation on soil**. Far-reaching action would **limit disasters** linked to soil degradation such as landslides and **improve the quality of life in urban areas**, including by planting trees.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

The proposed action is twofold: first of all **reverse the trend of new builds** to slow down the pace of soil sealing, and secondly, **encourage soil restoration** to *give back to nature what belongs to it*.

Change 11 – Set up local European contact points to consult with and advise citizens

Associated aspiration for Europe: A closer and more accessible Europe

What does this change cover?

Key words: Houses of Europe, local contact point for Europe, better access to information

The aim of this change is to provide concrete responses to the fact that **the European Union is not felt to be present in everyday life**, as highlighted by many participants, and to work to bring Europe and its citizens closer to one another.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

To close the gap between the EU and citizens, a **specialised contact point** could be appointed in each town hall with the role of listening to and advising citizens. The information provided by this report could be of a socio-economic nature, focusing on accessing European aid or information, for instance on the role of lobbyists. The information provided would be addressed to both the general public and professionals, in particular to advise SMEs and help project owners to access EU funds. In the long term, this change could lead to the creation of **dedicated Europe hubs,** similar to the existing Houses of Europe, but at local level, for optimal regional coverage.

This change would be seen as successful if every citizen *instantly recognises* this contact point and dedicated hub, which would provide resources, information and advice about Europe and where citizens would be listened to.

Change 12 – Standardise elections to the European Parliament in the 27 Member States and bring the EU closer to citizens by replacing the current voting method with uninominal voting at regional level

Associated aspiration for Europe: A Europe with more efficient governance

What does this change cover?

Key words: Institutional change, citizens monitor activity throughout the term of office

This change reflects citizens' desire to **be closer to elected representatives** and to follow their activity throughout their term of office. It addresses the widely shared finding that citizens' concerns do not lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

The change in the election method would consist of a **unified voting system** at European level and the transition from national constituencies to regional constituencies, which is considered possible by 2035.

Change 13 – Establish a common policy to offer a better reception to and improve the social and professional integration of migrants (including irregular migrants)

Associated aspiration for Europe: A Europe which guarantees respect for fundamental rights

What does this change cover?

Key words: European migration office, guaranteeing a decent reception everywhere in Europe

The aim of this change is to improve the reception of migrants in the European Union, a problem which citizens unanimously identify as an **emergency**. In contrast to the current situation, the establishment of **a common, concerted and solidarity-based immigration policy** appears as a major contributor to peace.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

The gradual implementation of a common policy on the reception of migrants would make this change a success.

A **citizens' initiative** should submit this change to the Commission and, in the medium term, enable the adoption of a **common standard** defining a framework for the reception and social integration of migrants. In the long term, this standard would be supported by the creation of a **specialised European immigration office** and the recognition of migration policy as a European Union competence.

Change 14 – Preserve the specific characteristics (food labels, craft products, traditions) of the different European regions to prevent the homogenisation of ways of life and ensure product traceability and quality

Associated aspiration for Europe: A Europe where the interests of each state take priority

What does this change cover?

Key words: European labels, promoting diversity of cultures and traditions

The aim of this change is to preserve the **diversity of European traditions and products** and to **prevent the homogenisation** of ways of life – a criticism often levelled at the European Union.

What are the key stages and criteria for success?

From the point of the view of the citizens, it is mainly a question of making the existing database of the different **European and national labels** more accessible. To this end, it was proposed that a website be created that follows the three-click principle: one click to access the site, a second to display a map of the regions of the European Union, and a third to bring up a description of each region's labels.

Success with regard to this change would take the form of enhanced communication about existing practices, resulting in citizens' having a better knowledge of the diversity of European cultures.

Part 2: presentation of the outcome of the ‘Parole aux Jeunes’ (‘Young People Have Their Say’) consultation

Dates of the consultation

09/05/2021 to 18/07/2021

Turnout figures

50 008 participants

2 918 proposals

338 330 votes

The ‘Parole aux Jeunes’ consultation was launched on the initiative of the Minister of State for European Affairs. This consultation forms part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, an unprecedented exercise in participatory democracy conducted by the European institutions, the aim of which is to give all European citizens the opportunity to voice their views on what they expect from the European Union. The consultation’s findings will inform the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe and of the French Presidency of the European Union.

4 main outcomes

1. A massive mobilisation of young people: over **50 000 young French citizens**, across all the regions, took part in the consultation.
2. The most significant **points of consensus** concern European policies to combat **climate change, relocating** production to Europe, **revitalising European democracy, and the EU’s global influence** (economy, research, human rights, diplomacy).

3. **The idea of a more powerful and united Europe runs through the entire consultation**, and there is consensus on several points:

- A Europe that stronger economically (particularly as a result of relocation) to contend with China and the United States
- A diplomatic Europe with more clout on the international stage
- A Europe that is a world leader in the fight against climate change
- A Europe brought together by its young people
- A Europe united in research and innovation

4. **Four ideas supplementing** those generated by the citizens' panels were also endorsed by the young participants:

- A European economy that is environmentally and socially responsible
- A Europe that is geographically more connected by rail
- A fairer Europe in terms of taxation
- Strong EU action to promote women's rights

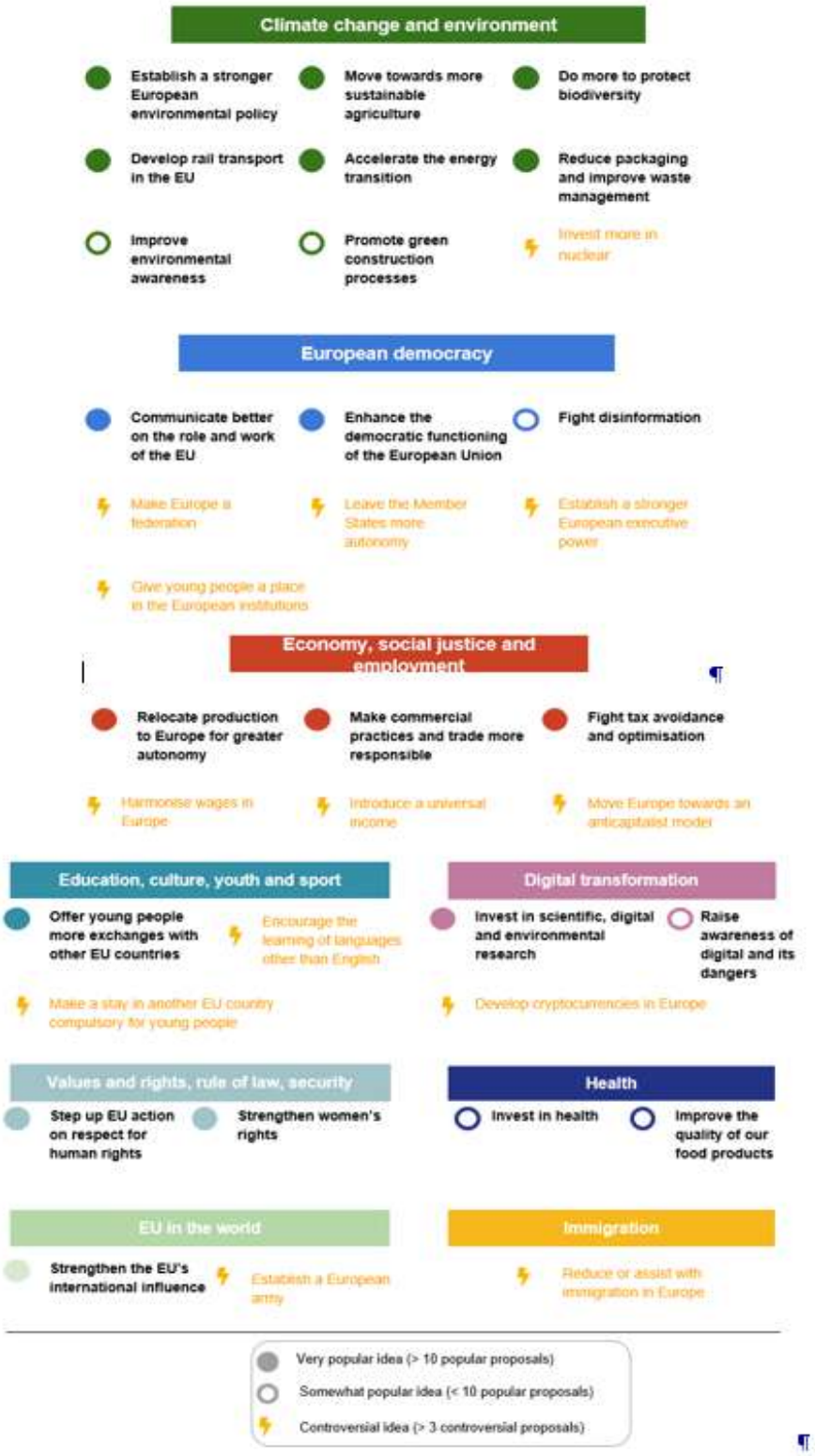
22 popular ideas and 13 controversial ideas divided among the nine topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The popular ideas are based on proposals supported by a majority of the participants in the consultation. Popular proposals are those that garner the most support, with an average of ***79 % of votes in favour****.*

The controversial ideas are based on the proposals that provoked the most debate among the participants in the consultation, with a balance between votes for and votes against. Controversial proposals are those most hotly debated during the consultation, with an average of ***40 % of votes in favour and 38 % of votes against.***

Analysis of these proposals led to the identification of 22 popular ideas and 13 controversial ideas. These 22 popular ideas and 13 controversial ideas were divided up into nine categories corresponding to the main topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Summary of the popular and controversial ideas



Conclusion

'For you, in one word, Europe in 2035 should be...':

Response from citizens participating in the national conference to the final question:

'For you, in one word, Europe in 2035 should be...'

National Citizens' Panel on the future of Europe in Berlin

- Citizens' recommendations -

Germany held its National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe on 5, 8, 15 and 16 January. The process of selecting citizens followed the stratified random selection of participants for the European Citizens' Panels. 12,000 citizens in Germany were invited to participate; out of the respondents, approximately 100 were selected, taking into account the current census data of the Federal Republic of Germany to reflect the diversity of German society and the population as a whole. During the National Citizens' Panel, the participants discussed five topics: The Role of the EU in the world, A Stronger Economy, Climate and Environment, SocialJustice, European Values and the Rule of Law. They then developed concrete recommendations under these headlines that were adopted in the final plenary session on 16 January: *www.youtube.com/watch?v=cefqmarZXzY*

Table 1:

Linking foreign trade interests with climate policy measures

We recommend that the EU (particularly the EU Commission) launch an investment package for climate-friendly technologies and innovations, including funding programmes. This package should be financed through climate-related import tariffs which would be earmarked and passed on as monetary compensation for the climate damage caused. In this context, a points-based system to rate sustainability would be introduced for certain products. A clear EU position and a strong and innovative Europe would be helpful inreaching global climate targets. This would help consolidate the role of the European Union as a responsible, global pioneer and model which secures wealth and can bring aboutsustainable global changes. Those goals are important to us because the EU is making an enduring contribution in the fight against climate change which in the long term could make an important contribution to consolidating world peace.

Table 2:

Creating incentives for production to be based in the EU, especially the production of basic supplies

In order to facilitate the production of basic supplies in the EU, we recommend accelerating and standardising approval procedures, reducing bureaucracy and offering subsidies to companies that relocate to the EU and/or develop production sites in the EU. The EU should promote renewable energy on a massive scale in order to reduce energy costs.

Through these measures, we want to shorten supply chains and make them more climate friendly, help strengthen the EU and create jobs in which human rights are respected.

Those goals are important to us because relocating production to the EU would make the EU internationally more autonomous and politically less vulnerable.

Table 1:

Digi-Score – points for a strong EU-wide digital economy

We propose introducing a publicly accessible digital score board, Digi-Score, run by the European Commission (DG Connect). This is a detailed ranking system that indicates and compares the current level of digitisation of EU businesses. With this proposal, we aim to create an incentive to increase digitisation across Europe. Businesses with a low digital score would be entitled to receive targeted support to help them catch up.

This goal is important to us because it would help pave the way for increasing productivity, efficiency and sales and thereby strengthen Europe as a manufacturing base.

Table 2:

Information platform for an EU-wide exchange of knowledge and experiences

We recommend that the EU set up an information platform serving as an EU-wide exchange of knowledge and experiences. Our goal is to pool information on transnational education and training courses in the EU, showcase best practice examples and offer citizens the opportunity to present new ideas for cross-border exchange. In addition, further information could be provided on the technical expert fora available (e.g. on energy, environment,digitisation).

We deem this important because citizens need transparency about the cross-border training and education courses that are available. They should receive better guidance at EU level on what fora and platforms exist.

Table 1:

Regulation on guaranteed product life

We recommend that the EU introduce legislation to ensure a product-specific, extended, guaranteed lifetime for products manufactured and sold in the EU and make it transparent for consumers.

Resources are finite and could be saved through this measure, as well as waste be avoided, which would benefit the environment, the climate and consumers.

In this way, we want to encourage manufacturers to bring products on to the market thatare more durable and repairable.

Table 2:

Long-term EU campaign for sustainable consumption and lifestyle

We recommend that a European body, including branches in EU countries, be provided with its own resources and lead the campaign.

We aim to ensure that all people in the EU have a common identity, become more mindfulof the need for sustainable consumption and lifestyle and adopt this way of life.

These goals are important to us because we want to generate an intrinsic motivation for sustainable living.

Table 1:

Creating more exchange opportunities for students in Europe

We recommend that the European Union adopt - in addition to the existing ERASMUS programme - a regulation on an exchange programme for students between the ages of 14 and 25 - irrespective of background, gender and level of education. This exchange programme should be systematically established and communicated by local schools. Every student should have the possibility to make use of the exchange programme at any time during his or her school career. To this end, the European Commission should submit a proposal to the European Parliament and the European Council

Our aim is for students, irrespective of school performance and financial support by their parents, to have the possibility to take part in exchange programmes throughout Europe. A culture of European exchange should be fostered from school age. Above all, it is important that exchange programmes are low-threshold and free of red tape. Through the exchange programme, we want to establish European solidarity and reduce language barriers. This should take place with educational justice and educational participation in mind in order to enhance intercultural and communicative competences.

These goals are important to us since they can help promote European cohesion, strengthen respect and cooperation and impart European values from a young age, so that Europe's diversity can be perceived as a chance.

Table 2:

Introducing a basic job-specific salary

We recommend that the EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights submit to the European Parliament a proposal for the introduction of a basic job-specific salary in all Member States. This basic salary should be composed of a minimum wage sufficient to secure a livelihood, and a job-specific supplement.

Our aim is for working performances and wages to be comparable within the EU in order to strengthen social justice. This goal is important to us to ensure that the basic principle of the EU is reflected in the labour market: comparable living and working conditions, irrespective of one's place of residence and profession.

Table 1:

Embodying European values and communicating them emotionally

We recommend that European values be made more tangible and communicated in a more emotional way. We could achieve this, for example, through an "onboarding" package, comprising media, interactive elements and greater involvement of citizens.

Our goal is for every single person living in the EU to know about the common values and identify with them.

This goal is important to us because it forms the basis of our co-existence in our community of values. There is far too little awareness of these values because the personal connection is missing. We need to establish this connection.

Table 2:

“EU Life”

We recommend that the EU establish its own educational and informative television programme in order to strengthen awareness among all EU citizens of our common values and ensure that there is easy, barrier-free access for all. These goals are important to us because we wish to gain an insight into public opinion in all EU countries. In this way, we want to strengthen common ground and help bring people together in order to promote more solidarity and train people in the rule of law in order to safeguard democracy.

Citizens' panel to formulate recommendations for the Conference on the Future of Europe, 11-12 March 2022

Summary Report

Rome, 16 March 2022

SWG

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 160

1. Guiding Principles of the Panel Organisation Process 161

2. Participants' Selection and Engagement Procedures 162

3. Panel Organisation 165

4. The Work Agenda 165

5. Recommendations Collected 167

A Stronger Economy, Social Justice, and Jobs 167

1. Overcoming the 20th Century Production Model 167
2. Generative and Inclusive Productive Regulations 168
3. Measuring Growth in People's Happiness and Not in the Quantity of Products 168
4. Greater Integration Amongst States 169
5. Inclusion Policies 169
6. Employment 171

Europe in the World 172

1. Strengthening the European Identity 172
2. Strengthening the Economy and Institutions 173
3. Cooperation and Partnerships 174
4. Political and Cultural Reference Point 175

6. Final Evaluation by Participants 16

1. Guiding Principles of the Panel Organisation Process

The whole process of panel implementation was designed to comply with the indications of the Guidance for National Citizens' Panels in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Specifically:

- **Purpose:**
  All those invited to take part in the panel filled in a participation questionnaire indicating the objectives and aims of the project, with specific references to the Conference on the Future of Europe, the topics covered and the methods of engagement.
- **Transparency:**
  All materials for the presentation of the initiative were made available to participants through a variety of means, always referring to the official website of the Conference and emailing the materials to all participants.
- **Inclusiveness:**
  The invitation to participate was conveyed in a variety of ways, such as: an email invitation to members of the SWG Community as well as the dissemination of links to fill in the application form via Twitter and Linkedin. This generated a total of over 400 accesses to the application form and 245 applications. The selection of participants (based on randomness) was carried out in such a way as to ensure the presence of people of different genders, ages, social backgrounds, places of residence and employment status.
- **Representativeness:**
  Although the size of the sample is not representative in the statistical sense, the mechanism for constructing the sample was designed to achieve maximum heterogeneity amongst the participants in order to reproduce a microcosm of the target audience.
- **Information:**
  All participants were provided with an extensive set of information about both the Conference and the topics discussed during the panel. In the introductory section, the objectives and modalities of the project were reiterated according to the principles of neutrality and completeness. All participants were given the opportunity to ask for more information and details about the event through the direct telephone numbers of SWG's project managers.
- **Deliberation Groups:**
  The key objective of the entire process was the formulation of concrete recommendations addressed to the European Union, broadly shared by the participants. The working approach and the way the groups were led resulted in a process centred on the collection of participants' indications, their elaboration and synthesis as well as their verification and validation by the groups themselves through a subsequent working session.
- **Timing:**
  A relaxed atmosphere was created during the working sessions, giving the participants plenty of time to explore the issues on which they were asked to deliberate, express their opinions and listen to those of others. For the same reason, it was decided to divide the two main groups into two subgroups. The work was also spread over two days so as to allow a proper sedimentation of the considerations that emerged.

- **Follow up:**
  The last day of work saw all the panels engaged in a verification and validation process of the first draft of the recommendations elaborated during the first phase of the work. Once the report on the results had been delivered to the Department for European Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and the relevant authorisation had been received, the final version of the recommendations was shared with all the panel participants. In all cases, participants were invited to continue to follow the activities of the Conference through the website and the updates that will be published.
- **Integrity:**
  The entire work process was conducted in full autonomy by SWG, according to the assignment received. The Department for European Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers was constantly informed about the different steps of the initiative and the results that were being achieved.
- **Privacy:**
  The privacy of participants was fully guaranteed. In order to be admitted to the panel, all candidates had to sign the informed consent required by law.
- **Assessment:**
  At the end of the process, a questionnaire was administered to all participants to evaluate their experience, the results of which are summarised in this report.

2. Participants' Selection and Engagement Procedures

The Selection

The aim of the pre-event communication phase was to recruit at least 50 Italian citizens interested in participating in the initiative.

To this end, a short self-application form was set up: a questionnaire to be filled in online on SWG's proprietary platform, in which all those interested in participating in the initiative could apply by indicating the minimum data necessary for their placement in the clusters from which participants were randomly drawn. The necessary conditions for participation were the availability of an internet connection, a device equipped with a microphone and video camera as well as the signing of the Conference Charter.

The application form was disseminated through social networks from SWG's accounts. To this end, 6 posts were made on Twitter and 1 on Linkedin with the following results:

Social network	Dates	Number of views	Access to the application link
Twitter	6 posts between 8 and 10 March	889	31
Linkedin	1 post on 8 March	410	2 5

At the same time, members of the SWG Community were invited to apply, according to an invitation strategy aimed at guaranteeing maximum representation of the Italian population, not only in terms of socio-anagraphical characteristics, but also in terms of ideas, cultural orientations and values.

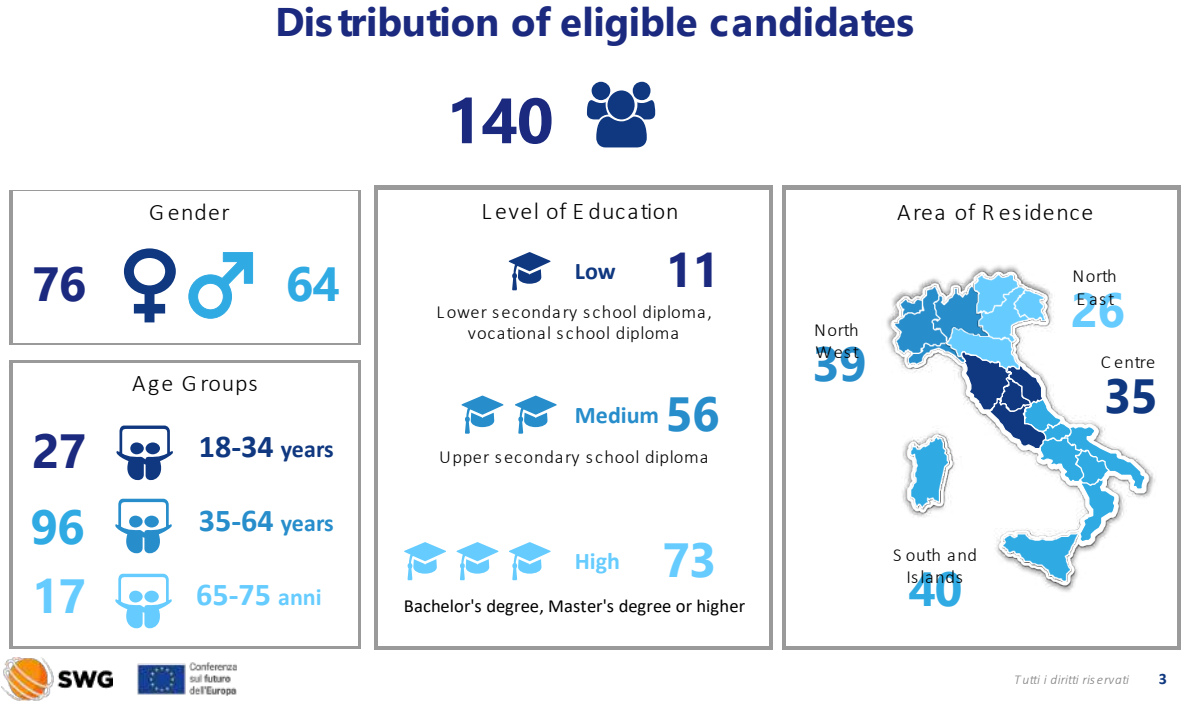
Applications were held between 8 a.m. on 8 March and 4 p.m. on 10 March 2022, resulting in a total of 420 accesses to the application form and 225 completed applications.

A total of **140** people were actually eligible, from which 70 were selected according to a criterion aimed at ensuring a balanced presence of subjects in terms of gender, geographical distribution, age and educational qualifications.

In the candidate selection procedure, particular care was paid to operating according to a principle of fair probability for selection amongst participants, with procedures based on a criterion of conditional randomness.

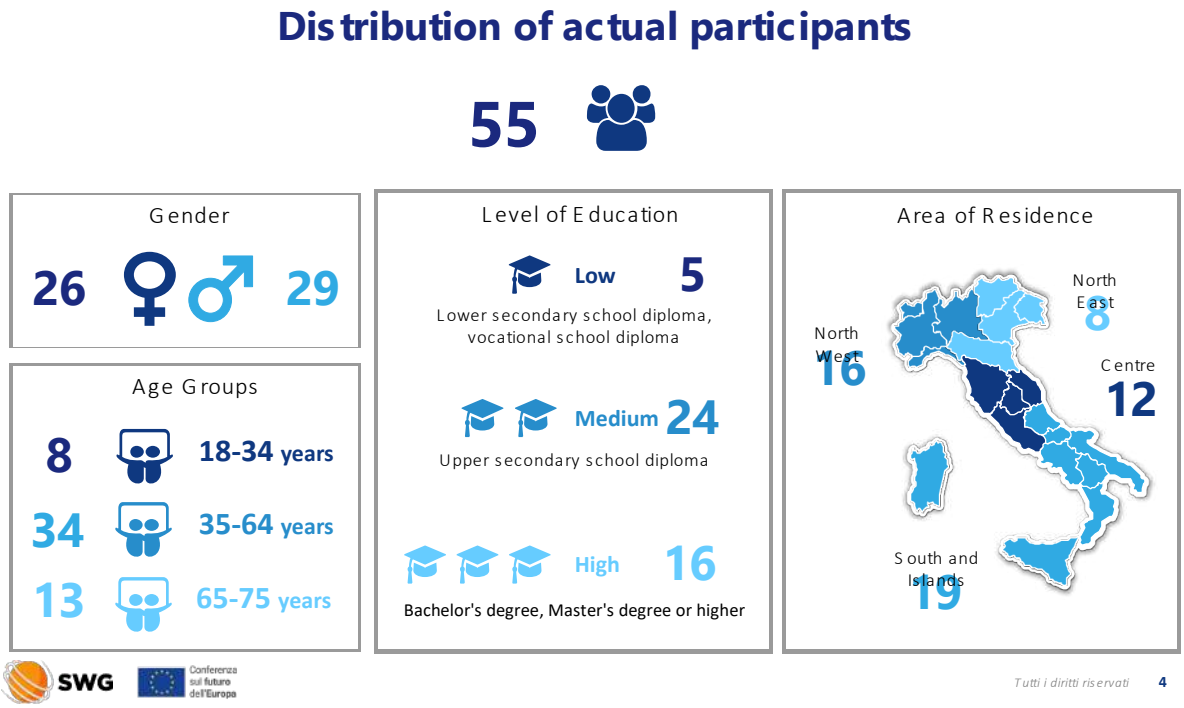
The randomness of the draw was a central element of the project to ensure fairness in the access process. However, in the spirit of the initiative, it seemed important to put in place a strategy not only to involve the maximum number of subjects possible, but also to ensure maximum heterogeneity of the selected subjects in order to promote maximum inclusiveness.

In summary, the distribution of those eligible to participate was as follows:

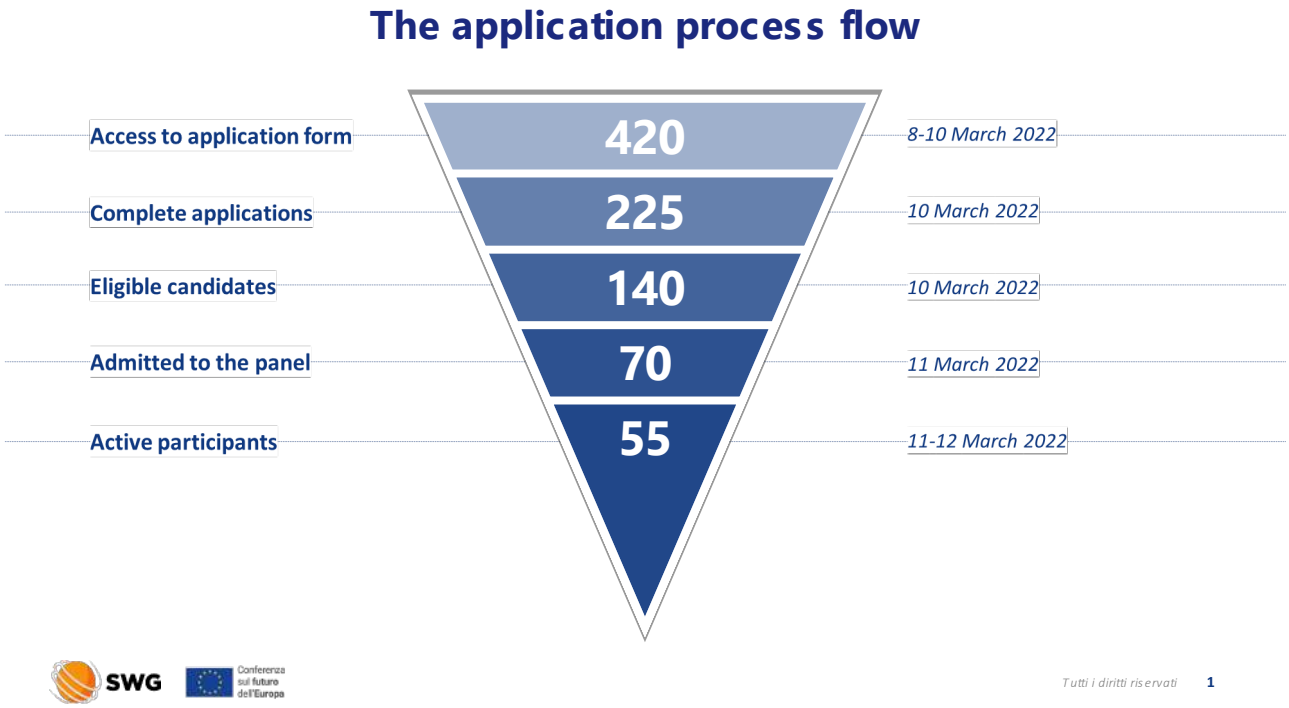


Once the 70 candidates had been drawn and, on the morning of the event, telephone calls were made to those identified to confirm their participation. The recall was carried out by SWG's proprietary CATI Contact Centre. Overall, at the end of this phase, 59 subjects were registered and confirmed their participation. **Of these, 55 took an active part in the panel.**

The social and age composition of the panel was as follows:



At a glance, these are the results of the recruitment process:



Communication Materials

To ensure a high level of motivation and participation from the very first engagement, the following materials were made available to all participants:

- **The presentation sheets of the Conference on the Future of Europe and of the national panels.**
- **The Future of Europe Conference Charter.**
- **The themes of the topics that would be discussed during the panels.**
- **The technical and organisational information required for participation.**

3. Panel Organisation

In order to maximise the participation of people with work commitments, the panel was structured on two consecutive half-days, including a public holiday, according to the following schedule:

- **Friday 11 March from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.**
- **Saturday 12 March from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

On the one hand, this decision was intended to facilitate workers' participation in the initiative and, on the other hand, break up the commitment to participation by encouraging greater attention and involvement, with also greater deliberation on the issues and proposals presented.

The panel participants accessed the two working sessions through the GoToMeeting platform and were divided into 4 groups (two for each thematic area), led by a SWG moderator and with the presence of a transcriber to take the minutes of the interventions. The moderators led the groups through two different discussion tracks (one for each thematic area), aiming to involve all participants as much as possible and ensuring an approach based on maximum inclusion and neutrality.

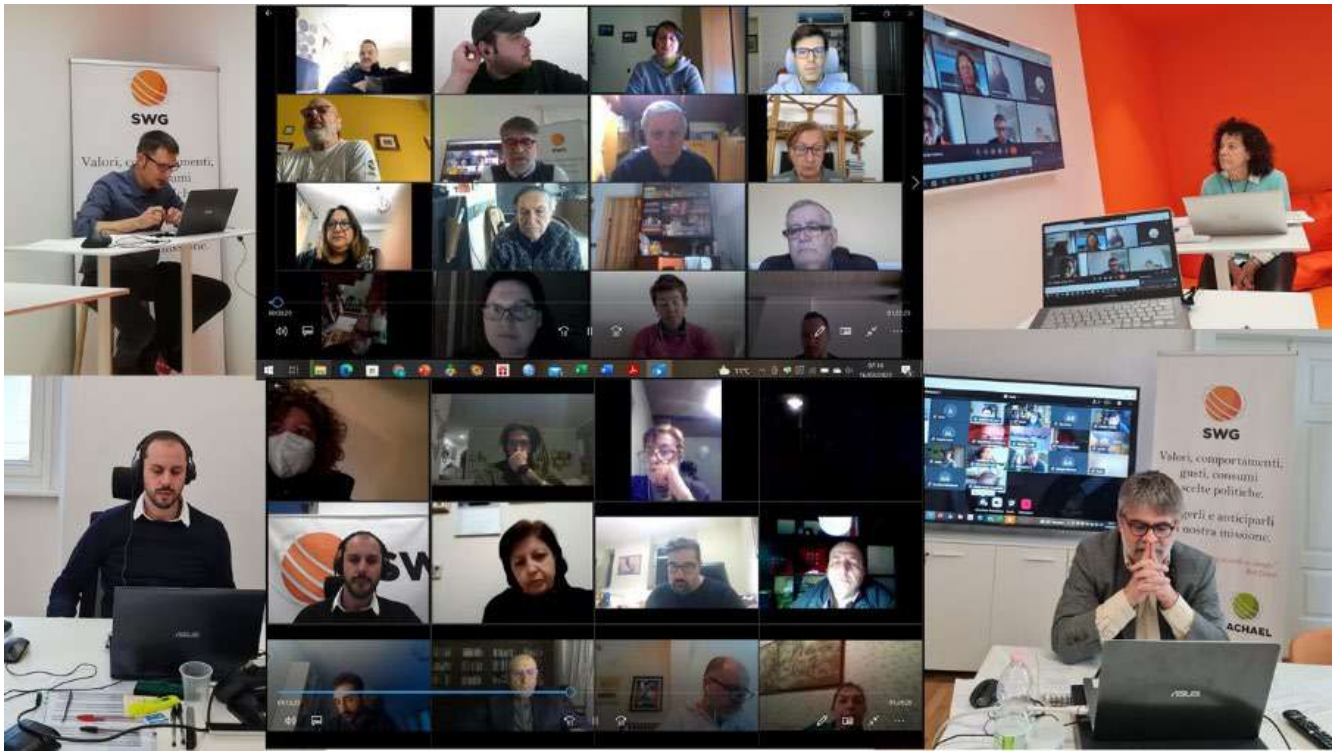
4. The Work Agenda

First Session (Friday 11 March 2022)

- 3:00 p.m.- Opening of the connection and opportunity for participants to connect to the platform as well as check the functioning of their audio and video systems.
- 4.00 p.m. - Introduction by the Moderator: illustration of the reasons behind the initiative and the structure of the work.
- 4:15 p.m.- Breakdown of participants into groups based on the preferences indicated in the application phase.
- 4:20 p.m. - Start of group discussion.
- 8:00 p.m.- End of session.

Second Session (Saturday, 12 March 2022)

- 10.00 - Resumption of work with reading of the results of the first day's work.
- 10.15 - Continuation of the discussion, insights and comments from the participants.
- 12.00 - End of work.



5. Recommendations Collected

€ A Stronger Economy, Social Justice, and Jobs

1. Overcoming the 20th Century Production Model

The perception of the panel participants is that the latest world events (the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine) have forcefully shown the limits of the current European productive model and have highlighted the need to revise an approach that many describe as being "twentieth century".

The evidence of Europe's dependence on energy and food purchased from countries outside of the European Union, as well as the discovery (during the pandemic) that we are not able to produce the quantity of medical devices and vaccines needed to combat the advance of the virus on our own, have led to the perception of a fundamental weakness in our economic system linked to a lack of self-sufficiency.

At the same time, there is a clear perception that a stronger economy, capable of creating jobs in a context of social justice, must have strong assets in terms of technology. In order to do this, it is essential to support an education system that is increasingly focused on STEM subjects.

Technological innovation, sustainable energy, but also tourism and culture appear to be three fundamental directions for the development of the European economy of the future, with a specific focus on maintaining basic production to avoid the risk of excessive dependence on non-EU countries for the supply of essential products and raw materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Tackling climate change and alternative energies effectively.**
2. **Investing in an economy based on tourism and culture, including the many small destinations in Europe.**
3. **Focusing on technology and innovation as drivers of growth.**
4. **Reducing dependence on other countries for raw materials, energy sources and agriculture.**
5. **Encouraging young people to study science subjects.**

2. Generative and Inclusive Productive Regulations

Overcoming the economic organisation of the twentieth century also requires a review of the rules and procedures for regulating business activity. There are four recommendations in this direction, which share a common logic: on the one hand, simplifying the rules and, on the other hand, maintaining a high level of vigilance against misconduct (particularly with regard to counterfeiting and unfair competition).

Great attention is paid to the need for economic rules to be generative first and foremost, reducing as far as possible those choices that impose a standardisation of production processes (jeopardising specific local products with deep cultural roots), but also the destruction of agricultural assets due to the need to maintain predefined production quantities.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Reducing bureaucracy (permits, certifications).**
2. **Reducing the standardisation of products and recognising local and regional cultural and production peculiarities (respect for production traditions).**
3. **Overcoming the logic of "fixed quotas" in agricultural production, with the relative destruction of excess produce.**
4. **Combating counterfeiting and unfair competition.**

3. Measuring Growth in People's Happiness and Not in the Quantity of Products

Overcoming the twentieth-century production model does not only mean changing production methods, but also entering into a new culture in which growth indicators are not just centred on the quantity of goods produced, but on the ability to ensure that citizens achieve a goal of happiness. In the new economy, the key subject around which to judge impact and investment cannot be goods but must be people. This implies the need to move from a system of indicators based on the quantity of goods produced (GDP) to a system capable of measuring the well-being produced on people (GDH - gross domestic happiness).

RECOMMENDATION AT A GLANCE

1. **Developing an economy centred more on the production of happiness (Gross Domestic Happiness) than on goods (Gross Domestic Product).**

4. Greater Integration Amongst States

What is clear to everyone, even to those who are less satisfied with the current set-up and the results achieved so far by the European Union, is that monetary union is not enough, and that Europe must be able to move with increasing strength as a cohesive political entity, able to negotiate externally with one voice and to act with greater solidarity internally. Greater union is a key aspect of increasing the political, commercial and productive strength of the European Union: homogeneity of fundamental laws as well as an integrated and cohesive system of taxation of businesses and citizens, where wages and services to citizens are aligned. Only in this way will we have a Europe capable of reducing social differences and promoting quality of life.

This means not moving backwards on the achievements of recent years and preserving the concept of welfare, indicated by the participants in the panel as the most advanced in the world and the most careful to guarantee equal opportunities and social justice to its citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Do not compromise on welfare rights (public health, public education, labour policies).**
2. **Consolidate what has been done in terms of the single currency and the interconnection of payment systems and telecommunications.**

Today, however, all that has been done in the past no longer seems sufficient, and the Europe of the future needs to make a definitive leap forward in terms of integration amongst Member States, according to an internal vision that is no longer based on competition, but on cooperation, which puts every European citizen in a position to have the same systems of guarantees and opportunities in all the Member States of the Union.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Overcoming the self-interest of individual States and the tendency to seek individual advantages to the detriment of others.**
2. **Establishing a system that provides for the same laws, taxation systems, rights and duties in all countries.**
3. **Coordinating tax regimes amongst the different States, especially concerning companies (no free zones or low taxation).**
4. **Coherent prices of products and a guarantee of equal purchasing power across the different States.**
5. **Reducing wage disparities across the different States and the geographical regions within them.**
6. **Making the public debt of various Member States a common responsibility.**

5. Inclusion Policies

A Europe that is fair and capable of offering happiness to its citizens is an inclusive Europe, which always maintains a high level of attention to combating inequalities. The recommendations set a course for achieving long-cherished goals (such as gender equality), and mark out new requirements linked to the cultural transformations of contemporary societies (digital inequalities and the right to live in a healthy environment).

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Achieving full gender equality, including by strengthening paternal parental leave and childcare facilities.**
2. **Tackling digital inequalities.**
3. **Ensuring that all European citizens can live in a healthy and sustainable environment.**
4. **Ensuring the opportunity of social mobility and, therefore, to have a full chance of self-realisation and self-determination.**
5. **Promoting generational change at all levels.**
6. **Managing the reception of refugees and migrants in a balanced way across the different States.**

Once again, the role of schools and educational policies appears to be central, not only to provide young people with the skills they need to enter the labour market, but also to build a European culture. After building a Europe of institutions, it is essential to build a Europe of peoples. From this point of view, the centrality of a common language is emphasised to enable dialogue between citizens of different countries and equal access to services. The dream of Esperanto having collapsed, the UK's departure from the European Union has raised doubts about the possibility of adopting English as a shared language, a key idiom in international relations as well as within the scientific and economic system.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Promoting the adoption of a common language.**
2. **Investing in schools and the teaching the history of Europe rather than of individual nations as well as political economy and civic education.**
3. **Access to culture, education and exchanges between students and citizens of the different Member States**

Inclusion policies have an essential component in guaranteeing access to opportunities for citizens. The participants in the panel, from this point of view, underlined how Italy has often been unable to use the European funds made available for this purpose. Inclusion and accessibility mean that European institutions are closer to their citizens, and more information and awareness about the rights that European citizens have as such. From this point of view, the importance of a direct relationship between the Union's institutions and citizens emerged, without necessarily being mediated by the Member States.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Promoting the use of European funds for reducing inequalities.**
2. **Accessibility and proximity of European institutions to citizens.**
3. **Encouraging direct access by citizens as well as communicating their rights and opportunities clearly.**

6. Employment

Il The issue of employment consistently emerged as a cross-cutting element and a direct effect of the European Union's ability to follow through on its recommendations. In the debate amongst participants, it was clear that the issue of employment was central to people's lives, but that it could not be pursued without strengthening economic and social justice issues. The strong expectation is for a European Union in which active labour policies remain central and increasingly coordinated.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Promoting exchanges between workers in Europe through a European Job Centre.**
2. **Having integrated employment policies at an EU level.**
3. **Providing incentives for companies that offer employment.**

Europe in the World

Recent international events and, particularly, the war between Russia and Ukraine, have had a profound impact on the perception of the role that Europe should play internationally.

The recommendations collected essentially focused on an axis that aims to strengthen the Union (both in terms of identity and as an economic force) and position it as a model of reference and stimulus in its relations with other countries.

1. Strengthening the European Identity

In order to be recognised outside of its borders, the European Union must first of all be internally cohesive, not only economically and financially, but also in terms of identity and values. An identity that is not created through homologation, but through the enhancement of local specificities within a framework of shared essential values.

In this respect, there is also a consideration of a potential enlargement of the Union's perimeter which, according to some of the panel participants, should not be done in an indiscriminate manner, but instead focus on mutual cultural and value recognition rather than on economic standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Enhancement of European values, cultural traits as well as regional specificities.**
2. **Creation of an institute for European culture to foster a culture of respect and cross-fertilisation between citizens of different States.**
3. **Redefinition of the principles of belonging for new candidate countries, with a strengthening of factors such as cultural identity and values.**

2. Strengthening the Economy and Institutions

The Europe of the future is called upon to play a leading role at international level, and this role can only be taken on when the Union is strong and independent of other countries. There is widespread awareness that the countries of the Union are poor in raw materials, but it seems essential that the Union should be able to guarantee greater independence in terms of energy supplies, agriculture and technological products.

This requires precise investments to catch up in areas such as technology (where the European Union does not currently seem to have a leading role), but also in the food and energy sectors.

The war between Russia and Ukraine has also brought back to the centre of the debate the importance of an integrated European defence policy, with a specific identity and greater autonomy with respect to NATO, whose membership is not in question.

Finally, it entails precise choices for the future, with a strong investment in science and research to increase the skills of young Europeans.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Strengthening domestic production capacity: food chain (especially wheat) and technology (microchips).**
2. **Enhancing typical regional and European products.**
3. **Strengthening European industrial clusters (e.g. steel).**
4. **Strengthening local energy production from a green perspective (gas, solar, wind).**
5. **Developing aerospace technologies.**
6. **Creating European scientific laboratories (European Virus Bank).**
7. **Creating a common European Army acting within the framework of NATO, but also helping to go beyond it.**
8. **Investing in the training of trainers (European exchanges for teachers, Erasmus for teachers).**
9. **Increasing the mobility of European researchers by developing new Community scientific institutions.**
10. **Promoting the emergence of innovative start-ups.**

3. Cooperation and Partnerships

The Europe of the future is not seen as a fortress defending its wealth, but as a protagonist on the international stage which is capable of dialogue with all the countries of the world. A dialogue that starts from a commercial power and should aim at economic leadership, which can be consolidated through the building of partnerships and projects of great international scope.

All this with a view to cooperation and attention to less secure areas of the world, with ad hoc projects to promote the poorest countries, as well as cultural and economic exchange with the countries of the East.

Specific attention is also paid to the issue of migration, with greater coordination across the different states and using shared procedures for managing requests and people.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Boosting exports.**
2. **Promoting transnational European tourist routes.**
3. **Developing a commercial system of negotiations at a European level (not as individual States or companies, but as a Union) to have greater bargaining power, but with also constraints linked to the respect of human rights.**
4. **Carrying out major international projects such as the International Space Station.**
5. **Financing projects in Africa to build schools and hospitals without a colonial attitude and instead aiming at respect for European rights and values.**
6. **Investing in on-site training (especially for women) in the poorest countries.**
7. **Promoting exchanges of technicians and trainers.**
8. **Building a system of common rules for the access of migrants, with different processes between humanitarian and economic migrations and fair distribution across the different States with common rules (census and control of behaviour and employment).**

4. Political and Cultural Reference Point

In the scenario outlined above, Europe is called upon to represent a clear political and cultural reference point at world level from the point of view of rights and ethics, setting an example by making decisions aimed at guaranteeing a healthy environment, respect for people's rights and dialogue between East and West.

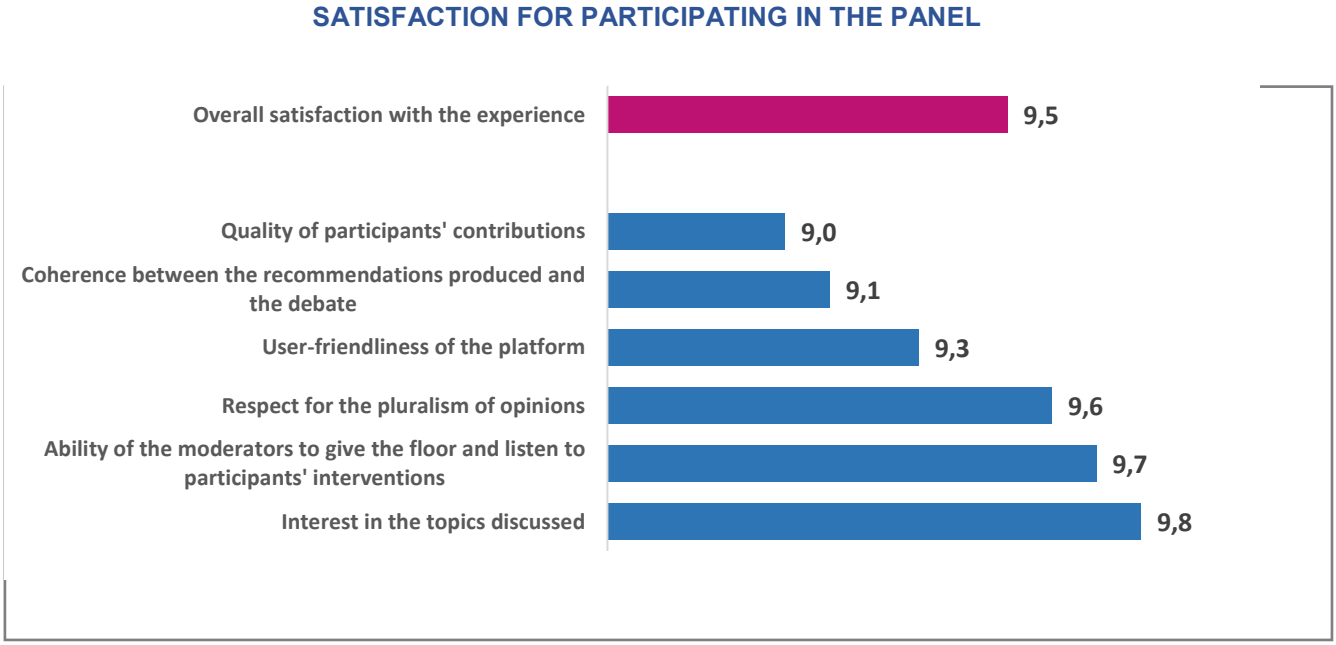
RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

1. **Leading the way as a green continent, achieving zero emissions before others and increasing clean energy production (wind and solar).**
2. **Exporting technologies to produce zero-impact goods.**
3. **Acting as a confluence (a public place, an agora) between East and West, promoting cultural exchanges and joint cultural initiatives (such as the World Art Days, to be held in rotation in the various European capitals and with an artistic programme that includes Western and Eastern artists).**
4. **Creating a European ethical model to manage migration processes which is to be shared internationally.**

6. Final Evaluation by Participants

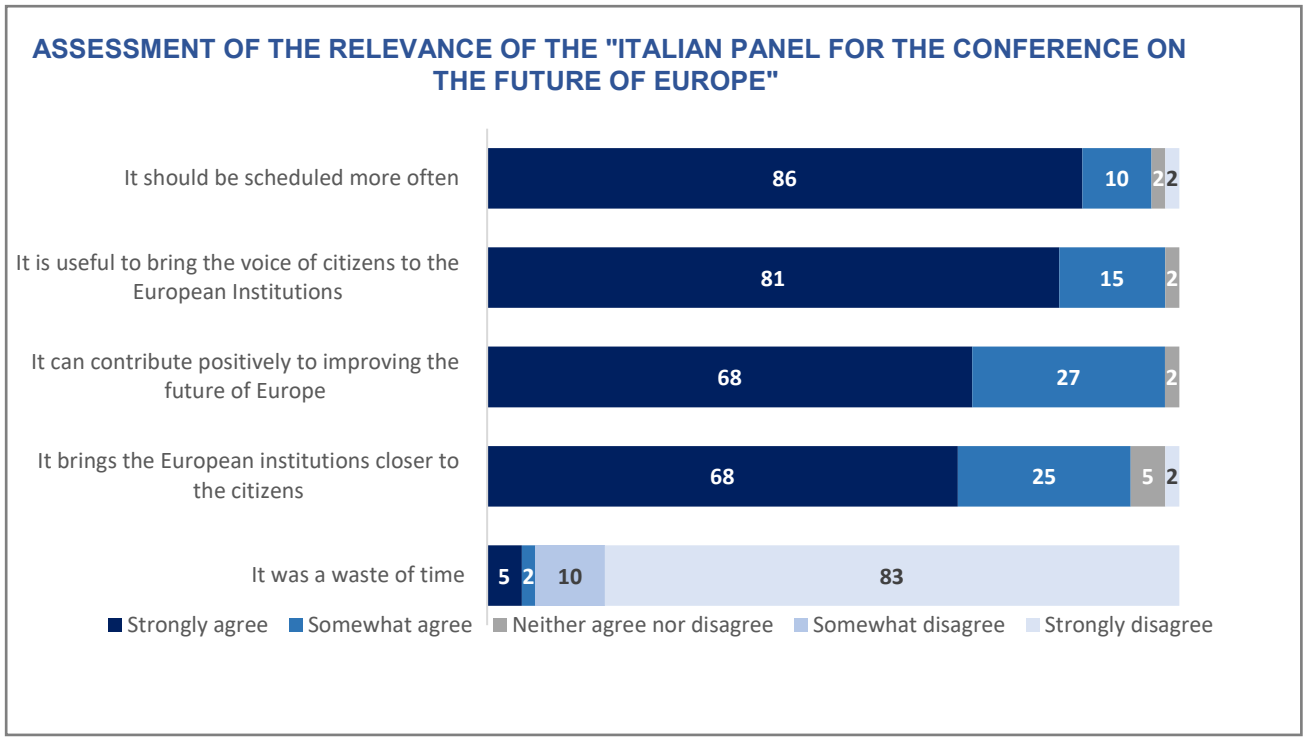
At the end of the two days of work, all participants were invited to fill in a short questionnaire to evaluate their experience. The evaluation questionnaire was sent out two days after the end of the panel to give all participants time to digest the experience and give balanced feedback.

The results collected show a particularly high level of satisfaction, both in terms of interest and from the point of view of ease of participation and the perception of listening and inclusion.



Although starting from different experiences, skills and motivations, the participants felt strongly involved: 98% of the respondents to the evaluation questionnaire felt that they had participated actively and made a positive contribution to the debate.

In general, there was a very strong perception of the usefulness of this experience, which was perceived above all as an opportunity for active participation and produced a sense of greater closeness to the Community institutions. This led to almost all the respondents to ask for this type of initiative to be repeated over time.



All participants indicated that if such an initiative were to be organised again, they would not only participate willingly, but also recommend their friends to participate.

Lithuanian Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe

Report

This report is divided into four parts. The first briefly presents how the event was organised. The second sets out the recommendations for EU and Lithuanian national policies formulated by the Citizens' Panel participants. The third provides a brief analysis of the groups' discussions and the main outcomes of the panel. The fourth compares the outcomes of the Citizens' Panel with the results of surveys of Lithuanian citizens on the state and future of Europe.

1. Organisation of the National Citizens' Panel

Following the Conference on the Future of Europe guidance for organising National Citizens' Panels, in December 2021, the Lithuanian branch of research agency Kantar TNS, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, developed a methodology for the random, stratified and representative selection of Lithuanian citizens, on the basis of which Kantar TNS selected 25 Lithuanian citizens aged between 18 and 65, representing different socio-economic groups and all the geographic regions of Lithuania[3].
On 4 January, the selected citizens were invited to a virtual opening session, during which the idea behind the National Citizens' Panel was presented and the topics most relevant to the future of Europe were discussed. After the event, the participants received a document describing the issues discussed in more detail and providing sources of information.
On 15 January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe. The event was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Eastern European Studies Centre (EESC) and Kantar TNS research agency. The 25 selected citizens participated in person.

The panel participants discussed two EU policy issues: what the **EU's role and powers in foreign policy** should be, and what its **economic role** should be. During the event, a separate session was dedicated to each of these topics, at the beginning of which EU policy experts Linas Kojala (EESC) and Prof. Ramūnas Vilpišauskas (University of Vilnius) briefly familiarised the citizens with information and issues relevant to the subject of the session. The citizens could ask questions and share their views. After the introduction from the expert, the participants were divided into three smaller groups that each formed a representative sample, and each group had to consider a different question related to the topic of the session. In the session on foreign policy, the following questions were discussed:

1.1. Is there a need for an autonomous EU defence and foreign policy?
1.2. What sort of relationship should the EU have with its neighbours in Eastern Europe, with North Africa and with Turkey?
1.3. What kind of migration policy should the EU have?

In the session on the economic role of the EU, the following questions were addressed:

2.1. Is there a need for greater redistribution of funds under the EU budget, and for common EU borrowing?
2.2. Should social standards be regulated at EU level?
2.3. How can the EU's economy be strengthened?

[3] Citizens representing the cities of Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys and the counties of Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Alytus, Marijampolė, Tauragė, Telšiai and Utena were selected, according to data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics.

At the end of the session, each group had to formulate the main conclusions of their discussion, in the form of statements of principle or more concrete proposals regarding current EU policy issues. Then, during the general discussion, a representative from each group presented those conclusions to the other panel participants, and the participants from the other groups could ask questions and offer suggestions to complement the proposals. After the presentations and discussions, the citizens voted individually in favour of two conclusions: the proposal or statement that was most important for strengthening Lithuania's role in the EU and for the success of the EU itself across Europe; and the statement or proposal that seemed most important for the personal well-being of the participant as a resident of the EU. The vote was followed by a discussion summarising the main ideas raised during the National Citizens' Panel.
In the week following the event, the experts examined the content of the discussions and refined the ideas put forward by citizens. On 25 January, a virtual summary session was held during which citizens were presented with the recommendations that had emerged from the content of their discussions. The citizens had the opportunity to state whether they supported the recommendations, to supplement their content and to rank them. This opportunity was open to all participants for one week after the summary session, during which they could send their views and comments in writing to the panel organisers.

2. Outcomes of the National Citizens' Panel

This part of the report presents the outcomes of the National Citizens' Panel, i.e. the recommendations and statements formulated by the working groups on the role of the EU in foreign policy and the economy.

First session: The EU's role and powers in foreign policy

1. We invite the EU to develop a more effective policy towards China. Stronger support for Lithuania is needed, but Lithuania should also better align its position with its EU partners. In order to ensure a more effective alignment of interests within the EU and a unified policy on China, as well as on other foreign policy issues, we recommend that consideration be given to the possibility of creating an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs.
2. We recommend returning, at EU level, to the question of establishing a quota system for migrants.
3. We recommend that a commission dedicated to dealing with migration challenges be set up at EU level, to ensure a quicker response to migration crises, to guarantee Member States' right to explain and defend their national interests, and to draw up and implement common guidelines for migration management.
4. We recommend strengthening economic and humanitarian ties with North African countries, keeping their political situations in mind, in particular with a view to reducing the influence of China, Russia and other countries on the region.
5. We recommend strengthening ties with Eastern Europe, promoting economic measures that reach individuals.
6. We call for EU sanctions against foreign entities to be stricter, more targeted and to include key individuals from the sanctioned state (e.g. political leaders).
7. We call for the EU's common foreign and security policy to be based on the fundamental principle of solidarity between different EU Member States, European regions and societies.
8. We recommend that the EU review its hitherto open migration policy, which is causing security problems, driving up crime and creating closed communities within society.
9. We invite Lithuania to speak up more actively on migration policy issues and initiate discussions about migration challenges.
10. We recommend that the EU pursue an active and rigorous policy towards states that use migratory flows as a tool for hybrid attacks, by unanimously applying stricter sanctions while also talking to them with a view to de-escalating the situation.

Second session: The economic role of the EU

1. We recommend that the EU take various measures to enhance the security of supply of important goods: prioritising intra-EU trade, promoting the manufacture of high-tech products and further diversifying import sources. We also recommend continuing to look for new export markets.
2. We recommend reviewing the approach to natural gas contracts, to pursue both long- and short-term contracts. We recommend further diversifying energy supply sources.
3. We recommend assessing the measures of the European Green Deal and their implementation, taking into account possible negative socio-economic consequences. In working towards the objectives of the Green Deal, we recommend using energy from nuclear and natural gas in addition to renewable energy sources.
4. We stress that it is essential for all Member States to respect the primacy of EU law. We call for Lithuania to take a clear and principled position in this regard.
5. We recommend that Lithuania make greater use of best practices in EU countries, to achieve its goals of higher social standards, business development and balanced and sustainable development.
6. We recommend that greater emphasis be placed on enhancing cybersecurity, including data infrastructure protection.
7. We recommend that the EU and its Member States prioritise the promotion of economic literacy among citizens, education and the dissemination of information.
8. We recommend that new EU trade agreements include ambitious social, labour and health standards. We recommend setting guidelines at EU level as to what social media platforms are required to do and what they may not do in their management of user information and personal data.
9. We recommend that further consideration be given to common borrowing at EU level, with a view to creating more favourable borrowing conditions. We also recommend developing financially sustainable and responsible policies that reduce Member States' need to borrow.
10. We recommend strengthening oversight of the absorption and use of EU funds, starting with municipalities, and consolidating the current practice of adjusting the use of funds. Since the objective circumstances of the beneficiaries of EU funding can change, it is very important to balance the need for transparency with the need for flexibility.
11. We recommend that Lithuania continue to actively promote business development and investment in its regions.

3. Analysis of the discussions and outcomes of the National Citizens' Panel

Participants in the National Citizens' Panel considered the most important issues currently relevant to Lithuania (ones which are widely debated in national politics and the media) and their possible solutions. The vote on the panel's most important conclusions showed that almost 45 % of the total votes in both sessions were given to proposals on two topics: relations with China and management of migration flows (see table below). The issue of energy policy also received a great deal of attention: although there was only one proposal on this subject, it received almost 10 % of all the participants' votes. These voting results suggest that citizens' perception of the future of Europe may be determined by existing (national) political problems and current affairs.

Recommendation	Votes
First session: The EU's role and powers in foreign policy	
1. We invite the EU to develop a more effective policy towards China. The support Lithuania is currently receiving is insufficient, but Lithuania has also not sufficiently aligned its position with its EU partners. In order to ensure a more effective alignment of interests within the EU and a unified policy on China, as well as on other foreign policy issues, we recommend that consideration be given to the possibility of creating an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs.	11 (22.9 %) *8 important for Europe as a whole, 3 personally*
2. We recommend returning, at EU level, to the question of establishing a quota system for migrants.	9 (18.8 %) *9 important for Europe as a whole*
3. We recommend that a commission dedicated to dealing with migration challenges be set up at EU level, to ensure a quicker response to migration crises, to guarantee Member States' right to explain and defend their national interests, and to develop and implement common guidelines for management of migrants.	7 (14.6 %) *3 important for Europe as a whole, 4 personally*
4. We recommend strengthening economic and humanitarian ties with North African countries, keeping their political situations in mind, in particular with a view to reducing the influence of China, Russia and other countries on the region.	6 (12.5 %) *6 important personally*
5. We recommend strengthening ties with Eastern Europe, taking economic measures that reach individuals.	5 (10.4 %) *5 important personally*
Second session: The economic role of the EU	
1. We recommend that the EU take a range of steps to enhance the security of supply of important goods: prioritising intra-EU trade, promoting the manufacture of high-tech products within the EU and further diversifying import sources. We also recommend exploring new export markets.	9 (19.6 %) *3 important for Europe as a whole, 6 personally*
2. We recommend reviewing the approach to natural gas contracts, to pursue both long- and short-term contracts. We recommend further diversifying energy supply sources.	9 (19.6 %) *9 important for Europe as a whole*
3. We recommend assessing the measures of the European Green Deal and their implementation, taking into account possible negative socio-economic consequences. In working towards the objectives of the Green Deal, we recommend using energy from nuclear and natural gas in addition to renewable energy sources.	6 (13 %) *6 important personally*
4. We stress that it is important for all Member States to respect the primacy of EU law. We call for Lithuania to take a clear and principled position in this regard.	4 (8.7 %) *2 important for Europe as a whole, 2 personally*

Moreover, the issues that matter most to citizens – relations with China, migration and energy – are not of an ad hoc nature: how they are resolved will have a big impact on Europe's long-term future. Accordingly, the fact that current affairs are likely to be at the forefront of citizens' minds when they think about the future is not problematic. As the future is built in many small steps starting today, understanding citizens' basic expectations in the short term is a prerequisite for being able to manage long-term processes and solve problems in a sustainable way. This reasoning underpins the below analysis of the main outcomes of the National Citizens' Panel.

The highest total number of votes (11, or close to 12 %) went to the statement that **the EU needs a more effective policy towards China**. This overall conclusion encompassed a number of more specific statements. Firstly, participants stressed that the EU support provided thus far to Lithuania in the face of economic pressure from China had been insufficient. Secondly, the representatives of the group that delivered the conclusion stressed that Lithuania also needed to step up its coordination of its policy towards China with its EU partners, especially because trade with China remained important for the EU as a whole. Thirdly, citizens put forward the idea that establishing the post of an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs could help to coordinate positions and shape common policies on China and other issues more effectively. Eight participants identified this conclusion as particularly important for Europe as a whole and three as important for themselves personally.

The issue of relations with China is closely linked to two other proposals that received a high number of citizens' votes. Nine participants voted in favour of the conclusion drawn during the second session that **the EU needs to strengthen security of supply** (three participants indicated that this was of great importance for Europe as a whole and six others that it was personally important for them). This conclusion, too, encompassed several facets. Firstly, citizens stressed the need to prioritise EU markets, which were characterised by reliable suppliers and higher product standards. Secondly, participants stressed the need to promote high-tech production capacities within Europe itself. Thirdly, citizens were in favour of further diversifying import sources. In formulating these recommendations, those taking part in the discussion continually referred to China as a factor: security threats associated with Chinese products, dependence on the supply of raw materials from China for manufacturing high-tech products, and China's practice of copying or stealing technologies from Western companies operating in its market. A further six votes ('personally important') went to the proposal to **develop the EU's economic and humanitarian cooperation with North African countries**, because it was important to reduce the influence of China, as well as Russia and other unfriendly states, in those countries.

The results of the voting also revealed citizens' concerns about migration issues. In the area of foreign policy, two of the three conclusions that received the most votes centred on migration. Nine participants voted in favour of the proposal that **the EU should revisit the possibility of setting up a system of compulsory migrant quotas for Member States** (they all stressed the particular importance of this proposal for the whole of Europe). The participants who formulated the conclusion were in favour of basing national quotas on population and allocating EU co-financing to provide for the migrants distributed according to the quotas. A further seven participants voted in favour of the proposal to **set up a permanent functional commission at EU level to address migration issues, to which representatives of the Member States would be delegated** (three considered the proposal of particular importance for Europe as a whole and four personally important for them). Participants stressed that such an body could speed up the EU's response to migration crises, while ensuring an appropriate balance between respect for common EU principles and the right of Member States to defend their national interests and security.

During their discussions on migration policy, participants discussed two different crises in the management of migration flows: the 2016 Mediterranean migration crisis and the 2021 Belarusian hybrid attack on Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, when Minsk exploited flows of migrants from the Middle East and Africa. A number of panel participants said that the 2016 crisis had seemed distant and irrelevant, both for them and for Lithuania as a whole, and that the proposal first put forward at that time to set up a migrant quota system had not seemed appropriate. According to the participants, the experience of a hybrid attack had brought migration in Eastern Europe into focus and led to a fresh assessment of quotas as an appropriate, effective and solidarity-based migration policy instrument. Several participants stressed that when confronted with the 2021 crisis it became difficult to distinguish between refugees, migrants and persons posing security threats entering the country's territory. All participants in the debate agreed that the current 'open' EU migration policy did not sufficiently take into account the threats posed by migration, the national interests of the Member States, the capacity to integrate migrants, etc. The citizens also criticised the EU for its slow or negative response to Lithuania's needs, including its refusal to finance the construction of a barrier at the external border.

In conclusion, the two most prominent policy issues for Lithuania in 2021 – relations with China and the management of migration flows – are prompting Lithuanian citizens to demand greater EU involvement and more effective common policy. Citizens are concerned about China's policy and its growing influence in Europe and the EU's neighbourhood. It must be acknowledged that China's economic influence compels Europe to seek appropriate balanced policy measures. The main solution, according to the citizens, is to strengthen common EU foreign policy instruments, industrial policy and cooperation with neighbours. Similarly, citizens identified united action at EU level, including a possible new quota system for migrants, as probably the most appropriate way to avoid the security threats posed by migration and to manage migration flows to Europe quickly and effectively. The participants in the Citizen's Panel took the view that a stronger and more closely coordinated common EU policy would be the best response to the increasing pressure from China and the hybrid attack by Belarus.

The panel participants' views on these crises can be compared with their proposals on energy and climate policy issues. At the end of 2021, many Lithuanian citizens were directly confronted with the challenge of rising heating costs, and the energy price crisis quickly became one of Lithuania's most important current issues. Concerns about energy prices were also reflected in how the panel participants voted: nine citizens even voted in favour of the conclusion that this was the most important topic for Europe as a whole. The participants' main recommendation was to **review Member States' current practices in concluding energy supply contracts with different suppliers with a view to concluding both long-term and short-term contracts**. In other words, citizens supported a policy of energy diversification, but did not make any recommendations for a common EU policy and did not recommend further integration of energy policy.

As regards climate policy, citizens recommended **evaluating the measures of the European Green Deal in terms of their expected socio-economic impact and ambition**. Six participants voted in favour of that proposal, all of them classing it as personally important. Some participants worried that the 'green transition' was being carried out too quickly and argued that Lithuania needed to assess more carefully whether such policies might be detrimental to the needs of the country and its citizens. The need to use nuclear energy and natural gas alongside renewable energy sources was also raised by several participants. In support of their position, they referred to Germany's decision to continue using natural gas and tap the potential of the new generation of so-called modular nuclear power plants. In their discussions of climate policy, the panel participants thus prioritised Member States' policies designed to meet national needs, rather than an ambitious common EU climate governance policy.

Given the relatively small number of participants in the panel and the citizens' different responses (more united action or more flexibility) to different types of crises, it would not be appropriate here to consider generalised and more widely applied measures. However, this trend in opinions may yield interesting topics for further research into the attitudes of Lithuanian citizens to EU integration issues, which should take into account changes and differences in citizens' attitudes towards autonomous EU policies and institutional measures.

4. Outcomes of the Citizens' Panel in the broader context of Lithuanian public opinion

To put the outcomes of the National Citizen's Panel in context, this last section of the report compares them briefly with the results of two relevant public opinion polls and the interim results of other preparatory activities for the Conference on the Future of Europe. The first opinion poll examined in this part of the report is a survey of citizens carried out by Eurobarometer in October and November 2020 on the Conference on the Future of Europe. The second is the most recent Standard Eurobarometer survey, conducted in summer 2021. As parts of these surveys focused on other policy matters and on citizens' expectations of the conference itself, the following comparisons are made in respect of the topical issues covered by the panel. The analysis of the preparatory activities for the Conference on the Future of Europe is based on an initial report on those activities by the EESC, which sets out the views of the participating citizens on a wide range of EU policy issues.

The results of the Eurobarometer surveys suggest that the discussions and voting patterns of the Citizens' Panel participants are a fair reflection of the views prevailing in Lithuanian society. The panel participants' recommendations to strengthen common foreign and migration policy and some decision-making at EU level are in line with the wider public opinion polls:

- Lithuanian citizens are more supportive of a common EU defence policy than the EU average (90 % and 78 %, respectively);
- Lithuanian citizens are more supportive of a common EU migration policy than the EU average (76 % and 71 %; a possible margin of error should be indicated with this difference);
- Lithuanian citizens see migration as one of the two main challenges for the EU;
- Lithuanian citizens are more favourable to solutions at EU level (49 % as compared to 42 %).

Lithuanian citizens who participated in the preparatory events for the Conference on the Future of Europe also highlighted the importance of defence cooperation, common EU migration policy and EU foreign policy as areas in which Lithuania would be interested in seeing greater EU involvement.

The data from the Eurobarometer surveys may explain the panel participants' views on relations with China and energy prices: Lithuanians were more concerned than the EU average about deteriorating relations between the world's countries and the resulting geopolitical tensions (33 % as compared to 18 %). The panel participants' conclusions on the need to develop a more ambitious common policy towards China are in line with both these findings and the abovementioned support for decision-making at EU level and for a common EU defence policy. On the other hand, the panel participants' concerns about finding various solutions to reduce energy prices may be linked to the fact that Lithuanians are much more concerned than the EU average about rising inflation and rising prices (53 % and 23 %). Sensitivity to rising inflation makes containing price increases seem more important than developing common EU policies or other policy objectives.

The Eurobarometer data also reveal an interesting change in Lithuanian citizens' attitudes towards migration as a political problem. In the 2020 survey, fewer Lithuanians than the EU average identified migration as the most important challenge for the future of the EU (16 % versus 27 %); but in the 2021 survey, the proportion of Lithuanian respondents identifying migration as the main problem for the EU had increased to 32 % (EU average: 25 %). While such a shift in opinion may be attributable to differences in the wording of the question, it is also in line with the insights that the participants in the Citizens' Panel discussions shared into how their views on migration issues had developed.

In addition, a comparison of the outcomes of the Citizens' Panel and data from the Eurobarometer survey reveals a difference between the rather cautious attitude of the panel participants to EU climate policy and the concerns of Lithuanian citizens about climate change. While the panel participants called for an assessment of whether the European Green Deal is too ambitious and could harm Lithuania's interests, Lithuanians have consistently cited climate change as one of the most important challenges for the EU, according to the Eurobarometer surveys. In the 2020 survey, 47 % of Lithuanian respondents named the climate as the main global challenge for the future of the EU (EU average: 45 %); in the 2021 survey the figure was 28 % of Lithuanian respondents (EU average: 25 %). It should be stressed that citizens who participated in the other preparatory events for the Conference on the Future of Europe also referred to climate policy as one of the areas where Lithuania should be most interested in greater EU involvement. This difference may well be explained by the panel participants' motivation for voting: all those who voted for the recommendation to re-examine the European Green Deal measures indicated that the topic was important to them personally. This means that personal opposition may not be incompatible with the view that climate change is one of the most important policy challenges facing the EU.

Rijksoverheid

ONZE KIJK OP EUROPA

Our vision of Europe

Opinions, ideas and recommendations

Topics
Values and rights, rule of law, security
A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
European democracy
Digital transformation
Education, culture, youth and sport

3 December 2021

This document is a translation of the report entitled ‘Onze kijk op Europa; meningen, ideeën en aanbevelingen’, the Dutch-language version of which was published on 3 December 2021 at www.kijkopeuropa.nl. This translation is a simplified version in which the original layout (illustrations and other stylistic elements) has been removed for translation purposes.

Our vision of ...

Report summary: all recommendations one by one

Through the citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe', we have gathered the opinions and ideas of Dutch citizens on the future of Europe. This has led to the following recommendations being made to the European Union on the first five topics.

Values and rights, rule of law, security

It is important that the EU protects the rule of law. At the same time, Dutch citizens think that account should be taken of the different traditions and cultures within Europe. While cooperation within the EU can have a number of different benefits, it should bring added value for all stakeholders. This also applies to the sharing of security information. Sharing everything with everyone would soon make cooperation rather inefficient..

Ensure that everyone can feel free and safe
Enlarge the EU only if it brings added value
Work together, in particular to combat international crime and terrorism

A stronger economy, social justice and jobs

The Dutch see many opportunities for strengthening Europe's economy. However, it is not always possible to compare one country with another. In particular, the tax system should be fairer and clearer. And we, as Europe, should focus more on our strengths, such as quality and diversity. In that context, EU member states can work together to ensure equal opportunities on the European labour market.

1. Take account of similarities and differences
2. Play to Europe's strengths
3. Develop a tax system that is fair and clear
4. Ensure that no-one is left behind

European democracy

While the Dutch do not need to know every single thing about the EU, they do want more transparency and understanding. For example, the perspectives of other EU member states can help paint a broader picture. In addition, the Dutch believe that the EU should engage in dialogue with citizens more often, and then preferably on an ongoing basis. It is important not only to take account of different interests, but also to ensure that decisions are taken more quickly than at present.

1. Provide a broader perspective on Europe
2. Find new and ongoing ways in which to listen to citizens
3. Be clearer and more transparent about decisions
4. Ensure that problems can be resolved more quickly

Digital transformation

Society is becoming increasingly dependent on the internet, and Big Tech is becoming more and more powerful. This is sometimes a source of concern for Dutch people. It would therefore be helpful if the EU could draw up European (privacy) rules and standards. Those rules and standards should then be comprehensible and workable for everyone. Dutch people prefer to get support and information from their national government, in their own language.

1. Ensure a fast, secure and stable internet connection everywhere
2. Lay down clear rules and standards for internet companies
3. Combine privacy rules with practical implementation and explanation

Education, culture, youth and sport

Young people studying abroad could learn more about their host country than they do at present. And countries with lower levels of knowledge should not let all their talent go abroad in a brain drain. Dutch people see topics such as culture and unethical practices in sport as a matter more for the member states themselves. And they place a high value on citizens being able to communicate in their own national languages. In general, and above all else, everyone in Europe should feel free to be themselves.

1. Do encourage students to study abroad but go about it sensibly
2. Leave matters such as culture and sport primarily to the member states
3. Ensure that Europeans get to know and respect one another better

Introduction

Between 1 September and mid-November, the citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe' enabled all Dutch people to share their opinions and ideas on the future of Europe. The Netherlands is putting the recommendations that came out of this dialogue, together with the opinions and ideas gathered, to the European Union (EU). This report focuses on the first five topics. The other four topics will be addressed in a follow-up report at the beginning of 2022.

About 'Visions of Europe'

The EU wants to know what its inhabitants think about Europe. The EU is therefore organising the Conference on the Future of Europe. The opinions and ideas of inhabitants throughout the EU will eventually feed into the future plans for Europe. As part of that Conference, the Netherlands is organising the national citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe'.

'Visions of Europe' was launched on 1 September with the online gathering of opinions and ideas by means of a survey involving a representative panel. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the initial insights gained from the panel survey and formulate specific recommendations, we organised topic-based dialogues online. The dialogues were open to anyone who wanted to get involved. We also criss-crossed the country to talk to young people and other (harder-to-reach) groups.

From schoolgoers, students in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and university students to farmers, migrants and the Minister himself.

In October and November, a total of eight online topic-based dialogues took place with an average of 30 participants at each meeting. We also organised one online topic-based dialogue and seven on-site topic-based dialogues with various groups of Dutch people. For example, we talked to the Turkish community in Schiedam and were hosted by volunteers from the Piëzo Foundation in Zoetermeer. There, we were also joined by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Knapen. The Minister discussed the dialogue and the opinions on the future of Europe with the participants. Finally, we organised six meetings with various groups of young people. For example, we were hosted by a secondary school in Helmond, an MBO institute in Doetinchem and the University of Leiden.

'I'm always happy to speak my mind at the water cooler. That's why I felt I had to get involved in this.'
Participant in a topic-based dialogue

About this report

Based on the opinions and ideas we have gathered over the past few months, the EU has been presented with recommendations from Dutch people. The conversations which took place between Dutch people gave rise to interesting discussions and innovative ideas. Suggestions were also made through the panel survey and open research. Some of those ideas are included in this report. The content of this report thus reflects the voice of the Netherlands: our vision of Europe.

Of course, just as there are differences between European countries and citizens, we in the Netherlands do not always see eye to eye with one another. But it is precisely those differences that are worth so much and an important feature of a democracy. The recommendations stem from the most prevalent opinions and ideas voiced by participants in 'Visions of Europe'. We also describe the concerns, thoughts and feelings which are less common, but struck us during the dialogues and in the online research.

'It was great to be able to discuss things with people with opposing views (for and against) in small groups. Very different from the way in which things are often discussed on social media.'
Participant in a topic-based dialogue

Nine topics have been identified for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Those topics are also at the heart of the Dutch citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe'. In October, we published an interim report containing initial insights and follow-up questions based on the panel survey. In the second report, we describe the opinions, ideas and recommendations on the first five topics for the Conference Plenary in December. The next report, covering the remaining four topics, will be published in mid-January.

Current report - December 2021

Values and rights, rule of law, security
A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
European democracy
Digital transformation
Education, culture, youth and sport

Next report - January 2022
Climate change and environment
Migration
Health
EU in the world

What happens next?

The Conference on the Future of Europe brings together the ideas, opinions and recommendations of all the EU's inhabitants. The meetings will discuss not only the results of all the national citizens' dialogues, but also the outcome of other initiatives from the Conference. For example, there are also European Citizens' Panels, and all EU citizens (including Dutch citizens) can access a European Digital Platform.

'It's good that the EU is taking this initiative. I also hope that something will actually be done with the results.'
Participant in a topic-based dialogue

The Conference will close in the spring of 2022. The Netherlands will then draw up a final report on the citizens' dialogue: a compilation of this report and the next report (covering the remaining topics). The Conference will produce recommendations for its Presidency: the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. They have committed to explore ways in which to follow up on the recommendations. For the Netherlands Government, the results also constitute a valuable contribution in terms of shaping the country's EU policy.

The process in the run-up to the spring of 2022 can be summarised as follows:

Timeline

Visions of Europe

1 Sept	12 Oct	22/23 Oct	15 Nov	17/18 Dec	21/22 Jan	22/24 Apr		
Gathering ideas online								
	Topic-based dialogues							
		Interim results (interim report)		Interim report on the topics of economy and democracy	Interim report on the topics of climate and EU in the world	'Our vision of Europe' final report		
		↓		↓	↓	↓		
		Conference meeting		Conference meeting	Conference meeting	End of Conference	→	Recommendations for Presidents European Parliament European Commission Council of Ministers
				↑	↑	↑		
	More opinions and ideas on the future of Europe:							
Citizens' dialogues				European Citizens' Panels		European Digital Platform (incl. for Dutch citizens)		

Structure of this report

This report focuses on five topics. For each of the topics we describe the following:
Recommendations based on all strands of the citizens' dialogue
Impressions of the opinions, ideas and discussions raised in the (online and physical) topic-based dialogues and suggestions from the online research, in words and images.

A statement of accountability appears at the end of the report.

Values and rights, rule of law, security

The EU monitors the rule of law in all EU countries, and seeks to stem inequality in the EU. It also strives to protect all Europeans from terrorism and crime. To achieve this, the EU adopts measures and rules, and EU countries work closely together.
How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our view on security and the rule of law

68 % of Dutch people find security and the rule of law important and think that the EU should tackle these issues.

1. Make sure that everyone can feel free and safe

78 % of Dutch people think it's important for the EU to protect the rule of law and our fundamental rights and freedoms. We also find the protection of consumer rights important: a large majority are happy that the EU makes manufacturers put the same information on packaging in all countries. Many Dutch people also think, however, that the EU should take account of differences in traditions and (governance) cultures in Europe. Also because otherwise it is difficult to work together efficiently. Above all, we think it's important for everyone in Europe to feel free and safe. This includes having a roof over your head, and access to education and care. As well as knowing that products in European shops are always safe.

2. Only expand the EU if enlargement brings added value

44% of Dutch people think that the EU should not take in more countries. 25%, on the other hand, are in favour of enlargement. The existing member states already have their differences as it is. Many Dutch people think that we should sort this out first. And, if new countries do join, they must also genuinely be able to meet our conditions. Both now and in the future. A lot of Dutch people think enlargement should also bring added value for the existing member states. What's more we think that there are also other ways of nations working together on security and stability. For example, we are sometimes worried about Russia's influence on countries on the EU's eastern border. It is important for the EU to address this.

'Enlargement should not be about costs and benefits, but about a vision of stability.'

3. Working together above all to fight international crime and terrorism

68 % of Dutch people think that EU countries' security services should share their information with each other. But we also think it's important for countries to retain the right to decide what information they do/do not want to share. Sharing everything with everyone would soon make cooperation rather inefficient. And now that the EU is so big, we must remain critical when deciding when it is/is not appropriate to share sensitive information. We want to remain confident that our privacy is being protected. We think that most of all it makes sense to work together in fighting serious and international crime such as cybercrime, drug trafficking and terrorism.

'If you drive through a red light in the Netherlands, they really don't need to know about it in Spain.'

Discussions and ideas online and in person

'When you punish a country that doesn't follow the rules, it's the poorest people in that country who are the first to suffer. That is why I think talking is better than doling out punishments.'

'Let's first make sure the current club is stable. And only then start thinking about enlarging.'

'We can also be critical of our own rule of law. That is not perfect either.'

IDEA: 'Set strict rules on integrity for politicians throughout Europe to prevent them from being too easily influenced.'

IDEA: 'Increase cooperation between the police and the judiciary in EU countries.'

MBO college students in Doetinchem: 'If you want to be in the EU you must obey the rules'

At *Graafschap College* in Doetinchem about 20 nursing students discussed what they consider the biggest benefits of the EU: the free market, a common currency - the euro - and that, as a European, you can easily live and work in other EU countries. 'And that EU countries can support each other. Together you're stronger ', said one of the students. The importance of rules was also discussed. If countries don't obey the rules, it is often difficult to punish them severely. According to the students, this could be made a little easier. One of the students mentioned the deterrent effect. 'If penalties are severe, other countries also see what can happen if you don't play by the rules.'

The Indo-Surinamese in Utrecht: 'Trust in the rule of law is sometimes lacking'

Stichting Asha is an Indo-Surinamese voluntary organisation in Utrecht. One discussion participants had in the topic-based dialogue was the importance of citizens' rights: the right to a roof over your head, but also, for example, the right not to be discriminated against. The volunteers who took part said that there should be rules to protect the rights of all European citizens. Right now, it is not always clear what is decided in the Netherlands and what is decided at European level. That sometimes makes it difficult to have trust in public authorities. Also because now and again the public authorities do get it wrong. 'You could say that the state ought to defend me, but sometimes they mess up, like in the child benefits scandal', said one of the participants. 'The EU should see to it that the rules are actually respected,' said another.

A stronger economy, social justice and jobs

Small- and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the European economy. The EU therefore wants EU countries to work together on recovery plans so that we can emerge economically stronger from the pandemic. In the long term, the EU's goal is to make the European economy healthier, greener and more digital. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our vision of the economy and jobs

61 % of Dutch people find the economy and jobs important and think that the EU should deal with these issues.

1. Take account of similarities and differences

71 % of Dutch people think that the EU should make sure that businesses work together more to make the European economy stronger. But only a few of them think that more EU money should go to businesses. Above all, we think cooperation could be more efficient. Different companies are investing in the same new technology, sometimes also with public money. If we had a European vision of the economy, we could spend that money more efficiently. Of course, the differences between countries should still be taken into account.

'The agricultural sector in the Netherlands is so modern. It 's not really comparable to agriculture in other countries.'

2. Play to Europe's strengths

Dutch people believe that there are many opportunities for strengthening Europe's economy, but that choices have to be made. That is why we think that the EU should mainly focus on playing to its strengths. We think, for example, that Europe is good at digitalisation, sustainability and infrastructure. And, perhaps more importantly: quality and diversity are synonymous with Europe. It is precisely because we are a diverse continent, with different opinions and ideas, that we should tap into much more than the economic benefits. That is how Europe can set itself apart from the Chinese economy, for instance.

3. Develop a tax system that is fair and clear

82 % of Dutch people think that EU countries should work together to make sure that all businesses in the EU pay their fair share of taxes. Including the very big companies. Some of them move to other countries just because they can pay less tax there. The EU should do something about this, for instance, have a minimum rate for all countries. On the other hand, we think that taxation is a matter for individual countries, which have their own objectives and circumstances. All in all, we find taxation a complicated issue. And that is why we would like to see a better tax system that is fair and clear for everyone in Europe.

‘Cucumbers should be straight everywhere, but tax rules can differ. Isn't that crazy?’

4. Ensure that no-one is left behind

71 % of Dutch people think that the EU should help create more jobs. We think that certain groups deserve special attention, such as young people and people who are not in the labour market. That could be done through grants for companies, but also by giving employers and workers extra support. We are thinking, for instance, of advice or simply very practical things. Sometimes such support can be more efficiently organised from within the EU, and sometimes it is more a matter for the member states themselves. EU countries should ultimately ensure equal opportunities on the European labour market together.

Discussions and ideas online and in person

‘Speed up automation in Europe so that goods now coming in from China are made here again.’

‘Take the bitcoin revolution and other cryptocurrencies seriously. People dealing in them are dismissed as tax evaders, even though blockchain technologies like this are the future.’

‘Shareholders are not the only stakeholders in the European economy. You can’t do anything without workers.’

‘Europe needs to do more for people with disabilities. At the moment, it's much too hard for them to find suitable jobs.’

‘Lots of European rules are complicated and constantly changing. That makes it hard for businesses to innovate.’

‘When I was having building work done for my company, my local contractor could have easily got started on the job much sooner. But first I had to put the contract out for European tender. Such a rigmarole.’

Participants in the online dialogue: ‘What do we think of big business?’

The increasing power of big business was discussed at one of the topic-based dialogues. Some participants would like to see the EU taking a harder line on this - because businesses sometimes make massive profits but pay little tax on them thanks to clever tax constructs. Other participants pointed to the ‘bigger picture’: these companies create lots of jobs and are good for the national economy. ‘You shouldn’t chase them away’, someone said. 'EU countries should put their heads together on this', said another. ‘Big companies can play countries off against each other. That is why we, as the EU, must form a more united front.’

Nature-inclusive farmers: ‘Set targets instead of limits’

BoerenNatuur is an association of agricultural collectives. One of the things discussed by a group of members was European regulations for farmers. On the one hand, they think that the EU is a good thing, such as making it easy to export to other countries. On the other hand, they think that policy could often be clearer. ‘But we are increasingly all on the same page,’ someone said. In particular, there is still room for improvement in procedures: they are often still very bureaucratic and time-consuming. One of the participants said that regulations should, above all, not be too detailed. ‘Set clear targets instead, such as clean water. Then we can decide for ourselves how wide the sluices should be.’

European democracy

The EU encourages Europeans to vote and also wants to involve EU citizens in European decision-making and policy outside the electoral period. The EU is also taking initiatives to strengthen democracy, such as an action plan focusing on free and fair elections and a free press. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our vision of European democracy

60 % of Dutch citizens find European democracy an important topic and think that the EU should play its part.

1 Give a broader view of Europe

Dutch people have noticed that when the media cover Europe, it is often when there's a crisis. We don't hear much about the daily decisions. As citizens, we do not need to know everything, but getting a clearer overall picture would help us form sound opinions. It would be interesting, for instance, to hear other countries' views on the EU more often. The media and education can play an important role here. That said, the media must still be able to make their own choices, as Dutch people place a high value on press freedom in our democracy.

'We often only hear about the EU when there's a crisis. This is stoking negative perceptions of Europe.'

2 Find new and ongoing ways of listening to citizens

51 % of Dutch people think the EU is not sufficiently in touch with society. To improve this, the EU should engage in dialogue with citizens more often, and preferably on an ongoing basis. That's why Dutch people find the Conference on the Future of Europe a good initiative. Referendums can also be a valuable tool, but Dutch people have differing views on this. Some topics may require specialist knowledge. Talking to citizens should never be a box-ticking exercise. We find it important that we are taken seriously.

3 Be clearer and more transparent about decisions

Dutch people sometimes find Europe very complicated. People don't have the same level of background knowledge. The EU should take this into account more. We want the EU to become more transparent and for it to be easier to keep up with developments. The Netherlands government also has a role to play here. Many Dutch people are interested in European decisions but find the official channels too difficult to access or too complicated. Also, everyone has different interests and needs. So you should also be able to choose which topics you wish to hear more about. Young people are often interested in Europe, but don't see much about it on their social media accounts, for instance.

'While, on holiday in Hungary I saw a large notice near a newly planted wood: 'Made possible by the EU.' I'm sceptical about Europe, but actually felt some pride then.'

4 Solve problems more quickly

Dutch people find it very difficult to understand how European democracy works, but EU decision-making does often seem to be very slow. In European elections we mostly see alliances between national parties. Perhaps there are other ways of addressing European interests? Roughly one third of Dutch people think that it should be possible to vote for foreign candidates in the European Parliament elections. Roughly the same number of Dutch people disagree. The most important thing is to take sufficient account of different interests. And solve problems more quickly than we currently do.

'In elections I like to be able to identify with someone and know what he or she stands for. The person doesn't need to be Dutch.'

Discussions and ideas online and in person

'Get rid of countries' veto rights. The majority should decide.'

'Set up citizens' focus groups for important decisions, perhaps even on a mandatory or semi-mandatory basis, like juries in the US.'

'Ensure that EU politicians and civil servants regularly touch base with the 'grassroots' and do not just stay in the Brussels bubble.'

IDEA: 'I think every news bulletin should devote a few minutes to European matters. Or why not start a daily or weekly news programme about Europe?'

IDEA: 'Maybe European politicians should appear more on TV shows.'

'As a young person I hardly ever read anything about Europe. I'm curious about Europe but don't want to spend much time on it.'

Young people from 'Coalitie-Y' in Utrecht: Discussion about holding referendums

Members of Coalitie-Y - a group of youth organisations - held a lively discussion on the use of referendums. Opponents mentioned the danger of simple 'yes' or 'no' questions, since the issues are often much more complex. One of the participants said: 'We can vote for the EU and stand as candidates. With referendums you weaken those options.' Supporters of referendums said it was a good thing to know what citizens think: this can provide guidance. Referendums could also contribute to general awareness about the EU: what proposals are on the agenda and what choices should be made.

Civil society volunteers: 'Countries need to understand each other better.'

The Piëzo Foundation in Zoetermeer brings together volunteers who contribute to society in different ways. The participants in the topic-based dialogue expressed their concern about the growing divide in Europe. That applies to countries' views on the LGBTIQ community, for instance. When countries do not understand each other's views, cooperation is difficult. 'All the more reason to get to know each other better', said one participant. 'We simply don't know nowadays how people are thinking in other countries. We don't understand each other's cultures and backgrounds sufficiently. That's necessary if we are to take good decisions together.'

Digital transformation

In our online world increasingly high demands are being set for internet connections, safety and privacy. The EU feels some responsibility in this area and is committed to ensuring that no-one is left behind in the digital society. The EU is also investing in digital solutions to social issues. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our vision of the online world

45 % of Dutch citizens see the online world as an important issue and one that the EU should address.

1 Ensure a fast, secure and stable internet connection everywhere

61 % of Dutch people think the EU should ensure that everyone in Europe has access to a fast and stable internet connection. We are all aware that the internet is playing an ever-increasing role in our lives. Our children are growing up with digital education. Both national and international communication are increasingly online. The internet's considerable autonomy sometimes worries us. As a result, many Dutch people think the EU should invest in this area, providing the investment is efficient. Protection against online crime is, in our view, the most important issue to be tackled at European level. However, it is also good to focus on combating internet crime at national level.

'If I imagine a cyber attack on our flood defences, I feel very vulnerable.'

2 Lay down clear rules and standards for internet companies

75 % of Dutch people think the EU should ensure that internet purchases are equally secure in all EU countries. Almost all of us are buying more things abroad and share sensitive data when doing so, which sometimes feels unsafe. It's hard to know which websites you can trust. It would be good for the EU to draw up European privacy rules and standards that everyone could understand. The power of large internet companies often worries us too. We feel we have some responsibility ourselves for handling our data sensibly, though we also think the EU can play a role in this area. EU countries need to work together to ensure that companies such as Google and Facebook do not get too much power.

'There's not much we can do as a small country against a 'global player' like Facebook.'

3 Combine privacy rules with practical implementation and explanation

Following the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Dutch citizens know that all countries must comply with the same privacy laws and regulations. We are pleased we can count on this legislation, since our privacy is important to us. Some Dutch people find the rules sometimes go too far or are illogical. Besides, the legislation can generate a lot of work for employers. We also think that more attention needs to be paid to the practical implementation of the privacy legislation, with more support and guidance for both citizens and businesses. Here we think the main role is for the member states. Problems or questions relating to privacy are best addressed with our national authorities and in our own language.

Discussions and ideas online and in person

IDEA: 'Set tougher requirements for programmers and businesses and ban insecure programming languages.'

'Provide free European antivirus software to create a European firewall.'

'When I cross the border into Germany my mobile phone suddenly loses its coverage. Surely that shouldn't happen any more?'

'With our iPhones we can be tracked anywhere. That's also our own fault.'

'It's not convenient to have to fill in a different type of privacy form in each country.'

IDEA: 'Establish European internet policing. That's an obvious area for EU action.'

Participants in the online dialogue: 'Good internet access everywhere is in our own interest'

There was an interesting discussion in one of the topic-based dialogues on the EU's role in the online world. All the participants agreed that it was important to have good internet connections throughout Europe. But should this be a matter for the EU? Several participants felt this was mainly a task for individual Member States. Another participant pointed out that good and stable internet connections abroad would also benefit the Netherlands: 'We earn billions in trade with other EU countries. So it's in our own interest that these countries operate well.'

School pupils in Helmond: 'Same rules and penalties for internet criminals'

In the Dr. Knippenbergcollege in Helmond, 15- and 16-year-old pupils discussed the problem of online crime. They regularly hear about this in the news: for example, that there's been a data breach in a company, or that a country such as Russia or China is trying to steal data. As internet criminals often work across borders, they find it logical for European countries to cooperate on this. That means setting rules, but also penalties, they think. 'If hackers from Russia are trying to invade our space, the EU must retaliate.'

Education, culture, youth and sport

EU countries are responsible themselves for the areas of education, culture, youth and sport. The EU can and does provide support by, for example, promoting quality education and multilingualism, protecting cultural heritage and supporting cultural and sporting sectors. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations — Our vision of education, culture, youth and sport

45 % of Dutch people consider education an important issue and think that the EU should deal with these issues. For youth, culture and sport, the figures are 39 %, 23 % and 19 % respectively.

1 Do encourage students to study abroad but go about it sensibly

Many Dutch people consider that studying abroad has a positive impact on young people. It contributes to personal development. What's more, studying abroad can help Europeans to better understand each other. It can also contribute to better integration. Many Dutch people therefore consider it a good thing that there is an Erasmus programme that encourages study abroad. But we are also pleased that the EU is keeping a critical eye on this. In practice, for example, international students tend to stick together and do not always learn much about the country in which they are studying. The EU also needs to avoid a situation in which countries with lower levels of knowledge end up with a brain drain with all their best talent studying abroad.

'Vocational-level exchange programmes should also be developed.'

2 Leave issues such as culture and sport to the Member States

58 % of Dutch people think that the EU should do more to protect Europe's cultural heritage. Like the temples in Greece, for example. On the other hand, we think that local culture is primarily the responsibility of the countries themselves. The same applies, for example, to problems in sport. This is an important issue, but it cannot be one of the EU's core tasks. Basically, Europe needs to prioritise and a lot of money is needed for other things. Sometimes financial contributions are what's needed, but there are other ways of working together too, for example by sharing knowledge and ideas.

'Protection of culture is a matter for the countries themselves. But if world heritage is being neglected, then I definitely think the EU should intervene.'

3 Ensure that Europeans get to know each other better and respect each other more

Dutch people like it when other Europeans speak English well. It makes life easier when we are abroad. And if, for example, we want to communicate with migrant workers in the Netherlands. At the same time, many Dutch people consider it very important that we continue to speak and value our own language. We also want to respect other differences within Europe. Whether it is culture, education or sport, everyone should feel free to be themselves. Differences can sometimes be a source of conflict, but they are also precisely what makes Europe such a rich continent. Many Dutch people therefore think that countries should take the time to become familiar with each other's customs and ideas.

'I see the EU as a group of friends. We respect our differences and I can appeal to them for help if I need to.'

Discussions and ideas online and in person

IDEA: 'Alongside the local curriculum, introduce a shared European curriculum at all levels of education.'

IDEA: 'In addition to a Capital of Culture, there should also be an educational, youth and sports capital (or country) each year.'

'What connects us in the EU is precisely the fact that we all have our own country's culture. And so we are not defined by a single culture.'

'Instead of highlighting the negative things, we should try to promote sport more.'

'I am integrated here, I pay taxes, but I am and remain Latin American. I cherish my language, music and food. These are not issues for Europe.'

'There is too much talk about the economy in Europe. And too little about well-being.'

Students at the University of Leiden: 'Language is important, but must remain a free choice'

At the University of Leiden, history students discussed this. They consider it important for people to speak more than one language. For them, knowing more languages is fantastic for one's personal development, good for trade and for political relations in the EU. They think that languages should be offered at school but should not be made compulsory. Similarly, the students consider that a second language does not necessarily have to be a European language. 'If you live in Eastern Europe and choose to learn Russian, then you're entitled to', said one of the participants.

Turkish community in Schiedam: 'Ensure fair job opportunities for all young people'

At Stichting Hakder in Schiedam, one of the things the local Turkish community spoke about was the importance of fair employment opportunities for everyone. All those present agreed that the EU should require companies to offer traineeships or jobs to young people with few opportunities. They reported that young migrants in particular have difficulties finding traineeships and jobs. 'Some of them do not even go to the doctor because they are afraid that they will have to pay for it themselves. So they are very unlikely to apply for a traineeship or a job', one of the participants said. 'Businesses need to do more about this and the EU should encourage that.'

Statement of accountability

Visions of Europe is made up of different, interlinked dialogue formats that gather Dutch citizens' views and ideas on the future of Europe and the EU. This section provides evidence of the way in which the interlinked dialogue formats comply with the guidelines applicable to national Citizens' Panels in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Design of interlinked dialogue formats

The following forms of dialogue have been used:

1. **Panel survey**
   Survey of a representative cross-section of the Dutch population.
2. **In-depth online topic-based dialogues**
   Dialogues in which the results of the first interim report 'Our vision of Europe: initial insights and follow-up questions (8 October 2021)' are explored more with a group of Dutch people.
3. **Dialogues with specific groups**
   Meetings with Dutch people who are not accustomed to participating in (online) surveys and panels.
4. **Dialogues with young people**
   Meetings focusing on the European topics that are most relevant to young people.
5. **Online open research: Questionnaire and 'Swipe to the future'**
   The panel survey questionnaire could also be completed by all Dutch nationals, including those resident abroad. This questionnaire was open from 1 September 2021 to 14 November 2021. In addition, during the same period, every Dutch person was able to participate through the 'Swipe to the future' tool, an online tool with 20 statements.

1 Panel survey

The Dutch citizens' dialogue Visions of Europe (Kijk op Europa) was launched on 1 September 2021 with a panel survey. In this statement of accountability we briefly describe the design and implementation of this panel study.

Goal and target population

Visions of Europe was launched with an online questionnaire exploring how Dutch people feel about the future of Europe. The questionnaire was presented to a representative panel and made accessible to all Dutch people (including those living abroad). In addition, the online tool 'Swipe to the future', which featured 20 statements that people could give their views on, was also available to everyone. The results of the panel survey provided input for the various topic-based dialogues in the follow-up to the Visions of Europe citizen dialogue.

The target population for the panel survey consists of all Dutch citizens aged 18 or over and registered (from the time the field work began) as Dutch residents in the municipal Personal Records Database. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), on 1 January 2021 this target group numbered 14 million 190 874 people. The lower limit of 18 years is in line with the voting age. This is the population identified for the panel survey.

Field work

To obtain a statistical picture of 'the Dutch', a survey was conducted of a nationwide panel of over 100 000 members (ISO-certified, Research Keurmerk group, Dutch Market Research Association). These members have all registered for the survey panel and regularly give their opinions on a range of topics. In addition to their personal motivation for providing input, they are also paid for filling in the surveys. Various scientific studies have shown that respondents who receive financial compensation for filling in surveys do not give significantly different answers from those who do not (source: Does use of survey incentives degrade data quality? Cole, J. S., Sarraf, S. A., Wang, X., 2015).

Field work started on 11 August 2021 and ended on 19 September 2021. A single data-collection method was used: internet research. The members of the survey panel each received an email containing a personalised link to the online questionnaire. After two weeks the panel participants received a reminder email. Invitations to participate were sent in batches and in stratified form (with due regard to equal distribution among subpopulations) until the required number of respondents had been reached.

Sampling and distribution

The guiding principle for the study's design was that a minimum of 3 600 respondents would have to participate in order to achieve good statistical reliability. This number also provided a good distribution across various background characteristics in the population. Dutch people do not come in one shape or size. For this reason the study ensured in advance that the sample was properly distributed to factor in a number of characteristics. The Netherlands is a relatively small country, but regional opinions can differ. A person's attitude to the relative importance they attach to a topic may (also) be determined by where they live. For example, people who live in rural areas may feel differently about security to urban dwellers. In addition, studies by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) have shown that more educated people generally support the EU more than less educated people, and that young people are more often pro-EU than older people (source: 'Wat willen Nederlanders van de Europese Unie?' (What do the Dutch want from the European Union? Netherlands Institute for Social Research, The Hague, 2019).

To address this, we assigned quotas in advance across the following characteristics, to ensure a representative sample distribution: (1) region (using COROP regions), (2) age and (3) level of education. [note: a COROP region is a division of the Netherlands used for statistical purposes.] In addition, the sample reflects the following background characteristics: sex, origin, primary day-to-day activity and political leanings.

The COROP regions were developed using the nodal principle (population centres which provide services or which serve a regional function) on the basis of commuter flows. Here and there, the nodal principle has been abandoned in favour of provincial boundaries. After a redrawing of municipal boundaries crossed the COROP boundaries, these regions were adjusted (source: CBS). Within the COROP regions, we ensure a good distribution across the following age groups: 18-34; 35-54; 55-75 and over 75.

Finally, we also ensured a representative distribution across levels of education. The sample distribution of respondents is in line with the national distribution of the highest level of education attained, which is as follows:

Highest level of education attained

Low: primary education, pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (years 1-3), senior secondary vocational education (MBO) (year 1)	32.1 %
Medium: senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (years 4-6), senior secondary vocational education (MBO) (years 2-4)	44.6 %
High: higher professional or university education	22.9 %
Unknown	0.4 %

Response

In total, 4 086 respondents took part in the panel survey. The target of 3 600 fully completed questionnaires was met.

Response by COROP region and age group	**18-34 years**	**35-54 years**	**55-75 years**	**75+ years**
North Drenthe	11	14	17	5
South-East Drenthe	10	12	14	4
South-West Drenthe	7	10	11	3
Flevoland	29	33	28	6
North Friesland	20	22	25	8
South-East Friesland	12	13	14	3
South-West Friesland	8	11	11	4
Achterhoek	22	27	34	11
Arnhem/Nijmegen	52	53	55	15
Veluwe	44	48	51	17
South-West Gelderland	16	18	20	5
Greater Delfzijl	2	4	5	1
East Groningen	7	10	12	3
Rest of Groningen	36	26	28	8
Mid Limburg	13	17	21	7
North Limburg	17	20	23	7

South Limburg	**38**	**40**	**52**	**17**
Mid-North Brabant	34	35	35	11
North-East North Brabant	41	43	51	14
West North Brabant	40	47	49	15
South-East North Brabant	55	56	58	18
Greater Haarlem	13	18	18	7
Greater Alkmaar	14	19	19	6
Greater Amsterdam	116	104	88	23
Het Gooi & Vechtstreek	13	21	19	7
IJmond	12	14	15	4
Top of North Holland	22	27	30	9
Zaanstreek	11	13	12	3
North Overijssel	25	28	25	8
Twente	41	44	46	14
South-West Overijssel	10	11	12	3
Utrecht	96	100	89	27
Rest of Zeeland	16	21	23	8
Zeelandic Flanders	6	8	9	3
Greater Leiden & Bollenstreek	30	31	31	10
Greater The Hague	63	70	57	18
Delft & Westland	19	15	15	4
Greater Rijnmond	103	107	99	31
East South Holland	22	24	25	8
South-East South Holland	24	26	26	9

Response by level of education

Low	1 382	34 %
Medium	1 747	43 %
High	915	22 %
Unknown	42	1 %

Reliability and representativeness

With 4 086 respondents, it is possible to make observations about the population with 95 % reliability and a 1.53 % margin of error. The reliability and margin of error of the results depend on the size of the sample. The larger the sample, the more reliably and/or accurately the results can be extrapolated to the population as a whole.

The reliability level is defined as 1 (100 %) minus the significance level. It is normal to assume a significance level of 5 %, which means a reliability level of 95 %. This means that, if the study were to be repeated in the same manner and under the same conditions, the results would give the same picture in 95 % of cases.
The accuracy level (expressed as the margin of error) indicates the range of values within which the actual value in the population lies or, in other words, how far the results from the sample might deviate from the results that would be obtained if the entire population were to complete the survey. A margin of error of 1.53 % means that the actual value in the total population may be up to 1.53 % higher or lower than the value in the sample. In practice, this means that, if a survey result from the sample indicates that 50 % of respondents find a particular topic important, the actual percentage may be up to 1.53 % lower or higher than 50 % (i.e. between 48.47 % and 51.53 %). A margin of error of up to 5 % is common and generally accepted in (statistical) quantitative research.

Besides reliability, the representativeness of the sample is also important. Since the invitations to participate in the survey were sent in batches and stratified, the results are representative in terms of COROP regions and age groups within each COROP region. The response is also in line with the national distribution of the highest level of education attained.

Other background characteristics

The respondents in the panel survey were asked a number of extra background questions. The questions covered gender, views on the EU, origin, primary day-to-day activity and which political party they would vote for if an election were to be held now.

49 % of respondents were male, 50 % were female and 1 % preferred not to answer this question.

51 % of respondents thought it was a good thing that the Netherlands is a member of the EU, 13 % thought it was a bad thing, and 36 % saw it as neutral or did not have an opinion.

95 % of respondents were born in the Netherlands. For 89 % of respondents, both parents were born in the Netherlands. For 5 % of respondents, both parents were born abroad.

Respondents' current political leanings

Party	**%**
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	14 %
Party for Freedom (PVV)	13 %
Socialist Party (SP)	8 %
Democrats 66 (D66)	6 %
Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	6 %
Labour Party (PvdA)	6 %
Party for the Animals	4 %
GreenLeft (GroenLinks)	4 %
Christian Union	3 %
JA21	3 %
Farmer-Citizen Movement (BoerBurgerBeweging)	2 %
Forum for Democracy	2 %
Reformed Political Party (SGP)	2 %
Volt	2 %
DENK (THINK)	1 %
Van Haga Group	1 %
BIJ1	1 %
Den Haan party	0 %
Other	2 %
Blank ballot	3 %
Prefer not to say	13 %

Would not vote	**5 %**

What is your main day-to-day activity at the moment?

Occupation	**%**
Pupil/student	6 %
Part-time employee	16 %
Full-time employee	31 %
Self-employed	3 %
Homemaker	5 %
Jobseeker	2 %
Volunteer	2 %
Unfit for work	6 %
Retired	27 %
Other	1 %
Prefer not to say	1 %

Questionnaire

The questionnaire and this report were commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and drawn up by an independent external organisation. The questionnaire has a modular structure and comprises the following sections, which correspond to the topics identified for the Conference on the Future of Europe:
key topics and Europe's role
climate change and the environment
health
the economy and jobs
the European Union's role in the world
security and the rule of law
the online world
European democracy
migration and refugees
education, culture, youth and sport

When developing the questionnaire, close attention was paid to the quality, reliability and validity of the phrasing of the questions. The aim was to ensure neutral, non-leading wording of questions, statements and choices. In addition, the questions were reviewed to ensure that they were written in plain language (B1 level).

The questionnaire was tested qualitatively in a face-to-face setting with test respondents belonging to the target group, to see how the questions came across to different types of respondent. The wording was adjusted wherever it proved to be too complex.

Methods of analysis

Two methods of analysis were used in this study:

Univariate analysis

In univariate analysis, descriptive statistics are used to describe variables in a study. In this study, frequencies and averages have been used.

Bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis looks at the relationship between two variables, in this case the relationship between the importance of the various topics and whether or not the EU should deal with them on the one hand, and the background characteristic of age on the other. Significance testing was used to determine whether different age groups attach different degrees of importance to a given topic, and think differently about whether or not these are topics the EU should deal with.

Reporting and completeness

This report includes (visual) representations of the results of all questions put to the survey panel respondents. For some questions, respondents were able to give 'open' answers (as opposed to choosing from a set of multiple-choice answers). These open answers were then categorised and incorporated into the report. Ideas that respondents shared in the free comment fields serve as input for the various topic-based dialogues in the follow-up to the Visions of Europe citizens' dialogue.

2. In-depth online topic-based dialogues

The key topics of the Conference on the Future or Europe were discussed in more depth in eight online topic-based dialogues. The aim of the dialogues was to find out *why* people think the way they do, and their underlying reasons and feelings. What concerns them and what opportunities do they see? During the dialogue sessions, participants were also given a chance to contribute suggestions and ideas about the topics. They were also able to raise issues that are not part of the Conference but that are important to them.

The topic-based dialogues took place on 12 and 14 October and on 9 and 11 November. In October, there were four online topic-based dialogues on topics in the Economy and Democracy cluster. In November, there were four online topic-based dialogues on topics in the Climate and EU in the World cluster. An average of 29 people participated in each dialogue session (231 in total). Participants were recruited from the panel members (see 1) and through social media.

3. Dialogues with specific groups

We know that certain groups of Dutch people are less used to taking part in (online) surveys and panels. To gain a representative picture of the 'voice of the Netherlands' it was important to let them express their ideas and opinions too. That is why we also organised some in-person dialogues for Visions of Europe. The opinions and ideas we gathered through them have been used as one of the bases for the recommendations.

Target groups

There is no clear definition of target groups which are difficult to reach. Research and experience have shown that Dutch people from **non-Western backgrounds** are significantly less likely to participate in surveys and discussions voluntarily. Since they form a large group (14 % of Dutch people), they were selected to participate in the Visions of Europe dialogue. The same weightings have been applied as for **people with low levels of literacy**. That is also a large group (2.5 million Dutch people), which partly overlaps with the group of migrants (39 %). Finally, a dialogue was conducted with a group which rarely appears in surveys and discussions, and **is critical of Europe but has a lot of professional dealings with it**. Businesses in the agricultural sector were selected to take part.

The above groups were approached through organisations they belong to, such as migrant associations, interest groups and professional organisations. Because we limited the number of dialogues to eight, we could not cover everyone. That makes the choice of participants somewhat arbitrary. When selecting participants, we also mainly looked for people who were enthusiastic about taking part and helping mobilise the grassroots, as well as at practical issues such as availability for dates and locations.

On-location dialogues were held with members of the following organisations:
Stichting Hakder, Alevi community, Schiedam
Stichting Asha, Hindustani community, Utrecht (2 dialogue sessions)
Piëzo, civil-society organisation, Zoetermeer
Taal doet Meer, literacy organisation, Utrecht
BoerenNatuur, association of agricultural cooperatives
Marokkanen Dialoog Overvecht (Overvecht Morroccan Dialogue), Moroccan community, Utrecht
Femmes for Freedom, interest group for women from a migrant background, The Hague

A total of 110 people took part in these dialogue meetings.

4. Dialogues with young people

Young people are a priority target group for the Conference on the Future of Europe. To actively encourage their participation in the Visions of Europe citizens' dialogue, and to give the opinions and ideas of this group extra weight, five in-person dialogue meetings were organised especially for young people. A planned sixth meeting with young people had to be cancelled due to Covid restrictions.

Meetings were held at the following institutions:
Studievereniging Geschiedenis, history students' association, Leiden University
Dr. Knippenbergcollege, secondary school, Helmond
Coalitie-Y, Socio-Economic Council (*SER*) youth association
Graafschap College, MBO institute, Doetinchem
CSG Jan Arentsz, STEM secondary school (*technasium*), Alkmaar

A total of 95 young people took place in the dialogue meetings.

Discussion techniques used

The Socratic method was used for the online topic-based dialogues, the dialogues with specific groups and the dialogues with young people. This method has been used for years in the Netherlands for our 'Dialogue Day', when people across the Netherlands speak to each other about issues that concern them. In the Socratic method, the moderator applies the following principles:

Let everyone tell their story
Don’t immediately tell a counter-story
Treat each other with respect
Speak for yourself (‘I think’ instead of ‘they say’)
Ask for explanations if nothing but generalisations come up
Don't judge, investigate opinions instead
Allow silence if people need time to think

The dialogues follow this pattern: divergence - convergence - divergence. The starting point is that first you have to diverge (make room for individual feelings and opinions) before you can converge (discuss possible directions) and finally diverge again (e.g. gather individual recommendations). Theory and practice show that this pattern ensures a smooth dialogue.

All dialogues were led by professional facilitators.

5. Online open survey: Questionnaire and ‘Swipe to the future’

The panel survey questionnaire was also open to all Dutch citizens, including those resident abroad. It was open from 1 September 2021 to 14 November 2021. In addition, during the same period, every Dutch person was able to participate through the ‘Swipe to the future’ tool, an online tool with 20 statements.

Response and implementation

In total, 1 967 respondents filled in the questionnaire and 6 968 fully completed the swipe tool. The questionnaire and swipe tool were open to all; there were no prior conditions or selection criteria for taking part. Questions in the questionnaire could be skipped (there were no mandatory questions) to maximise response. Participants answered ‘I would rather not say’ much more often in the questionnaire than in the representative panel survey.
The backgrounds of participants in the open questionnaire and swipe tool differed from those of the participants in the representative panel survey in a number of ways. The results of the open questionnaire and the swipe tool are not representative, unlike those of the panel survey. The results of the online open survey were used to supplement the panel survey. They give an insight into prevailing feelings and ideas in the Netherlands. The suggestions for improvement given in the free-text fields were used in the
sub-topic ‘Discussions and ideas online and in person’. The swipe tool was used to gain an insight into some prevailing feelings in the Netherlands. The results were taken into account when preparing the recommendations. Since representativeness is a requirement, this report only takes limited account of the results of the online open survey.

This is a publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
www.kijkopeuropa.nl

Rijksoverheid

National government

Our vision of Europe

Opinions, ideas and recommendations

Topics
Climate Change and Environment
Migration
Health
EU in the world

14 January 2022

This document is a translation of the report entitled ‘Onze kijk op Europa; meningen, ideeën en aanbevelingen’, the Dutch-language version of which was published on 14 January 2022 at www.kijkopeuropa.nl. This translation is a simplified version in which the original layout (illustrations and other stylistic elements) has been removed for translation purposes.

Our vision of ...

Report summary: all recommendations one by one

Through the citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe', we have gathered the opinions and ideas of Dutch citizens on the future of Europe. This has led to the following recommendations being made to the European Union on the last four topics (out of a total of nine).

Climate Change and Environment

Provide a clear direction for Europe's approach to climate change
Ensure that countries and undertakings cooperate more closely on targeted solutions
Introduce a fair and practicable CO_2 system
Communicate more clearly and more positively on climate challenges

Dutch people think that the EU should take the lead when it comes to combating climate change. While member states should be able to make their own choices, they must work towards the same goals. Instead of pointing fingers at one another, EU countries should make more of an effort to exchange knowledge and identify common solutions. A CO_2 taxation system may well be effective, but it must be fair, practical and clear. In general, Dutch people think that the EU should communicate more clearly and more positively on the subject of the climate.

Migration

1. **Prevent the debate about refugees from losing sight of the finer points**
2. **Ensure that refugees are distributed fairly and sensibly**
3. **Use knowledge and experience to help refugees' regions of origin**

Dutch people think it is important to distinguish between people fleeing from unsafe areas and economic refugees. Discussions nowadays about migration and integration often lose sight of the finer points. To ensure a fair distribution of refugees across Europe, the EU should agree on clear criteria which do justice to both the member states and the people who have fled their countries. Finally, Dutch people suggest that the EU should provide regions hosting refugees not only with financial support, but also with know-how.

Health

1. **Be more proactive in the face of a pandemic**
2. **Provide affordable and reliable medicines for everyone**
3. **Countries must act individually to make their healthcare systems fairer and more effective**

Dutch people take the view that EU countries should cooperate more closely when combating a pandemic. In the case of the approach to COVID-19, the policy is sometimes confusing. While the rules need not be the same everywhere, they should at least be compatible. As regards vaccines or medicines, Dutch people want the costs to be kept as low as possible while ensuring reliable quality and responsible production. Moreover, we think it is important that large undertakings should not abuse their power; healthcare should primarily be a national responsibility.

EU's role in the world

1. **Take advantage of the EU's strength, in particular on major international issues**
2. **Encourage cooperation, not conflict, both inside and outside Europe**
3. **Take a considered approach when offering to help resolve conflicts**

Dutch people think that European cooperation should be directed primarily at major issues of common interest. This should also be the focus of the EU's cooperation with third countries. In addition to climate change and the coronavirus pandemic, such issues also include international security and protecting the European economy from unfair trade. Both inside and outside Europe, Dutch people prefer cooperation to conflict. In addition, in terms of an approach to conflict, an effort should always be made to seek a non-violent resolution.

Introduction

Between 1 September and mid-November, the citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe' enabled all Dutch people to share their opinions and ideas on the future of Europe. The Netherlands is putting the recommendations that came out of this dialogue, together with the opinions and ideas gathered, to the European Union (EU). This report focuses on the last four topics (out of a total of nine). The first five topics have already been addressed in a report published on 3 December 2021.

About 'Visions of Europe'

The EU wants to know what its inhabitants think about Europe. The EU is therefore organising the Conference on the Future of Europe. The opinions and ideas of inhabitants throughout the EU will eventually feed into the future plans for Europe. As part of that Conference, the Netherlands is organising the national citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe'.

'Visions of Europe' was launched on 1 September with the online gathering of opinions and ideas by means of a survey involving a representative panel. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the initial insights gained from the panel survey and formulate specific recommendations, we organised topic-based dialogues online. The dialogues were open to anyone who wanted to get involved. We also criss-crossed the country to talk to young people and other (harder-to-reach) groups.

From schoolgoers, students in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and university students to farmers, migrants and the Minister himself

In October and November, a total of eight online topic-based dialogues took place, with an average of 30 participants at each meeting. We also organised one online topic-based dialogue and seven on-site topic-based dialogues with various groups of Dutch people. For example, we talked to the Turkish community in Schiedam and were hosted by volunteers from the Piëzo Foundation in Zoetermeer. There, we were also joined by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Knapen. The Minister discussed the dialogue and the opinions on the future of Europe with the participants. Finally, we organised six meetings with various groups of young people. For example, we were hosted by a secondary school in Helmond, an MBO institute in Doetinchem and the University of Leiden.

'It's about our children's future. That's why I think it's important to get involved in this.'
Participant in a topic-based dialogue

About this report

Based on the opinions and ideas we have gathered over the past few months, the EU has been presented with recommendations from Dutch people. The conversations which took place between Dutch people gave rise to interesting discussions and innovative ideas and suggestions. Some of those ideas and suggestions are included in this report. The content of this report thus reflects the voice of the Netherlands: our vision of Europe.

Of course, just as there are differences between European countries and citizens, we in the Netherlands do not always see eye to eye with one another. But it is precisely those differences that are worth so much and an important feature of a democracy. The recommendations stem from the most prevalent opinions and ideas voiced by participants in 'Visions of Europe'. We also describe the concerns, thoughts and feelings which are less common, but struck us during the dialogues and in the online research.

'It was nice to be able to express my views about matters which are important to me, and to feel that my voice is being heard.'
Participant in a topic-based dialogue

Nine topics have been identified for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Those topics are also at the heart of the Dutch citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe'. In October, we published an interim report containing initial insights and follow-up questions based on the panel survey. At the beginning of December, another report appeared describing the opinions, ideas and recommendations on the first five topics. The present report covers the remaining four topics.

Previous report - December 2021

Values and rights, rule of law, security
A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
European democracy
Digital transformation
Education, culture, youth and sport

Current report - January 2022

Climate Change and Environment
Migration
Health
EU in the world

What happens next?

The Conference on the Future of Europe brings together the ideas, opinions and recommendations of all the EU's inhabitants. The meetings will discuss not only the results of all the national citizens' dialogues, but also the outcome of other initiatives from the Conference. For example, there are also European Citizens' Panels, and all EU citizens (including Dutch citizens) can access a European Digital Platform.

‘I hope that those in charge of the EU take my views on board, and that this helps them make the right choices.’
Participant in a topic-based dialogue

The Conference will close in the spring of 2022. The Netherlands will then draw up a final report on the citizens’ dialogue: a compilation of this report and the previous report, containing the recommendations on all nine topics. The Conference will produce recommendations for its Presidency: the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. They have committed to explore ways in which to follow up on the recommendations. For the Netherlands Government, the results also constitute a valuable contribution in terms of shaping the country’s EU policy.

The process in the run-up to the spring of 2022 can be summarised as follows:

Timeline

Visions of Europe

1 Sept	12 Oct	22-23 Oct	15 Nov	3 Dec	14 Jan	21-22 Jan	Feb	18- 19 Feb	11-12 Mar	22-24 Apr		
Gathering ideas online												
	Topic-based dialogues											
		Interim results (interim report)		Interim report on the topics of economy and democracy	Interim report on the topics of climate and EU in the world		'Our vision of Europe' final report					
		↓				↓		↓	↓	↓		
		Conference meeting				Conference meeting		Conference meeting	(possible) Conference meeting	Final event of the Conference	→	Recommendations for Presidents European Parliament European Commission Council of Ministers
						↑		↑		↑		
				More opinions and ideas on the future of Europe:								
Citizens' dialogues					European Citizens' Panels				European Digital Platform (incl. for Dutch citizens)			

Structure of this report

This report focuses on four topics. For each of the topics we describe the following:
Recommendations based on all strands of the citizens' dialogue
Discussions and ideas online and in person: impressions of the opinions, ideas and discussions raised in the (online and physical) topic-based dialogues

A statement of accountability appears at the end of the report.

Climate Change and Environment

Recommendations - Our view on climate change and the environment

71 % of Dutch people see climate change and the environment as important issues and think the EU should tackle them.

1. Choose a clear direction for the European approach on climate change

68 % of Dutch people think that the EU should take a leading role in the fight against climate change. Global warming is a problem that no single country can solve on its own. Although Dutch people do not all see alike on climate change, we think the EU needs, in any event, to develop a clearer vision of the future. Despite the Green Deal, it is noticeable that member states' views often differ. While countries should still be able to make their own choices, they must work towards the same goals. We also think we have our own responsibility as citizens, which includes adapting our behaviour as consumers.

'The Netherlands wants to get rid of natural gas, but it's being promoted in Germany. I find that rather hard to understand.'

2. Ensure that countries and undertakings work together better on the solutions aimed at

Dutch people have the impression that countries often play the blame game on climate change and the environment. The main focus is on differences, for example between poor and rich countries in the EU, or between those with more or less industry. We would prefer them to look for agreements. Similar companies in different countries can exchange their knowledge, for instance, and work out solutions together. Poorer countries can also be more involved in this type of cooperation on tackling climate change. They can help design and also benefit from joint solutions.

'Tackling climate change should not be about competition but cooperation.'

3. Introduce a fair and practicable CO_2 system

In tackling climate change the EU has put great emphasis on reducing CO_2 emissions. Dutch people think we need a better system, which penalises both producers and users fairly. They disagree on whether countries with larger populations should be allowed to emit more CO_2. Some countries have highly polluting industries, for instance, whilst others simply have a lot of potential to produce green energy. These differences need to be taken into account, though without making things too complicated, as everyone needs to understand the system.

'Industrial countries export a lot. Does that mean they should be the only ones to pay the CO_2 tax? I think the users should also contribute.'

4. Communicate more clearly and more positively on climate challenges

Dutch people hear and read a lot about climate change. However, for many people it is still an abstract and complex notion. It is often seen as something that costs a huge amount of money, though tackling climate change provides opportunities too, for instance to promote local food production and develop new, sustainable technology. The EU can tell that story better and more often. We also think the leaders of member states could set a better example themselves. Less travel – for example between Brussels and Strasbourg – and more online meetings can be ways of supporting sustainability.

'Sustainability is still perceived too much as a cost; it should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat.'

Discussions and ideas online and in person

'We shouldn't see CO_2 emissions as a right, but as a troublesome side effect.'

'I have the impression that more is being said than done in Europe on climate change.'

'Stronger climate rules can benefit us over time; as a trading continent we should look for the opportunities here.'

'We cannot wait for other continents – there's no time for that.'

IDEA: *'Reward countries financially when their natural environment and biodiversity flourish.'*

IDEA: *'Promote ecofriendly tourism in the EU's poor regions.'*

MBO college students in Doetinchem: 'Long-distance travel should remain open to anyone'

It was suggested to students in the Graafschap College in Doetinchem that flying within the EU should become more expensive. Some students agreed, as more expensive tickets encourage people to look for more sustainable alternatives. It was stressed, however, that the EU should ensure there were better, climate-friendly options, such as better train connections. Other participants said they did not support more expensive flight tickets. 'Rich people fly the most now and can easily pay', said someone. 'They'll carry on doing so with higher prices, but long-distance holidays will then become impossible for ordinary people.'

Nature-inclusive farmers: 'The EU can help spread knowledge about sustainable solutions'

BoerenNatuur is an association of agricultural collectives. The topical dialogue included a discussion on climate change and the environment. The participants felt that implementation of EU laws and regulations by individual countries could be improved, taking the nitrogen legislation as an example. 'EU legislation only states that nature areas should 'not deteriorate', but that requirement is treated quite differently in Southern Europe to the Netherlands.' Most participants agree that Europe should take the lead in combating climate change. The farmers believe words are not enough; they should lead to results, above all through knowledge-sharing. 'In the agricultural sector we are working on ways to achieve cleaner farming. The EU should help spread the relevant knowledge quickly.'

Migration

(Migration and refugees)

The borders between EU countries are open. So countries work together in the EU, e.g. on managing the external borders and combating migrant smuggling. The fair distribution of refugees among EU countries is also under discussion. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our view on migration and refugees

65 % of Dutch people find migration and refugees important and think that the EU should tackle these issues.

1. Stop the debate about refugees from losing sight of the finer points

70 % of Dutch people think that the borders on the fringes of Europe need better protection. And 72 % of those would still think that way even if it meant that more refugees would be sent back to unsafe countries. Dutch people think that more attention should be paid to the reasons why people flee unsafe countries. In some cases climate change is the reason, in others it is war. Often the underlying reasons are only discussed to a limited extent when talking about refugees. And the added value refugees can bring to a country often only gets limited mention. Lastly, we think that the EU should draw a greater distinction between people from unsafe regions who are at the borders and economic refugees. To summarise, we think that the debate about migration and refugees often ignores the underlying reasons and lacks nuance. European politicians ought to be able to do something about this by setting a good example.

'We should see refugees as fellow human beings. Because not many of us would stand by and let someone in need die.'

2. Ensure that refugees are distributed fairly and sensibly

A European immigration service ought to be able to ensure that refugees are distributed fairly among EU countries. However, Dutch people think that there should be clear criteria for determining what is fair. A good social and welfare system can make a country attractive to refugees, for instance, but there are other factors of importance to both the refugee and the country concerned. In the Netherlands, for instance, we have a housing shortage. And some countries or sectors actually need more migrant workers. We think it is important for the EU to take this into account when distributing refugees. Clear agreements not only mean clarity, they also mean less discussion. Ultimately, that is a good thing for everyone concerned.

'Refugees must be allowed to use their talents in the country of destination too.'

3. Use knowledge and experience to help refugees' regions of origin

67 % of Dutch people think that the EU should give more help to unsafe regions to prevent flows of refugees. We realise that refugees do not choose to leave their home countries just like that. That is why we should address the causes, such as climate change or conflicts, which make regions unsafe or unviable. Support from the EU to regions of origin of refugees could be in the form of knowledge, not just financial assistance. For instance, in the Netherlands we know a lot about agriculture. We can help other countries deal with drought and erosion better through modern farming methods. And people who have fled to Europe can do some training in a European country and then provide help in their countries of origin themselves.

Discussions and ideas online and in person

'The EU should make provision for faster asylum procedures. Then there would be more room for people who really need it.'

'I know a lot of young people near me who want to buy a house but cannot find anything affordable. And in the meantime, refugees are given housing. I find that tough.'

'Climate change will continue to force people to flee their countries. You can't stop it, but perhaps you can regulate it better.'

'I live in Betuwe. We really need a lot of migrant workers here during the pear and apple season.'

'Unsafe regions are not unsafe for no reason; governments there are often corrupt. How do we know what happens to our help and money?'

IDEA: *'Also think about local strategies, such as citizen participation in the local reception of refugees, and financing local integration initiatives.'*

IDEA: *'Build 'tiny houses' in cities where refugees can live to start with. Then you would relieve the pressure on the housing market and increase support for taking people in.'*

Volunteers who were refugees themselves: 'People keep their distance in Europe.'

Taal Doet Meer is a voluntary association which helps people who are new to Utrecht and speak a foreign language get involved in the community. In the topical discussions with this association, it was not just migration but particularly integration that was talked about. Some participants came to the Netherlands as refugees themselves, including someone from Syria. 'After seven years I still don't feel Dutch. I still haven't found a job, even though I have a master's degree. I have noticed that European countries are mainly preoccupied with themselves and are not fully open to other countries and cultures.' Another participant said that Europeans often keep their distance from each other too. 'Most people are on their own; everyone does their own thing. Whereas I think we should talk to each other and learn from each other.'

Young people from the Nationale Jeugdraad (National Youth Council): 'Only let people in if you can take good care of them.'

In Utrecht members of the various working parties of the Nationale Jeugdraad (NJR) spoke to each other. The participants (between 16 and 23 years old) think that various aspects should be taken into account when distributing refugees across Europe, such as a country's population size, surface area, welfare and the number of reception centres. 'You should only let refugees into your country if you can take good care of them', said one of the participants. Young people also think that there should be consequences if a country does not live up to agreements on taking in refugees. They should be made to pay a fine, for instance. 'And refugees themselves should also have a say in where they go', one participant said. 'For instance, if they have family somewhere, you can't have them sent somewhere else.'

Health

(Healthcare)

Although healthcare is mainly run by individual countries, European policy can support and strengthen it. For instance, when tackling the coronavirus crisis or other (future) health crises. Or by joint research into serious illnesses. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our vision of healthcare

64 % of Dutch people consider healthcare an important issue and think that the EU should deal with it.

1. Take greater control of pandemic-countering measures

83 % of Dutch people think that countries in the EU should work together more to prevent infectious diseases from spreading across the world. Because viruses do not stop at borders. We have seen this now during the coronavirus pandemic. Policy in the EU can be confusing. That is not good for compliance with the rules. We think that measures to prevent viruses spreading in Europe should be better coordinated, but without the rules having to be the same everywhere. There should be room to make choices at local level. Not only because infection rates can vary, but also because Europe is made up of different cultures. Some measures work better in one country than in another.

'I live in the Netherlands near the German border. The different Covid rules in the two countries are driving me crazy.'

2. Provide affordable and reliable medicines for everyone

71 % of Dutch people think that the EU should make us less reliant on countries outside the EU for the development, production and supply of medicines. But if that would mean people having to wait longer for medicines as a result, opinions differ. Dutch people think that this would make the production and distribution of medicines complicated. On the one hand, the Netherlands is facing soaring care costs, and we think it is important to keep costs down for as long as possible. On the other hand, we want to be able to trust in medicines even if they come from far away. This is not just a question of quality, but also sustainable and ethical production. Generally we think that important medicines should be universally available, including in poorer countries.

'Care costs are almost unaffordable nowadays. So we should try and buy new medicines as cheaply as possible.'

3. Countries must act individually to make their healthcare systems fairer and more effective

Dutch people are worried about healthcare, and those concerns reach beyond the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, we are facing structural capacity problems in hospitals. Some Dutch people do not take a positive view of the effects of the market on healthcare. We understand that pharmaceutical companies have to earn back their investments and that health insurance companies want to buy care cheaply, but big companies should not abuse their power. The EU should do something about this through regulation. Otherwise, we regard healthcare as primarily a national matter. After all, countries themselves know best what the local problems and priorities are. We do, however, think it is important for European countries to learn from each other to improve healthcare.

Discussions and ideas online and in person

'We should be a bit more careful where the availability of medicines in Europe is concerned. We are giving too much away at the moment.'

'It's good that Germany has been taking COVID-19 patients from the Netherlands. I would like to see more of that sort of solidarity in Europe.'

'Wherever you live in the EU and whether you are rich or poor, everyone has the right to good healthcare.'

'When buying medicines don't just look at the price, but at the ethics too. That means no child labour, for instance.'

IDEA: *'Improve Europeans' health by making sure they have less stress. Reduce the number of working hours in a week, for instance.'*

IDEA: *'Use serious games or augmented reality to help young people make healthier choices.'*

People from Utrecht with a Moroccan background: 'Health comes at a price'

The association *Marokkaans Dialoog Overvecht (MDO)* fosters the participation of the Moroccan community in the Overvecht neighbourhood of Utrecht. It encourages dialogue in the neighbourhood in order to mitigate disadvantages. Participants in the topical dialogue for Visions of Europe think that European cooperation has many benefits. However, some participants think that the Netherlands is sometimes too dependent on other countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has been given as an example. The participants think that the lengthy deliberations in Europe meant that the Netherlands was too late in getting started with vaccinations. 'Maybe it would be more expensive if the Netherlands wanted to take more decisions for itself', one participant said. 'But this is about health, and health comes at a price.'

School pupils in Helmond: 'Better to be smart and copy from each other than all take the same approach'

In the Dr. Knippenbergcollege in Helmond, 15- and 16-year-old pupils discussed the way Europe has handled the pandemic. Some pupils think that the EU Member States should have set the vaccination programme together. Most participants think that each individual country has a better idea of what is necessary and what works there and so is in a better position to determine what is best for the population. For instance, they know which sectors need to be vaccinated first and which sectors can wait. 'Of course it's a good thing to discuss this internationally', said one of the pupils. 'When different countries have their own different approaches, they can watch and learn from each other.'

The EU's role in the world

The world is facing enormous challenges. The EU is convinced that issues such as climate change and pandemics can only be addressed by global cooperation. And the EU wants its voice to be clearly heard on the world stage, alongside the United States and China, for instance. How does the Netherlands view this?

Recommendations - Our vision of the EU's role in the world

56 % of Dutch people consider the role of the EU in the world an important issue and one that the EU should address.

1. Take advantage of the EU's strength, in particular on major international issues

The creation of the EU is one of the reasons Europeans have lived in peace for more than 75 years; many Dutch people see this as the greatest achievement of the EU. Apart from that, Dutch people think that the EU's strength lies in tackling big, international challenges together. For example, climate change, the pandemic and the refugee crisis. Member states can also have a greater impact vis-à-vis countries outside the EU by concluding international agreements jointly as the EU. We think the Netherlands is too small to make a difference to these issues on our own. Then again, Dutch people want our country to be able to continue making our own decisions, in line with our culture and our own interests. Cooperation in Europe should therefore be mainly about ensuring efficiency and impact.

'It is easier to conclude international cooperation agreements as the EU than as an individual country.'

2. Encourage cooperation, not conflict, both inside and outside Europe

66 % of Dutch people think that the EU should form a stronger bloc against other international blocs of power. We think that there is less and less of a balance in the world. Countries such as China and Russia are acquiring more and more power in different domains. This is something we are quite concerned about. The EU should therefore address issues such as international security and protecting the European economy from unfair trade. We think that it is important for member states to agree a single approach more often and more quickly. Then we could make our voice heard more clearly. The fact that, as European countries, we are stronger together does not mean that we want to engage in conflict more often. Above all, we want to work together well with countries outside Europe too whenever we can.

'If we reduce internal differences and conflict, the visibility and impact of the EU on the world stage will grow.'

3. Take a considered approach when offering to help resolve conflicts

With the EU's role in the world growing, 50 % of Dutch people think that the approach to conflicts in the world is an important issue. We find it hard to say what the best way of tackling conflicts is. Past experience has shown that military intervention does not always end well. It can generate unexpectedly high costs and extra flows of refugees. Countries should be allowed to decide for themselves whether they want to join a war, given the local impact. We generally see greater cooperation between European armies as a good thing: we think it is important for Europe to be able to defend itself properly. But our preference is always to solve conflicts without resorting to violence.

'During the evacuation from Afghanistan each country came up with its own plan. Surely that could have been done better?'

Discussions and ideas online and in person

'The EU should put its own house in order before telling others what to do.'

'By buying Chinese products in great quantities, we Europeans are giving China a leg up.'

'The US is still hugely important to European defence.'

'Being a member of the EU means that you have a seat at the negotiating table too. So you can have your say in important decisions.'

'The EU has to stop seeing itself as a separate entity, because it is not. It is a cooperative association of European member states and should behave accordingly.'

IDEA: *'Just like the regular international climate summits, there should be a regular conference on human rights.'*

IDEA: *'Make European armies more efficient by, for instance, buying equipment together.'*

Moroccan-Dutch women: 'Stand up for human rights'

Femmes for Freedom is a Dutch association that campaigns against forced marriages, sexual repression and financial abuse of girls and women from a bicultural background. A meeting with a group of Moroccan-Dutch women was organised with the association. The participants think that the EU is currently too dependent on Russia and China. 'You can tell that the EU simply doesn't dare do anything because it is scared of sanctions', one participant said. As an example they mentioned the manufacture of medicines, which can be far from cheap. 'If there is a conflict, China can simply turn off the tap and we will be left with nothing', said another participant. The subject of human rights was also raised. 'We pretend to find this really important but we turn a blind eye to what China is doing to the Uyghurs', another participant said.

Pupils from Alkmaar STEM secondary school ('technasium'): 'No joint army'

During their topical dialogue, pupils from the Jan Arentsz STEM secondary school in Alkmaar spoke about the pros and cons of a joint European army. The participants made it clear that they were not in favour. 'If a country in the EU had a problem with a country from outside the EU we would automatically have to join a war. I think countries should be able to decide that for themselves', said a participant. The possibility of a third world war was also discussed. The pupils did not think it was very likely to happen, but if it did come to that, they thought that a solution could still be found quickly. 'Armies can work well together too. As far as I'm concerned, there doesn't have to be a European army.'

Statement of accountability

Visions of Europe is made up of different, interlinked dialogue formats that gather Dutch citizens' views and ideas on the future of Europe and the EU. This section provides evidence of the way in which the interlinked dialogue formats comply with the guidelines applicable to national Citizens' Panels in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Design of interlinked dialogue formats

The following forms of dialogue have been used:

6. **Panel survey**
   Online survey of a representative cross-section of the Dutch population.
7. **In-depth online topic-based dialogues**
   Dialogues in which the results of the first interim report 'Our vision of Europe: initial insights and follow-up questions (8 October 2021)' are explored more with a group of Dutch people.
8. **Dialogues with specific groups**
   Meetings with Dutch people who are not accustomed to participating in (online) surveys and panels.
9. **Dialogues with young people**
   Meetings focusing on the European topics that are most relevant to young people.
10. **Online open research: Questionnaire and 'Swipe to the future'**
    The panel survey questionnaire could also be completed by all Dutch nationals, including those resident abroad. It was open from 1 September 2021 to 14 November 2021. In addition, during the same period, every Dutch person was able to participate through the 'Swipe to the future' tool, an online tool with 20 statements.

1. Panel survey

The Dutch citizens' dialogue Visions of Europe (Kijk op Europa) was launched on 1 September 2021 with a panel survey. In this statement of accountability we briefly describe the design and implementation of this panel study.

Goal and target population

Visions of Europe was launched with an online questionnaire exploring how Dutch people feel about the future of Europe. The questionnaire was presented to a representative panel and made accessible to all Dutch people (including those living abroad). In addition, the online tool 'Swipe to the future', which featured 20 statements that people could give their views on, was also available to everyone. The results of the panel survey provided input for the various topic-based dialogues in the follow-up to the Visions of Europe citizen dialogue.

The target population for the panel survey consists of all Dutch citizens aged 18 or over and registered (from the time the field work began) as Dutch residents in the municipal Personal Records Database. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), on 1 January 2021 this target group numbered 14 190 874 people. The lower limit of 18 years is in line with the voting age. This is the population identified for the panel survey.

Field work

To obtain a statistical picture of 'the Dutch', a survey was conducted of a nationwide panel of over 100 000 members (ISO-certified, Research Keurmerk group, Dutch Market Research Association). These members have all registered for the survey panel and regularly give their opinions on a range of topics. In addition to their personal motivation for providing input, they are also paid for filling in the surveys. Various scientific studies have shown that respondents who receive financial compensation for filling in surveys do not give significantly different answers from those who do not (source: Does use of survey incentives degrade data quality? Cole, J. S., Sarraf, S. A., Wang, X., 2015).

Field work started on 11 August 2021 and ended on 19 September 2021. A single data-collection method was used: internet research. The members of the survey panel each received an email containing a personalised link to the online questionnaire. After two weeks the panel participants received a reminder email. Invitations to participate were sent in batches and in stratified form (with due regard to equal distribution among subpopulations) until the required number of respondents had been reached.

Sampling and distribution

The guiding principle for the study's design was that a minimum of 3 600 respondents would have to participate in order to achieve good statistical reliability. This number also provided a good distribution across various background characteristics in the population. Dutch people do not come in one shape or size. For this reason the study ensured in advance that the sample was properly distributed to factor in a number of characteristics. The Netherlands is a relatively small country, but regional opinions can differ. A person's attitude to the relative importance they attach to a topic may (also) be determined by where they live. For example, people who live in rural areas may feel differently about security to urban dwellers. In addition, studies by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) have shown that more educated people generally support the EU more than less educated people, and that young people are more often pro-EU than older people (source: 'Wat willen Nederlanders van de Europese Unie?' (What do the Dutch want from the European Union? Netherlands Institute for Social Research, The Hague, 2019).

To address this, we assigned quotas in advance across the following characteristics, to ensure a representative sample distribution: (1) region (using COROP regions), (2) age and (3) level of education. In addition, the sample reflects the following background characteristics: sex, origin, primary day-to-day activity and political leanings.

The COROP regions were developed using the nodal principle (population centres which provide services or which serve a regional function) on the basis of commuter flows. Here and there, the nodal principle has been abandoned in favour of provincial boundaries. After a redrawing of municipal boundaries crossed the COROP boundaries, these regions were adjusted (source: CBS). Within the COROP regions, we ensure a good distribution across the following age groups: 18-34; 35-54; 55-75 and over 75.

Finally, we also ensured a representative distribution across levels of education. The sample distribution of respondents is in line with the national distribution of the highest level of education attained, which is as follows:

Highest level of education attained

Low: primary education, pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (years 1-3), senior secondary vocational education (MBO) (year 1)	32.1%
Medium: senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (years 4-6), senior secondary vocational education (MBO) (years 2-4)	44.6%
High: higher professional or university education	22.9%
Unknown	0.4%

Response

In total, 4 086 respondents took part in the panel survey. The target of 3 600 fully completed questionnaires was met.

Response by COROP region and age group	18-34 years	35-54 years	55-75 years	75+ years
North Drenthe	11	14	17	5
South-East Drenthe	10	12	14	4
South-West Drenthe	7	10	11	3
Flevoland	29	33	28	6
North Friesland	20	22	25	8
South-East Friesland	12	13	14	3
South-West Friesland	8	11	11	4
Achterhoek	22	27	34	11
Arnhem/Nijmegen	52	53	55	15
Veluwe	44	48	51	17
South-West Gelderland	16	18	20	5
Greater Delfzijl	2	4	5	1
East Groningen	7	10	12	3
Rest of Groningen	36	26	28	8

Mid Limburg	**13**	**17**	**21**	**7**
North Limburg	17	20	23	7
South Limburg	38	40	52	17
Mid-North Brabant	34	35	35	11
North-East North Brabant	41	43	51	14
West North Brabant	40	47	49	15
South-East North Brabant	55	56	58	18
Greater Haarlem	13	18	18	7
Greater Alkmaar	14	19	19	6
Greater Amsterdam	116	104	88	23
Het Gooi & Vechtstreek	13	21	19	7
IJmond	12	14	15	4
Top of North Holland	22	27	30	9
Zaanstreek	11	13	12	3
North Overijssel	25	28	25	8
Twente	41	44	46	14
South-West Overijssel	10	11	12	3
Utrecht	96	100	89	27
Rest of Zeeland	16	21	23	8
Zeelandic Flanders	6	8	9	3
Greater Leiden & Bollenstreek	30	31	31	10
Greater The Hague	63	70	57	18
Delft & Westland	19	15	15	4
Greater Rijnmond	103	107	99	31
East South Holland	22	24	25	8
South-East South Holland	24	26	26	9

Response by level of education

Low	1382	34%
Medium	1747	43%
High	915	22%
Unknown	42	1%

Reliability and representativeness

With 4 086 respondents, it is possible to make observations about the population with 95 % reliability and a 1.53 % margin of error. The reliability and margin of error of the results depend on the size of the sample. The larger the sample, the more reliably and/or accurately the results can be extrapolated to the population as a whole.

The reliability level is defined as 1 (100 %) minus the significance level. It is normal to assume a significance level of 5 %, which means a reliability level of 95 %. This means that, if the study were to be repeated in the same manner and under the same conditions, the results would give the same picture in 95 % of cases.
The accuracy level (expressed as the margin of error) indicates the range of values within which the actual value in the population lies or, in other words, how far the results from the sample might deviate from the results that would be obtained if the entire population were to complete the survey. A margin of error of 1.53 % means that the actual value in the total population may be up to 1.53 % higher or lower than the value in the sample. In practice, this means that, if a survey result from the sample indicates that 50 % of respondents find a particular topic important, the actual percentage may be up to 1.53 % lower or higher than 50 % (i.e. between 48.47 % and 51.53 %). A margin of error of up to 5 % is common and generally accepted in (statistical) quantitative research.

Besides reliability, the representativeness of the sample is also important. Since the invitations to participate in the survey were sent in batches and stratified, the results are representative in terms of COROP regions and age groups within each COROP region. The response is also in line with the national distribution of the highest level of education attained.

Other background characteristics

The respondents in the panel survey were asked a number of extra background questions. The questions covered gender, views on the EU, origin, primary day-to-day activity and which political party they would vote for if an election were to be held now.

49 % of respondents were male, 50 % were female and 1 % preferred not to answer this question.

51 % of respondents thought it was a good thing that the Netherlands is a member of the EU, 13 % thought it was a bad thing, and 36 % saw it as neutral or did not have an opinion.

95 % of respondents were born in the Netherlands. For 89 % of respondents, both parents were born in the Netherlands. For 5 % of respondents, both parents were born abroad.

Respondents' current political leanings

Party	%
VVD	14%
PVV	13%
SP	8%
D66	6%
CDA	6%
Labour Party (PvdA)	6%
Party for the Animals	4%
GreenLeft (GroenLinks)	4%
Christian Union	3%
JA21	3%
Farmer-Citizen Movement (BoerBurgerBeweging)	2%
Forum for Democracy	2%
Reformed Political Party (SGP)	2%
Volt	2%
DENK (THINK)	1%
Van Haga Group	1%
BIJ1	1%
Den Haan party	0%
Other	2%
Blank ballot	3%

Prefer not to say	**13%**
Would not vote	5%

What is your main day-to-day activity at the moment?

Occupation	**%**
Pupil/student	6%
Part-time employee	16%
Full-time employee	31%
Self-employed	3%
Homemaker	5%
Jobseeker	2%
Volunteer	2%
Unfit for work	6%
Retired	27%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	1%

Questionnaire

The questionnaire and this report were commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and drawn up by an independent external organisation. The questionnaire has a modular structure and comprises the following sections, which correspond to the topics identified for the Conference on the Future of Europe:
key topics and Europe's role
climate change and environment
health
the economy and jobs
the European Union's role in the world
security and the rule of law
the online world
European democracy
migration and refugees
education, culture, youth and sport

When developing the questionnaire, close attention was paid to the quality, reliability and validity of the phrasing of the questions. The aim was to ensure neutral, non-leading wording of questions, statements and choices. In addition, the questions were reviewed to ensure that they were written in plain language (B1 level).

The questionnaire was tested qualitatively in a face-to-face setting with test respondents belonging to the target group, to see how the questions came across to different types of respondent. The wording was adjusted wherever it proved to be too complex.

Methods of analysis

Two methods of analysis were used in this study:

Univariate analysis

In univariate analysis, descriptive statistics are used to describe variables in a study. In this study, frequencies and averages have been used.

Bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis looks at the relationship between two variables, in this case the relationship between the importance of the various topics and whether or not the EU should deal with them on the one hand, and the background characteristic of age on the other. Significance testing was used to determine whether different age groups attach different degrees of importance to a given topic, and think differently about whether or not these are topics the EU should deal with.

Reporting and completeness

This report analyses the results of all questions put to the survey panel respondents. For some questions, respondents were able to give 'open' answers (as opposed to choosing from a set of multiple-choice answers). These open answers were then categorised and incorporated into the report. Ideas that respondents shared in the free comment fields serve as input for the various topic-based dialogues in the follow-up to the Visions of Europe citizens' dialogue.

2. In-depth online topic-based dialogues

The key topics of the Conference on the Future or Europe were discussed in more depth in eight online topic-based dialogues. The aim of the dialogues was to find out *why* people think the way they do, and their underlying reasons and feelings. What concerns them and what opportunities do they see? During the dialogue sessions, participants were also given a chance to contribute suggestions and ideas about the topics. They were also able to raise issues that are not part of the Conference but that are important to them.

The topic-based dialogues took place on 12 and 14 October and on 9 and 11 November. In October, there were four online topic-based dialogues on topics in the Economy and Democracy cluster. In November, there were four online topic-based dialogues on topics in the Climate and EU in the World cluster. An average of 29 people participated in each dialogue session (231 in total). Participants were recruited from the panel members (see 1) and through social media.

3. Dialogues with specific groups

We know that certain groups of Dutch people are less used to taking part in (online) surveys and panels. To gain a representative picture of the 'voice of the Netherlands' it was important to let them express their ideas and opinions too. That is why we also organised some in-person dialogues for Visions of Europe. The opinions and ideas we gathered through them have been used as one of the bases for the recommendations.

Target groups

There is no clear definition of target groups which are difficult to reach. Research and experience have shown that Dutch people from **non-Western backgrounds** are significantly less likely to participate in surveys and discussions voluntarily. Since they form a large group (14 % of Dutch people[1]), they were selected to participate in the Visions of Europe dialogue. The same weightings have been applied as for **people with low levels of literacy**. That is also a large group (2.5 million Dutch people[2]), which partly overlaps with the group of migrants (39 %). Finally, a dialogue was conducted with a group which rarely appears in surveys and discussions, and is **critical of Europe but has a lot of professional dealings with it**. Businesses in the agricultural sector were selected to take part.

The above groups were approached through organisations they belong to, such as migrant associations, interest groups and professional organisations. Because we limited the number of dialogues to eight, we could not cover everyone. That makes the choice of participants somewhat arbitrary. When selecting participants, we also mainly looked for people who were enthusiastic about taking part and helping mobilise the grass roots, as well as at practical issues such as availability for dates and locations.

On-location dialogues were held with members of the following organisations:
Stichting Hakder, Alevi community, Schiedam
Stichting Asha, Hindustani community, Utrecht (2 dialogue sessions)
Piëzo, civil-society organisation, Zoetermeer
Taal doet Meer, literacy organisation, Utrecht
BoerenNatuur, association of agricultural cooperatives
Marokkanen Dialoog Overvecht (Overvecht Moroccan Dialogue), Moroccan community, Utrecht
Femmes for Freedom, interest group for women from a migrant background, The Hague

A total of 110 people took part in these dialogue meetings.

4. Dialogues with young people

Young people are a priority target group for the Conference on the Future of Europe. To actively encourage their participation in the Visions of Europe citizens' dialogue, and to give the opinions and ideas of this group extra weight, six in-person dialogue meetings were organised especially for young people.

Meetings were held at the following institutions:
Studievereniging Geschiedenis, history students' association, Leiden University
Dr. Knippenbergcollege, secondary school, Helmond
Coalitie-Y, Socio-Economic Council (SER) youth association
Graafschap College, MBO institute, Doetinchem
CSG Jan Arentsz, STEM secondary school (technasium), Alkmaar
National Youth Council (meeting took place at an external location)

A total of 110 young people took place in the dialogue meetings.

Discussion techniques used

The Socratic method was used for the online topic-based dialogues, the dialogues with specific groups and the dialogues with young people. This method has been used for years in the Netherlands for our 'Dialogue Day', when people across the Netherlands speak to each other about issues that concern them. In the Socratic method, the moderator applies the following principles:

Let everyone tell their story
Don't immediately tell a counter-story
Treat each other with respect
Speak for yourself ('I think' instead of 'they say')
Ask for explanations if nothing but generalisations come up
Don't judge, investigate opinions instead
Allow silence if people need time to think

The dialogues follow this pattern: divergence - convergence - divergence. The starting point is that first you have to diverge (make room for individual feelings and opinions) before you can converge (discuss possible directions) and finally diverge again (e.g. gather individual recommendations). Theory and practice show that this pattern ensures a smooth dialogue.

All dialogues were led by professional facilitators.

5. Online open research: Questionnaire and 'Swipe to the future'

The panel survey questionnaire was also open to all Dutch citizens, including those resident abroad. It was open from 1 September 2021 to 14 November 2021. In addition, during the same period, every Dutch person was able to participate through the 'Swipe to the future' tool, an online tool with 20 statements.

Response and implementation

In total, 1 967 respondents filled in the questionnaire and 6 968 fully completed the swipe tool. The questionnaire and swipe tool were open to all; there were no prior conditions or selection criteria for taking part. Questions in the questionnaire could be skipped (there were no mandatory questions) to maximise response. Participants answered 'I would rather not say' much more often in the questionnaire than in the representative panel survey.
The backgrounds of participants in the open questionnaire and swipe tool differed from those of the participants in the representative panel survey in a number of ways. The results of the open questionnaire and the swipe tool are not representative, unlike those of the panel survey. The results of the online open survey were used to supplement the panel survey. They give an insight into prevailing feelings and ideas in the Netherlands. The suggestions for improvement given in the free-text fields were used in the sub-topic 'Discussions and ideas online and in person'. The swipe tool was used to gain an insight into some prevailing feelings in the Netherlands. The results were taken into account when preparing the recommendations. Since representativeness is a requirement, this report only takes limited account of the results of the online open survey.

This is a publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
www.kijkopeuropa.nl

III — References to the results of national events

- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Germany
- Estonia
- Ireland
- Greece
- Spain
- France
- Croatia
- Italy
- Cyprus
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Hungary
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Austria
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovenia
- Slovakia
- Finland
- Sweden

IV – Reference to the report from the Multilingual Digital Platform

Multilingual Digital Platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe - Report February 2022

PDF ISBN 978-92-824-8748-8 doi:10.2860/637445 QC-05-22-131-EN-N
Print ISBN 978-92-824-8663-4 doi:10.2860/87208 QC-05-22-131-EN-C

© European Union, 2022

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.