



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

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE WORKING GROUP ON MIGRATION

Friday 17 December 2021

1- Opening by the Chair

The Chair, Mr. Dimitrios KAIRIDIS (National Parliaments, EL), started by reminding members of the WG that **citizens' input is essential to the work of the Conference**, and that he will make every effort to ensure citizens' opinions and comments are fully heard.

He recalled the state of play of European Citizens' Panels, focusing on Panel 4, and highlighted as well that recommendations from National Citizens' Panels would also be debated in the Plenary and that some recommendations were related to the area of migration.

He also thanked those who had sent written contributions to him, and **emphasised that those contributions could not be shared in writing with the rest of the WG, and invited the authors to explain their positions orally in the WG, and to upload their contributions on the platform.**

2- Report by citizens from European Citizens' Panel (ECP) 4 on the state of play of their discussions

He then gave the floor to all citizens from the ECPs to introduce themselves (all of them took the floor to say a few words), and to explain the results of the second session of their Panel.

On the orientations of the second session, **two citizens from Panel 4** explained the process and main direction taken by the Panel in November 2021, also mentioning that, in substance, their orientations could be distributed into the three main headline topics that the Chair had outlined in the first session (i.e. legal migration, irregular migration, and asylum policy), although noting that some issues were cross-cutting and could be put into a fourth topic "others" category. They notably mentioned the following:

- In the Panel, no citizen mentioned closing borders;
- Reforming the Dublin system was frequently mentioned in the Panel;
- Europe should have a common efficient migration policy;
- Europe should promote solidarity amongst MS, and change decision making process maybe, for MS to work together and operate a fair distribution of migrants;
- Europe should give same support to countries of origins and transit;
- Europe should have proactive approach to migration. Europe should work on different causes, climate poverty etc. and work with countries of origin;
- Europe should strengthen Frontex's role;

- Citizens suggested a new European agency to coordinate MS national policies;
- EU should implement legal ways to migrate, like study and work, as the EU needs certain skills;
- Common European approach to asylum;
- Inform migrants about what to expect in the EU;
- Fighting against irregular migrations by opening more legal ways, communication between MS and countries of origin on the legal pathways to migration.

One member of the WG regretted that meetings could not take place in November. The Chair clarified that, for logistic reasons, it was difficult to convene formal meetings of the WG, which necessitate interpretation, but he indicated that an informal meeting had taken place between him, Mr. Alfieri the successive Chair, and the citizens who could speak English, to exchange on working methods, which had been very productive. He also indicated that he would see what could be done to have more meetings.

The Chair then **asked the citizens** two question:

- whether they thought the topic of migration was polarised;
- whether they thought that the three categories he had suggested could be used to organise the work of the WG, or if citizens felt that another category was needed.

Citizens from the European Citizens' Panel broadly agreed that, in the Panel discussions, views were not as polarised as expected, and that discussions were very constructive. One citizen however pointed to the fact that this may be due to the fact that a majority of citizens willing to take part in the Conference would have positive views about the EU and migration.

3- Discussion on the Third interim report from the Multilingual Digital Platform

The Chair asked Mr. Alfieri, who will subsequently chair the WG next year, to provide a summary of the chapter of the report on migration. Mr Alfieri provided a comprehensive outline of the different views expressed.

Mr. Alfieri then asked the two members of the WG, who had volunteered during the first meeting of the WG, to be responsible for the headline topics regular migration and irregular migration, to provide their views.

They subscribed to the views expressed by citizens, expressed their eagerness to hear and read the suggestions from citizens of Panel 4, and applauded their work.

The reactions by members were not consistently pointing at one direction. Some members pointed to the strong link with security and fighting criminality ("mass migration in times of war") along with a plea for the Union budget to fund physical barriers to "keep criminals out" on the one hand, on the other hand, others called for funding from the EU budget for better reception conditions, family reunification, education, fair opportunities for access to training, building of skills leading to better integration into the labour market throughout the EU. There were also calls for more readiness to invest in a European Resettlement Framework in view of the situation in Afghanistan. Many members called for addressing urgently situations where migrants were used for political purposes

("instrumentalisation") and for a reform of Schengen rules for more and better tracing of migrant movements. Some also called for the revision of Dublin rules in order to ensure that migrants were not "forced to stay" in one place but could move throughout Europe (secondary movements). **It was underlined by others that** all views should be heard, including those who "silently work far from politics", and that effort should be concentrated on protecting external borders from migration flows.

One member noted that the contributions per Member States, available on the platform, were very useful, and noted that migration often came last or second to last in terms of topics discussed on the platform.

4- Closing by the Chair

The Chair indicated that the third session of Panel 4 was likely to be postponed to February due to the current sanitary context, and that the Co-Chairs, together with the French Presidency, would find ways to keep the momentum and may announce the prolongation of the duration of the Conference, mentioning that more information would surely be available at the beginning of the year.

He concluded by thanking everyone for their participation, and recalled that members of the WG had his email address in case they wanted to contact him.