

The European Citizens' Panels - questions and answers

1. What are the European Citizens' Panels?

The European Citizens' Panels are a key feature of the Conference on the Future of Europe, provided for in the Joint Declaration¹ and organised by the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. Four European Citizens' Panels are organised to allow citizens to jointly think about the future they want for the European Union. 800 randomly selected citizens, representative of the EU's sociological and geographic diversity, are jointly taking part in a deliberative process of three sessions to shape the future of the European project. The Panels will take on board contributions gathered in the framework of the Conference providing input to the Conference Plenary by formulating a set of recommendations for the Union's three institutions to follow-up on.

2. What is a deliberative process?

A deliberative process occurs when a group of citizens chosen through random selection meets for several days at the request of a public authority to give a consensual answer to a question of general interest. The group (e.g. Citizens' Assembly, Citizens' Jury or Citizens' Panel) has access to group work techniques and to information, and has enough time to deliberate on the question that has been asked. This format is used more and more in the world.

3. How many, where and when will the European Citizens' Panels take place and on what topics?

There will be four European Citizens' Panels, each of them holding three deliberative sessions of three days, including two in-person sessions if the health context allows.

The first sessions of the four European Citizens' Panels will take place in-person in the premises of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The second sessions of the Panels will be held in remote format over a weekend. The third and final sessions of the Panels will take place in-person in the following educational institutions: the Institute of International and European Affairs in Dublin, the European University Institute in Florence, the College of Europe in Natolin (Warsaw) and the European Institute for Public Administration in Maastricht.

All European Citizens' Panels will take place in the same overall period from autumn 2021 to spring 2022.

¹https://futureu.europa.eu/uploads/decidim/attachment/file/6/EN_-_JOINT_DECLARATION_ON_THE_CONFERENCE_ON_THE_FUTURE_OF_EUROPE.pdf

The topics for discussion for each of the Panels are based on the themes of the [Multilingual Digital Platform](#) and are clustered in the following way and order:

- [Stronger economy, social justice, jobs/education, youth, culture, sport/ digital transformation;
- [European democracy/values and rights, rule of law, security;
- [Climate change, environment/health;
- [EU in the world/migration

4. Who are the participants in the European Citizens' Panels and how were they selected?

The European Citizens' Panels are composed of 800 European citizens, 200 for each of the four panels, a number striking a balance between diversity (facilitated when number is higher) and the effectiveness of the deliberation process. The selection of the citizens was conducted by randomly selecting citizens, representative of EU sociological diversity (different groups represented on the basis of five criteria: geographical origin - nationality, urban/rural -, socio-economic background, level of education, gender and age). The process is based on a credible methodology aimed at ensuring diversity and taking into account evidence from numerous experiences of citizens' assemblies at local, national and European levels. A third of each Panel is composed of young people (age 16 – 25). The distribution among Member States was made taking into account the degressive proportionality applied to the composition of the European Parliament. The selection took place between May and August 2021, covering the entirety of the population (limited to EU citizens). Citizens have been contacted in most cases by phone (random generation of phone numbers – fixed and mobile) in several rounds in order to explain the purpose and obtain their consent. Upon their agreement, they received an invitation letter explaining exactly what is expected from them and will receive professional support and guidance throughout the process.

5. How would you ensure commitment from the citizens?

The citizens participating in the European Citizens' Panels will be asked to commit to attending all sessions. Given the importance of the exercise and the contribution requested in terms of time and effort, they will receive a compensation fee. All sessions will take place over weekends in order to ensure as much as possible their availability and compatibility with their professional and private life.

6. What will be the output of the Panels and how would it link with the rest of the Conference?

The European Citizens' Panels will come up with series of collectively designed and owned recommendations that will feed into the overall Conference deliberations, in particular, into the Conference Plenaries, and ultimately into the report on its final outcome.

Each Panel will designate 20 representatives to the Conference Plenary to present and debate the recommendations adopted with the other representatives. The first two panels will present the result of their work during the Conference Plenary in December 2021, while the other two in January 2022. The Plenary will ensure that the recommendations from the national and European Citizens' Panels, grouped by themes, are debated without a predetermined outcome and without limiting the scope to pre-defined policy areas. The Plenary will put forward its proposals to the Executive Board, who will draw up a report in full collaboration and full transparency with the Plenary and which will be published on the Multilingual Digital Platform.

7. How will the deliberation process be organised?

A rigorous methodology and a clear deliberative protocol, built on the already rich experience of citizens' assemblies, with input from experts, facilitators and fact-checkers, will be implemented to allow a true bottom-up and citizen-driven deliberation.

There will be three different phases of work. In the first session ("definition of the agenda"), citizens will decide for themselves, building their vision for Europe, on the issues to be debated, within the framework of the Panel's main themes. The participants will prioritise the issues that they, as a group, want to deal with and deepen in order to generate specific recommendations for the European Union. Addressing these issues will be the task of a second phase ("thematic deepening") and which will be carried out in the second session leading to the third session where the recommendations will be approved.

After delivering the final recommendations to the Plenary, the last phase (feedback event) will allow for an accountability process, during which citizens will follow up on the response to their recommendations and their possible practical implementations.

The Panels' sessions will consist of plenary parts, where general presentations will be given and discussions will take place with input from all participants and of break-out sessions or working groups where the work will be concentrated in smaller groups and focused on specific aspects or sub-topics. Each panel will have 15 working groups.

The European Citizens' Panels will also be informed of any recommendation by National Citizens' Panels.

8. What language regime will apply to the deliberations of the European Citizens' Panels?

In order to ensure maximum diversity of deliberations, the Panels will be multilingual (24 EU official languages in Panel plenaries and a minimum of four in each breakout session of the Panels to cover all EU official languages).

9. What is the role of the external experts?

In the course of the deliberations, the citizens participating in the European Citizens' Panels will have access to information resources and expertise. A list of experts and stakeholders will be made available to the citizens and they will be able to select them from this list according to their topics and specific needs, whilst for the first session of each panel, experts will be present to introduce the topic.

10. What is the role of observers?

As a true democratic innovation, the European Citizens' Panels are expected to attract a lot of attention from the research community. Researchers can be present at the European Citizens' Panels and observe the proceedings, in respect of certain rules, and the work and the privacy of the participants. Where possible and upon

agreement, they will also be able to conduct interviews with them for research purposes.

11. Will the deliberations of the Panels be public?

The plenary meetings of the European Citizens' Panels will be live-streamed, while the documents of their discussions and deliberations will be made publicly available on the Multilingual Digital Platform <https://futureu.europa.eu> . The deliberations in the individual working groups will not be live-streamed in order to protect the citizens' freedom to discuss and draft recommendations.