



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

SUMMARY RECORD

Working Group on European Democracy, Chaired by Manfred Weber, European Parliament

21 January 2022, 14:00-16:00

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The meeting took place in hybrid format and was web-streamed ([recording available here](#)). The Chair welcomed the members and explained that the meeting would start with a presentation from the representatives of European and National Citizens' Panels, followed by a debate. The aim was to continue discussions under the working structure identified for the Working Group. He underlined that after intensive discussion and listening to each other, it was important to start work on concrete suggestions. In this respect, he recalled that proposals should be based on citizens' recommendations and gather at least a consensus among the European Parliament, Council, Commission and National Parliaments' components. In order to facilitate the process it was best to try to find an agreement inside the Working Group already. The Chair also noted the high political interest in the topics of the Working Group and referred in particular to the recent intervention of President Macron in the European Parliament¹.

2. Discussion

The debate started with a presentation by two citizens from the European Citizens' Panel on "European democracy/values, rights, rule of law, security". They praised the Chair's approach to the organisation of the Working Group meetings and noted that a few recommendations pertaining to the first two pillars could not be fully addressed in December. They highlighted notably those on direct democracy, a constitutional process for the European Union and strengthening democratic values inside the EU. Citizens also explained in more detail their recommendations on citizens' participation, education and information on the EU, and youth. They stressed that it was important for citizens to be able to participate more in the decision-making process through various instruments, including citizens' assemblies, while also ensuring a minimum level of political education in all EU Member States and access to reliable information.

Citizen representatives from Belgium, France and the Netherlands outlined the main outcomes of their respective panels, noting many convergent points with the recommendations at European level. They highlighted in particular the information gap perceived by citizens in a number of Member States, as well as the related issues of fake-news, accessibility of institutional communication, and the crucial role of education and media. Some of the panels touched also upon the topics of European elections, the role of the institutions, and the need for more transparency and efficiency in decision-making.

¹ President Macron took over as part of the joint presidency of the Conference on the Future of Europe with the start of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU on 1st January 2022.



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2.1. Follow-up discussion on democracy and elections, decision-making

In the ensuing debate, several speakers put forward arguments for or against moving towards voting for European Union level parties with candidates from multiple Member States (transnational lists), linking the appointment of the President of the European Commission to the outcome of the European elections, or even considering the possibility to elect directly the Commission President. Some speakers mentioned the possibility of moving from unanimity towards qualified majority voting in the Council, introducing the right of legislative initiative for the European Parliament, or starting a Constitutional process for the European Union. Some members expressed their readiness to open up the treaties, while others cautioned against the difficulties of doing it at this juncture, highlighting a number of important citizens' recommendations for improving European democracy which could be implemented under the current framework. Some speakers enquired how specific input from the Multilingual Digital Platform could be integrated into further work of the Working Group. The importance of workplace democracy as a key feature of social market economy was raised by one member.

2.2. Citizens' participation and youth

A lot of convergence was expressed on the need to provide better information and further include citizens in EU policy making. Some members expressed their support for the idea of holding citizens' assemblies on a regular basis to enrich the debate at EU level. The idea of creating better consultation spaces online was also recalled in the debate. Some members noted that a number of participatory tools and consultation mechanisms already existed. It was pointed out that such tools should in any case be seen as complementary to representative democracy, as well as the contribution of organised civil society and social partners, which all had their respective role to play. Citizens stressed that it was important for them to feel listened to and for all their recommendations to be discussed and considered seriously, without cherry-picking.

Better education on European citizenship and information on the EU were seen as closely linked to efforts to encourage citizen participation. There was a recognition that the democratic processes at EU level were complex, which is why it was important to pay particular attention to clear and simple communication. The problem of disinformation and the role of media in providing information on the EU were raised. Some members pointed to the role national parliaments could play in scrutinising their governments and stimulating debate at national level on EU issues.

As regards the minimum voting age, members made comments going in different directions. The ideas of positive discrimination of young people in democratic processes and assessing the impact of legislation on young people were put forward.

The Co-Chair of the Conference Executive Board, Commission Vice-President Šuica highlighted what the institutions have done already with regard to the issues addressed in citizens' recommendations and recalled the commitment by the three Presidents of EU institutions to listen and explore what could be done to further address the concerns expressed.



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3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

The Chair concluded the meeting by expressing his satisfaction that the debate had focused on citizens' recommendations, in particular those regarding their involvement and participation, which were crucial for citizens. He considered that the remaining two pillars (executive power, and subsidiarity and procedures), which were more technical in nature, could be covered at the next Working Group meeting. As regards the way forward, he reiterated his wish to start working on concrete proposals. This could be done by drawing up a written document/non-paper as a basis, involving citizens appropriately in this work. It was also important to take into account what initiatives had already been implemented, what was being planned and the work still ahead. He underlined that all members needed to approach the process with a will of compromise in order to be able to conclude.



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ANNEX I. Agenda for the meeting on 21 January 2022

AGENDA OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

Friday 21 January 2022 – 14:00 – 16:00
(hybrid)

1. Opening by the Chair
2. Presentation by citizens of the recommendations from European Citizens' Panel and National Citizens' Panels relating to "European Democracy", followed by a discussion
3. Exchange of views on European Democracy
 - 3.1 Executive power
 - 3.2 Subsidiarity and procedures
 - 3.3 Citizens' participation and youth
4. Presentation by the Chair on the ongoing exchanges on the Multilingual Digital Platform
5. Any other business
6. Closing by the Chair



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ANNEX II. List of members of the Working Group on European Democracy

Chair: Manfred WEBER (European Parliament)

Title	First name	Last name	Component
Ms	Chiara	ALICANDRO	European citizens panels
Mr	Michalakis	ASIMAKIS	European citizens panels
Mr	Zoltán	BALCZÓ	National Parliaments
Ms	Olga	BAUM	European citizens panels
Mr	Matouš	BĚLOHLÁVEK	European citizens panels
Mr	Brando	BENIFEI	European Parliament
Ms	Mara	BIZZOTTO	European Parliament
Mr	Damian	BOESELAGER	European Parliament
Mr	Ioannis	BOURNOUS	National Parliaments
Mr	Nicolai	BOYSEN	National citizens panels/events
Ms	Martina	BRAMBILLA	European citizens panels
Mr	Gari	CAPPELLI	National Parliaments
Mr	Vasco	CORDEIRO	Committee of the Regions
Ms	Annemieke	DE CLERCK	European citizens panels
Mr	Bruno	DIAS	National Parliaments
Mr	Gašper	DOVŽAN	Council
Ms	Aleksandra	DULKIEWICZ	Local/Regional representative
Mr	Pascal	DURAND	European Parliament
Ms	Anna	ECHTERHOFF	Civil Society
Mr	Sandro	GOZI	European Parliament
Ms	Eva Kjer	HANSEN	National Parliaments
Mr	Pablo	HISPÁN	National Parliaments
Ms	Pat	Kelly	Council
Ms	Antonia	KIEPER	European citizens panels
Mr	Wepke	KINGMA	Council
Mr	Tomáš	KOZÁK	Council
Mr	Zdzisław	KRASNODEBSKI	European Parliament
Mr	Reinhold	LOPATKA	National Parliaments
Ms	Esther	LYNCH	Social Partners
Mr	Evangelos	MEIMARAKIS	European Parliament
Mr	Aleksandar	MILISOV	European citizens panels
Ms	Radvilė	MORKUNAITĖ- MIKULĖNIENĖ	National Parliaments
Ms	Dorien	NIJS	National citizens panels/events
Mr	Jorge Luis	PAZOS LOPEZ	European citizens panels
Mr	Anti	POOLAMETS	National Parliaments
Mr	Arnoldas	PRANCKEVIČIUS	Council



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Mr	Paulo	RANGEL	European Parliament
Ms	Ariane	ROBERT	European Economic and Social Committee
Mr	Hans	ROTHENBERG	National Parliaments
Mr	Domènec Miquel	RUIZ DEVESA	European Parliament
Mr	Hermano	SANCHES RUIVO	Local/Regional representative
Mr	Axel	SCHÄFER	National Parliaments
Mr	Kaspar	SCHULTZ	National citizens panels/events
Mr	Pedro	SILVA PEREIRA	European Parliament
Mr	Sven	SIMON	European Parliament
Ms	Lucie	STUDNICNA	European Economic and Social Committee
Ms	Dubravka	SUICA	European Commission
Ms	Wiktorja	TYSZKA ULEZALKA	European citizens panels
Mr	Apostolos	TZITZIKOSTAS	Committee of the Regions
Mr	Bastiaan	VAN APELDOORN	National Parliaments
Mr	Andris	VĪTOLS	Council