

The EU is us: Give EU back to the citizen

The European Union and the democratic conversation has drifted too far from the average citizen. It has almost become an elite privilege to feel like a part of the EU and to be able to understand and benefit from everything that the EU offers. The EU has become more known for rules and regulations, and there is not enough focus on all the benefits of a shared European society that should ensure cohesion, peace and prosperity. The European Union is a great story that never gets told, and we, the Danish Amplify Hub, have written recommendations that can help make the EU more visible and that can engage citizens better in the democratic life.

Have a clear policy on arts and culture

From a Danish perspective we suggest the establishment of an independent cultural agency within the EU. When the aim is to strengthen democracy and conversation, the arts and culture offer a range of diverse solutions. The cultural institution is a 'learning room' that offers a very different learning environment than the school. We suggest making better use of culture and the arts and encourage the EU to offer financial support to and make demands from the cultural institutions, for instance by asking them to report how they live up to the European shared values.

Break down barriers

It has become too difficult for independent artists and small organisations to apply for grants for projects within e.g. Creative Europe. Far from every small institution or organisation are able to meet the requirements for co-funding and transnational partnerships. The way the funding programmes are structured today make it difficult to apply for funding for quite many culture organisations. Especially those aiming at underrepresented groups. We suggest making it easier by

- writing a guidebook that easy to understand
- offering smaller 'local' or 'regional' grants, that anyone can apply for regardless of size and type of organisation
- make it possible to create European projects without transnational partnerships, because the EU should be everywhere - not only transnational but local too

As an independent artist it is very difficult to be able to participate, simply because of all the bureaucracy and requirements. If the EU makes it easier to create and to have an impact on their own society, it will strengthen the feeling of ownership, belonging and community.

Foster matchmaking

It would be beneficial to be able to meet other European citizens/ students/ artists / organisations in our daily lives. Many artists and organisations would like to make international partnerships but don't know how. We suggest a platform where artists and organisations can be matched based on genre, values, aims, etc.

We also suggest making use of already existing structures like e.g. friendship cities and schools, because there is a lot of value in these exchanges.

Involve the younger generations directly and ask them how

It is of major importance to actively involve the youth in the EU. for two reasons: A) they represent a critical mass that can help develop the EU for the future and B) They are the next generation of lawmakers, and they need to feel comfortable around the EU and feel like it is relevant to them. How they should be involved is the question, and we suggest asking them directly. Either through establishing youth councils or something similar!

Better branding and visibility

The EU is the greatest story that never gets told! It is the story of nations coming together to live in peace and prosperity. Sadly this narrative gets lost in translation in bureaucracy, policy, rules and regulations. We suggest (inspired by the UN SDGs) to hire branding experts to work on visibility and accessibility by

- regular campaigns
- developing material for schools and other public institutions that are in line with the core EU values
- developing better digital platforms like e.g. an app where it is easy to find information, inspiration, possible partners, news etc.
- Update the current website to be far more user-friendly

The 17 development goals have managed to get people together from different practices, disciplines and professional backgrounds to discuss and develop solutions for a better planet. Something similar should be established on a European level. Not least to ensure a more diversified engagement.

Strengthen local presence

One of the many reasons that the EU feels far from the citizen is lack of local presence. Most people don't interact with the EU regularly, even though we all live in the EU, and the EU is us. Most are not sufficiently aware of the importance of the EU on national legislations. We suggest opening regional or municipal offices where people can go to get help with project ideas, funding, erasmus exchange and so on. Such offices would contribute to strengthening visibility, especially in more rural areas far from Bruxelles and national capitals.

Dare to dream differently

We recommend an ongoing effort to evolve and be much more inclusive in the development by truly listening to the people. For people to have faith in the EU, it must be based on democratic values and a belief in the human being, and we need to dare fight for these values. The EU should aim at facilitating democracy without dictating how it looks. The ability to listen to and trust the power and abilities of citizens of Europe is crucial for the future of Europe.