



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

## **SUMMARY RECORD**

### **COFE Plenary Working Group on the EU in the World Strasbourg, Friday 11 March 2022, 9:00 to 11:00**

Chair: Minister Hans Dahlgren, Spokesperson: Mansef Campos  
(Interpretation in EN, DE, FR, IT, EL, ES, PT, SE, HU, PL, RO, SI, HR)

#### **1. Opening of the meeting**

With Minister Dahlgren's arrival delayed due to a broken down train, this fourth meeting of the WG was opened and initially chaired by Asees Ahuja, director at the EU coordination secretariat at the Prime Minister's Office. She underlined how much the topics of this working group are now in the limelight following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

#### **2. Discussion of recommendations of European Citizens' Panel 4**

Minister Dahlgren had, taking account of his discussions with citizen representatives on the WG, sent out a thematic agenda based on three themes reflecting the clusters of recommendations in ECP4:

1. Self-reliance and Stability
2. The EU as an International Partner
3. A Strong EU in a Peaceful World

For each discussion, the chair would first invite citizens to present the corresponding recommendations and explain the reasoning and motives behind them. Following that, others in the group could respond and a discussion would ensue. Citizens developed a different preferential clustering system that was shared with the rest of the working group at the start of this meeting.

#### **Stream 1: Self-reliance and Stability**

The chair drew attention to the six recommendations under this topic. They range from developing policies to ensure the affordability, sustainability and availability of ethical European products to reducing energy dependency.

Citizen ambassadors presented recommendations on this subject, drawing particular attention to the need for energy autonomy (as recent events have underlined), a far greater development of renewables, and the need to strengthen external EU borders. A representative from the German citizens' panel presented their recommendations, focused on the need to replace the unanimity requirement by qualified majority voting (QMV) when it comes to decision taking in the CFSP field. The German panel also emphasised the need for strategic supplies of energy and food with an environmentally friendlier supply chain.

In response to the recommendations, other members of the Working Group shared ideas to keep in mind moving forward. These ranged from stressing the need to diversify energy and food supplies rather than strictly being self-sufficient. Several members also inquired if these recommendations were still sufficient given they were produced before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Citizens defended the relevance of these recommendations. The chair mentioned that recommendations could be put into relation of the new context when moving forward.

Other members drew attention to a paper drafted by MEP members of the working group. The importance of the Rule of Law and making the EU as close to citizens as possible were also addressed.

## **Stream 2: The EU as an International Partner**

The chair drew attention to the nine recommendations under this broad topic. They ranged from leveraging the EU's position as a trading partner, to improving worldwide ethical, social and environmental standards. They also suggest a more autonomous renewable energy production in Europe, as well as stronger citizen engagement.

Citizen ambassadors presented recommendations on this subject. They drew particular attention to: the need to sanction states that fail to respect standards, the need for an eco-scoring system, the desirability of banning the export of waste, the need to partner developing countries to help them shift to more environmentally and socially friendly policies and the need for transparency and accountability in EU decision taking.

Furthermore, recommendations from the Dutch national citizens panel were shared. They stressed that the EU should take advantage of its strengths, one of which was its size and ability to exert stronger influence than individual countries alone. A strong EU voice was needed to balance Russia and China, but the EU needs the ability to take faster decisions. Cooperation of European armies is necessary, even if we prefer non-violent solutions. Lithuanian national panel recommendations were also shared. They focused on: strengthening ties with the Eastern Partnership countries, placing stronger sanctions on Russia, solidarity among member states, greater attention to China and Africa and the creation of a European Minister for Foreign Affairs. German panel recommendations stressed the need for the EU Green Deal to have an external dimension – the Ukraine crisis does not mean the climate crisis is on pause.

Other representatives stressed the need to continue to include Civil Society and Social Partners in the work to promote democracy internally and externally. The Green Deal was stressed as a means to further cut off Russian influence.

## **Stream 3: A Strong EU in a Peaceful World**

The chair drew attention to the seven recommendations here deal with a variety of issues – such as taking more decisions by qualified majority instead of unanimity, establishing joint armed forces, EU sanctions, and also recommendations related to how to better inform citizens and continue dialogue.

Citizen ambassadors presented recommendations on this subject, drawing particular attention to recommendations 21 (ending unanimity except for enlargement and fundamental principles of EU) and 26 (enlargement only after consolidating EU), a more effective sanctions tool, and joint military forces but only for defensive purposes.

Other members wished to emphasise the peace-keeping role of EU military interventions rather than the idea of the EU becoming a military alliance.

One participant felt that the term “armed forces” needs to be defined with precision and that NATO should have primacy in military matters with National parliaments having the final say on committing armed forces. The concepts of a European Defence Fund and European Joint Armed Forces were further discussed. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine on everyone's mind, defence and security and how to address them as a unified EU were key items of discussion.

Citizens called for more transparency and education for those across the EU to better understand its competencies and procedures. They stressed that this area is an example of the many overlaps that the EU in the World WG has with other WGs. This must be considered when formulating proposals moving forward.

## **Concluding remarks**

Chair Dahlgren thanked everyone for the fruitful discussion and hoped that it had provided useful feedback for citizens. He mentioned that he had been in Versailles the previous day for the extraordinary meeting of the European Council where the heads of state and government had agreed on political, humanitarian and

military support for Ukraine. He mentioned that EU's role in international affairs is now on everyone's mind, and the EU itself is acting with unity and resolve.

Before the next plenary the executive board will be discussing next steps on how to take the recommendations forward. Meanwhile, discussions can continue also on the WhatsApp group.