



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

SUMMARY RECORD

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

11 March 2022, 14:00-16:00

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The meeting took place in remote format and was web-streamed ([recording available here](#)). The Chair stressed that Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has created a new situation, with the Ukrainian people fighting for a European way of life, including the right to elect their own president. In his view this was a 'Kyiv moment for Europe' which made it even more important to rethink Europe and for the Conference to deliver results. With regard to the draft non-paper circulated before the meeting, he stressed that it was fully up for discussion as regards the structure, format and content. The main aim of the WG meeting was to focus on the concrete suggestions made. He stated that he had discussed the paper with citizens' representatives the same morning, who had already requested changes to the format, but also to the drafting, to reflect better the ideas behind their recommendations. He announced he was informed that Ms Le Grip would coordinate the position of national parliaments in the Working Group, Vice-President Šuica would do the same for the Commission and reminded the Council to also identify one to coordinate their position. The Chair then suggested to first discuss procedural questions and after that the content of the non-paper, point by point.

2. Discussion

The members of the Working Group then engaged in a discussion on procedural issues. Several participants, stressed the importance of following a horizontal approach across the Working Groups when preparing draft proposals. Citizen's representatives noted that they would like a version where the author of each proposal could be identified more clearly. Two members considered that the methodology in particular needed to be objective and transparent, and horizontally followed, while putting citizens' input at the centre, asking the Chair to re-consider the proposed non-paper. Other members generally welcomed the draft non-paper, arguing that it was important to get the drafting process started. Many members stressed that every Member should be able to express their ideas and work on proposals on an equal footing within the working group. A question was raised how input from the Platform would be integrated so that citizens' ideas were properly included. One member felt that some of the suggestions would be difficult to agree on by consensus, or ratify at national level across the EU. Many Members expressed their concern on the entire process of the Conference was not clear enough.

Some members also asked for clarifications about the appointment and role of the coordinator for national parliaments, and how the Working Group would establish its position. The Chair explained that COSAC put forward the proposal on the side of national parliaments. He reminded that it would be up to each component to nominate a spokesperson to coordinate the component's position within the working group. He also recalled that a consensus between the four components remained the basic rule and no voting would take place in the Working Group, in accordance with the Rules of



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Procedure of the Conference. He assured the citizens every one of their recommendations was mentioned in the draft, but that we would be happy to improve the wording and make it even clearer. Some considered that the outcome of the Working Group should also reflect differences of opinion from other members.

The first chapter of the draft non-paper was then discussed, dealing with increasing citizens' participation and youth involvement in European democracy as well as the rule of law.

Members made the following main comments on the points covered:

- A few members mentioned that they were sceptical about EU-wide referenda, considering this a sensitive issue, and enquired about the matters subject to such referenda. Citizens clarified that such referenda would be used in exceptional cases for topics of particular importance.
- As regards citizens' assemblies, members made different suggestions as to how often they could take place (e.g. yearly and/or mid-term between European Parliament elections; structured in line with the political and institutional agenda of the EU). One member enquired what was meant by 'a limited mandate' for these assemblies and another suggested mentioning 'thematic' panels, as well as making sure to involve participants from all social backgrounds. Citizens commented that they had suggested a period between 12-18 months and that the main aim had been to ensure a rotation between citizens in these assemblies. It was also important that if the EU institutions did follow up on citizens' recommendations, they would duly justify this.
- As regards the recommendation to create a multifunctional digital platform, citizens pointed out that an important idea behind the recommendation had been to create an infrastructure for online voting, which would need to be reflected.
- Citizens also asked to reflect better the justification behind their recommendations on the use of artificial intelligence and translation technologies, and on online and offline interactions between the EU institutions and citizens, including the idea of including people with all levels of education in the interactions.
- Regarding programmes on the EU at school, citizens explained that the aim was to teach children about democratic processes before they become young voters. They also stressed that the focus should not be on additional hours, but rather on the content, i.e. learning about active citizenship, ethics and democratic values. In the debate, the idea gathered support, while some speakers warned against the risk of a standardisation of school curricula. Developing a common curriculum for voluntary adoption by Member States was mentioned as one possibility. The importance of non-formal learning and the Erasmus+ programme were also raised.
- On youth check of legislation, some members asked for more clarity. An impact assessment of new legislation and a consultation mechanism with young people were mentioned in the debate.
- On rule of law, the Chair pointed out that the WG on Values and rights, rule of law, security had the lead. Speakers generally supported the idea of extending the application of the conditionality mechanism to all breaches of rule of law. In addition, the ideas of broadening the scope of rule of law reports to the freedom of association and the protection of civic space, and reviewing the Article 7 procedure, were mentioned. One member raised the issue of the constitutional identity of Member States.



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More generally, some members suggested reorganising the order of the topics covered in the non-paper, or elaborating more on the respective roles of representative and participatory democracy in the EU. Others asked the text to cover the important role of organised civil society and social partners, which could be developed. One member suggested referring to existing mechanisms for citizen consultation, such as European Citizens' Initiatives and public hearings, which could also be improved.

Beyond that, some members mentioned their support or opposition to ideas mentioned in the other parts of the non-paper. The important issues of hate speech and tackling disinformation were also raised in the context of the war in Ukraine.

Commission Vice-President Šuica, in her role as Co-Chair stressed the importance of the Conference in light of the war started by the Russian government and of debating all recommendations from citizens in the Working Group. She also recalled the importance of respecting the rules of procedure of the Conference. Furthermore, she highlighted that, in her view, the need for citizens to be able to fully subscribe to and validate the proposals of the Plenary.

3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

In his concluding remarks, the Chair stressed that his aim had been to focus the meeting on citizens' input, given the central role of citizens' participation at the Conference. He explained that the other elements included in the non-paper would be addressed in the upcoming Working Group meetings. He invited members to have a more detailed look at the non-paper and send written contributions. These contributions would be then discussed in the next working group. He also noted that at its next meeting, the Working Group would go more into detail in its work on a common text. No objection was raised by members on this procedure and was therefore agreed. He also invited the Common Secretariat to create a shared online folder for all working group members to have access to everyone's contribution to the non-paper.



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ANNEX I. Agenda for the meeting on 11 March 2022

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

Friday, 11 March – 9:00 – 11:00
(room **WEISS S.2.1** and remote)

1. Opening by the Chair
2. Presentation of the first draft of the non-paper of the Working Group on European Democracy
3. Reaction by the European and National citizens panels' representatives of the WG on the first draft non-paper
4. Open discussion among WG members
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	Borislav	ANTONOV	National Parliaments
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	Janez	CIGLER KRALJ	Council
Mr	Vasco	CORDEIRO	Committee of the Regions
Ms	Annemieke	DE CLERCK	European citizens panels
Mr	Bruno	DIAS	National Parliaments
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
Mr	Arnaud	NGATCHA	Local/Regional representative
Ms	Dorien	NIJS	National citizens panels/events
Mr	Jorge Luis	PAZOS LOPEZ	European citizens panels
Mr	Anti	POOLAMETS	National Parliaments
Mr	Arnoldas	PRANCKEVIČIUS	Council
Mr	Paulo	RANGEL	European Parliament



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Ms	Ariane	ROBERT	European Economic and Social Committee
Mr	Hans	ROTHENBERG	National Parliaments
Mr	Domènec Miquel	RUIZ DEVESA	European Parliament
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	TZITIKOSTAS	Committee of the Regions
Mr	Bastiaan	VAN APELDOORN	National Parliaments
Mr	Andris	VĪTOLS	Council