



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

SUMMARY RECORD

Working Group on Values and rights, rule of law, and security

Chaired by Věra Jourová, Vice-President, European Commission

Friday 21 January 2022, 10:00-12:00

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

This third meeting of the Working Group (WG) took place in the European Parliament building in Strasbourg in hybrid format and was public - web streamed. Chair Věra JOUROVÁ opened the meeting by giving a special welcome to citizens' representatives and drew attention to the recommendations of European Citizens' Panel 2 (ECP 2), about half of which were referred to this WG, while the others went to the European Democracy WG. The Chair noted that the ECP recommendations that were attributed to the Values WG have been grouped into five clusters, as requested by members during the previous meeting.

2. Discussion

Chair JOUROVÁ started by inviting citizens' representatives from ECP 2 to present their recommendations on Values and rights, rule of law and security, followed by presentations from those National Citizens' Panels that had completed their work and had recommendations within the remit of this WG, namely the French, Dutch and German panels. The Chair also invited those WG members who had sent written contributions ahead of this meeting to take the floor and present their arguments in brief.

The representatives of European as well as National Citizens' Panels (in the case of the German panel, by written communication read out by the Chair) reported on their recommendations, underlining that they were aimed at the medium term and at securing a more cohesive EU, where citizens were aware of a common identity based on rights and shared values. Citizens for instance mentioned the need to protect vulnerable people; to ensure universal provision of basic needs such as housing and health care; to facilitate active citizenship; to ensure the respect of the rule of law in all Member States; to end discrimination on grounds of sex, sexuality, race and religion; to better secure the EU's external borders; to better integrate migrants; to strengthen EU competence regarding data protection; to improve the independence and diversity of ownership of media; to have better fact-

checking including a platform for correcting mis-information on the EU; to take measures to secure a more inclusive labour market with positive action to help minorities and vulnerable groups; to fight corruption and close tax havens; to improve standards of animal welfare; to have greater EU autonomy and capacity for defence and security; to create an annual Festival of Europe; and to defend European values internationally. Citizens emphasised that they want clear answers to their recommendations and detailed explanations if any would be considered for not needing a follow-up.

WG members then responded in an open discussion to these presentations, indicating their support or opposition to the various recommendations, or reflecting on how they might best be implemented.

Many WG members indicated their support for the aims of most of the recommendations, often picking out some for particular support such as those concerning the rule of law, the strengthening of citizens' rights, and non-discrimination.

Several WG members drew attention to other recommendations of citizens' panels or ideas from the Multilingual Digital Platform, such as the direct applicability of the EU Charter of Rights to national law, an EU passport as a symbol of citizenship, the need for QMV for decisions on article 7 sanctions, a much enlarged ERASMUS programme, reopening the European constitutional process while bearing in mind the risks this implies, and better protection for businesses against late payments of invoices.

Some WG members expressed reservations about particular recommendations, such as those concerning agriculture, a single working language for the EU, an annual conference on the rule of law, and universal childcare. Others warned of the dangers of hasty accession of new Member States if they are not ready, or if the EU is not ready. Some feared excessive involvement by the EU in matters that should be left to national authorities.

Some WG members put forward alternative suggestions to those contained in the citizens' panels' recommendations, such as red cards for national parliaments to oppose EU legislative proposals, deregulating the EU economy and allowing greater autonomy or independence for regions that choose that.

Some WG members raised the issues of the 'feasibility' of recommendations and called for indications on how easy they might be to implement, or whether any were already part of on-going procedures. Others argued that it was for the Conference to indicate what was desirable, irrespective of the potential difficulty of implementing them. The Chair stressed that this would be a matter for the Executive Board of the Conference or the Co-Chairs to decide, as it affected all WGs.

Some participants announced that they had, or were drafting, written responses to the recommendations and the Chair assured these would be duly taken into account. One WG member suggested that the next meeting be provided with a list of the ten most endorsed ideas on the Digital Platform that come within the remit of the WG and to invite their authors to a WG meeting.

Two Member States representatives flagged an issue with the provision of the information from initiatives organised at a national level, and asked for clarification of the process concerning the National Citizens' Panels and Events contributions to the Conference.

The Chair finally gave the last word to citizens' representatives. Many of them emphasised the need for effective and visible follow-up of their recommendations as well as of the Conference conclusions, including full explanations if any proposals are not followed up.

3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

Chair Věra JOUROVÁ thanked all participants for their valuable input. She closed the meeting by concluding that:

- The WG will keep collecting ideas and opinions from all of channels of the Conference (European and National Citizens' Panels, the Multilingual Digital Platform). She noted that necessary space would be given in the next WG meetings to those National Citizens' Panels that have not yet concluded their work, and clarified that there is an ongoing exchange at the technical level on the form of the National Citizens' Panels and Events contributions, emphasising that the National Panels' representatives can present at the WG and Plenary meetings.
- The received opinions will subsequently have to be consolidated in a reasonable and harmonised manner for the Plenary.
- In this perspective, the Co-Chairs of the Conference and the Executive Board should set a deadline for new contributions, especially concerning the Platform. WG members must be informed about the results of the Platform in due time and its results will be duly taken into account.
- The Conference will most likely be closed on 9 May, with a final outcome that should be based on the input from the channels of the Conference.