



Auswärtiges Amt



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



National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe – final report

February 2022

Table of contents

- Executive summary** 3
- Introduction**..... 4
- Overview of discussions and proposals for action** 7
 - Panel 1 – ‘The EU’s role in the world’ 7
 - Panel 2 – ‘A stronger economy’ 10
 - Panel 3: ‘Climate and the environment’ 13
 - Panel 4: ‘Social justice’ 15
 - Panel 5: ‘Rule of law and values’ 18

- The participation process** 20
 - Preparation and selection of participants**..... 21
 - Organisation and execution of the deliberations** 22
 - Link to the European Process**..... 26
- Annex..... 28

Drawn up in close consultation with the Federal Foreign Office by Huy Tran-Karcher (project manager) and Tristan Fuhrmann (project lead), with assistance from Tobias Remschel and Susanne Helm ifok GmbH

Executive summary

In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE), a National Citizens' Panel was held in Germany in January 2022. It was organised by the Federal Foreign Office in close collaboration with ifok. In digital round table discussions held on 5 and 8 January, around 100 randomly selected citizens set out their vision for the future of Europe and the issues they considered to be most important, in five different topic-based panels. The closing conference of the German National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe was held on 15 and 16 January 2022. During this conference, the participants collectively came up with two concrete proposals for action in each of the following thematic areas: 'The EU's role in the world', 'A stronger economy', 'Climate and environment', 'Social justice' and 'Rule of law and values'. The proposals for action were presented in the final plenary and voted on by the participants. All 10 proposals reached the 70 % quorum required for adoption. The proposals were then 'transferred' virtually to the Federal Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock. She submitted comments on them, as did the representatives of the Federal Government, the Bundestag and the *Länder* present at the plenary session of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the representative of the German Citizens' Dialogues and other high-level representatives of the Federal Government.

These proposals for action will be presented by the representative of the German Citizens' Dialogues, Ms Stephanie Hartung, at the plenary session of the Conference on the Future of Europe in Strasbourg in January and March 2022. They will also be accessible on the digital platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe. They will thus feed into the Europe-wide process, the results of which will be presented on 9 May 2022. The EU institutions will then assess which of the citizens' recommendations can be implemented, and how they can be implemented.

Introduction

In the context of a broad public dialogue process, citizens from all Member States of the European Union are discussing the development of the European Union with representatives of the EU institutions, the Member States and civil society, within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE). Since May 2021, those participating in the Conference have been discussing challenges, priorities and ideas for the future of the EU via a digital platform, at decentralised events, in national and transnational citizens' panels and in plenary sessions. The aim of the Conference is to produce conclusions with concrete recommendations for shaping the future of the European Union, which will be presented to the decision-makers of the EU institutions and discussed with a view to their possible implementation.

The Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe provides that each Member State can make further contributions to the Conference, 'such as national citizens' panels or thematic events'. At the request of and in close collaboration with the Federal Foreign Office, ifok organised the National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe on behalf of the Federal Government. In January 2022, around 100 randomly selected citizens exchanged views about their vision for the future development of the EU, discussed and prioritised specific topic suggestions, identified the attendant challenges, developed appropriate solutions and finally formulated concrete proposals for action, along with the corresponding justification. These were presented to the Federal Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, at the closing conference¹ on 16 January. She submitted comments on the proposals for action, as did the representatives of the Federal Government, the Bundestag and the *Länder* present at the plenary session of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the representative of the German Citizens' Dialogues and other high-level representatives of the Federal Government.

¹ The recording of the live broadcast of the closing conference on 16 January 2022 is available here: <https://bit.ly/3ABc9SQ>

At European level, the Conference on the Future of Europe covers a wide range of topics. The nine topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe were first clustered and then divided into the following four panels for the European Citizens' Panels:

- Panel 1 – A stronger economy, social justice, jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation
- Panel 2 – European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security
- Panel 3 – Climate change, environment / Health
- Panel 4 – EU in the world / Migration

The National Citizens' Panel mirrored this structure, but with a particular focus on the following topics:

- 'The EU's role in the world'
- 'A stronger economy'
- 'Climate and the environment'
- 'Rule of law and values'
- 'Social justice' was freely chosen in advance by citizens as the fifth topic from among the other topics of the European Citizens' Panels in an online vote.

When the predetermined topics were chosen, account was also taken of which topics had received the most attention on the digital platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe in Germany, and regarding which topics the most proposals and comments from Germany had been made. In light of the breadth of the topics, the goal was to enable more focused discussions to be held. At the same time, it was intended that participants would be able to express their preferences and interests in choosing the fifth topic. The aim of this approach is to ensure that the National Citizens' Panel's proposals for action should meet with acceptance in the context of the broader process.

The deliberation process was designed in such a way as to allow all the citizens to express their views on all the topics and to cast an informed vote in the final voting procedure. To that end, at certain points in the process the participants were reshuffled in their small groups and brought together in new configurations. Reflection and feedback periods in the five topic-based panels and in the plenary provided an opportunity to check back in with all the participants, and the input from experts on all the topics allowed for a common understanding of their breadth, the diversity of their content, and the current state of discussions about them at European level. This enabled the citizens to vote on the 10 proposals for action as an approximate representation of German society (see section on the selection of participants).

Below is an overview of the discussions in the small groups and the 10 proposals for action as drafted by the citizens, with the results of the vote.

Overview of discussions and proposals for action

Panel 1 – ‘The EU’s role in the world’



In the first of the five topic-based panels, participants grappled with the question of what role the European Union should play in the world in the future. In their contributions, the participants described a vision of a democratic and sovereign Europe that fosters diverse and good foreign policy relations and combines economic strength with effective climate action.

There was consensus among citizens that the EU’s positions at international level are currently hampered by internal conflicts and individual countries taking unilateral action. In this context, the abolition of the unanimity principle in votes by the Council of the European Union on the common foreign and security policy in favour of majority voting was therefore also discussed. There were a number of interventions urging the EU to ‘speak with one voice’ and to cooperate more in key policy areas, particularly on foreign, security, energy, climate and migration policy.

Discussions on the specific form the EU’s diplomatic relations should take revealed a less uniform picture. The citizens agreed that Europe should strive for friendly diplomatic relations, while at the same time seeking greater sovereignty vis-à-vis other states. But while some participants primarily called for greater independence from China and Russia – citing human rights violations and an absence of the rule of law – and a strengthening of transatlantic relations, others wanted more independence with regard to the USA and strong economic relations with China.

Even though these questions of foreign policy in the narrower sense initially took up considerable space in the small groups' discussions, in the end, European economic and trade policy took centre stage in both of the proposals for action – based on the premise that the EU's international influence is rooted especially in its economic strength – with a strong emphasis on climate policy. The groups outlined possible ways of making Europe's foreign trade interests more climate-friendly and encouraging the production of goods within the EU, also with implications for the climate.

First proposal
Linking foreign trade interests with climate policy measures

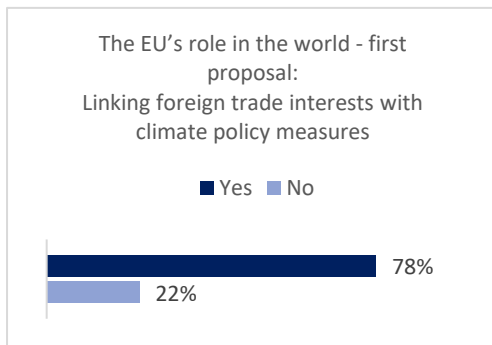


'We recommend that the EU (particularly the European Commission) launch an investment package for climate-friendly technologies and innovations, with a funding programme. This package will be financed through climate-related import tariffs which will be earmarked and passed on as monetary compensation for the climate damage caused. In this context, a points-based system to rate sustainability is to be introduced for certain products. A clear EU position and a strong and innovative Europe will be helpful in achieving global climate targets. This will help to consolidate a role for the EU as a responsible, global pioneer and model which secures prosperity and can bring about sustainable global changes. These goals are important to us because the EU is making an enduring contribution in the fight against climate change, which in the long term can make an important contribution to consolidating world peace.'

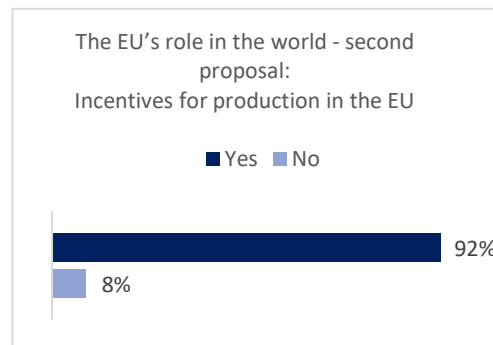
Second proposal
Creating incentives for production to be based in the EU, especially the production of basic supplies



'In order to facilitate the production of basic supplies, we recommend accelerating and standardising approval procedures, reducing bureaucracy and offering subsidies for companies that relocate to and/or develop production sites in the EU. The EU should promote renewable energy on a massive scale in order to reduce energy costs. We hope to thereby shorten supply chains and make them more climate friendly, help strengthen the EU and create jobs in which human rights are taken into account. Those goals are important to us because relocating production to the EU would make the EU more autonomous internationally and less vulnerable politically.'



Voting in final plenary



Voting in final plenary

Panel 2 – ‘A stronger economy’



In the second panel, citizens discussed how to strengthen the European economy. They painted a picture of a socially fairer EU with harmonised tax and health and safety laws, even more countries adopting the euro as their currency, strong digital infrastructure and climate-friendly goods and technological innovations being produced. The implications of increasing digitalisation for the labour market were also discussed. Citizens also emphasised the need for data protection and cybersecurity in the EU.

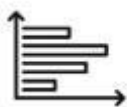
There was consensus in the small groups on the need to harmonise standards and laws within the EU with regard to working, learning and production conditions and taxation systems. For example, many citizens wanted a higher and Europe-wide minimum wage and common climate-protection standards and tax rates for businesses.

Participants also called for economic investment and subsidies in the EU to have a greater focus on sustainability and climate-protection criteria. That should lead to the development of more climate-friendly and resource-efficient innovations and technologies. Citizens emphasised their desire for more cross-border education and training opportunities and university courses, also allowing for the exchange of best practices. It was very important to participants that this would also help to bring people in the EU closer together.

As in the panel on the EU's role in the world, the desire for greater autonomy vis-à-vis other countries, in particular as regards goods imports, was expressed numerous times. To that end, participants considered it vital to increase production capacity in Europe for all types of goods. The question of how to create further incentives to promote innovation in the EU was also discussed.

Digitalisation was another key issue in the discussions in the small groups. There were calls in particular for the swift rollout of fibre networks and equal access to fast internet in all Member States. Digitalisation became the central theme in one small group over the course of the closing conference. Participants proposed ranking the degree of digitalisation of companies in the EU. Also linked to digitalisation, but with a focus on exchanging knowledge and experience, the other small group proposed the setting up of an EU-wide digital information platform in the area of education and training.

First proposal
Digi-Score – points for a strong EU-wide digital economy



‘We recommend that the EU and in this case DG Connect introduce a publicly accessible points system, Digi-Score. This is a detailed ranking system that indicates and compares the current level of digitalisation of businesses.

Through the publication of this information, we aim to create an incentive to increase digitalisation. Targeted support would be made available to businesses with a low Digi-Score, to help them catch up.

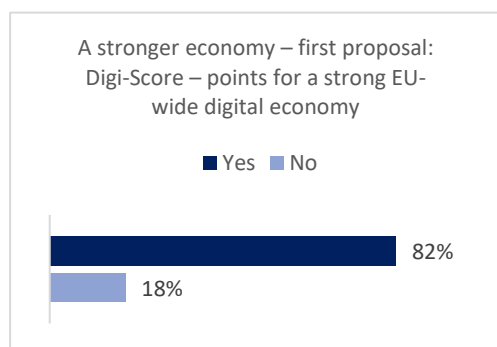
This goal is important to us because it would help pave the way for increasing productivity, efficiency and sales and thereby strengthen Europe as a manufacturing base.’

Second proposal

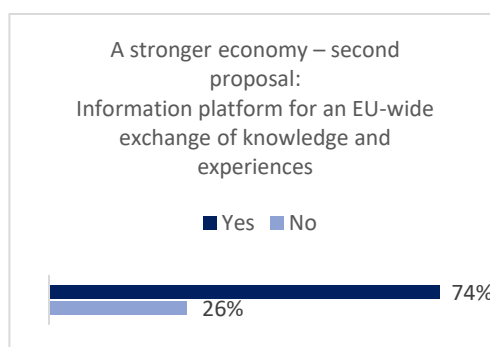
Information platform for an EU-wide exchange of knowledge and experiences



'We recommend that the EU set up a(n information) platform for (EU-wide) exchange of knowledge and experiences. This would serve to pool information on transnational education and training courses in the EU, showcase examples of best practice and offer citizens the opportunity to present new ideas for cross-border exchange. In addition, information would be provided on existing expert fora in key areas (e.g. energy, environment, digitalisation). These goals are important to us because citizens need transparency about the cross-border training and education courses that are available. They should receive better guidance at EU level on what fora and platforms exist in specific fields.'



Voting in final plenary



Voting in final plenary

Panel 3: 'Climate and the environment'



The fact that the cross-cutting topic of climate policy is now inextricable from a wide range of policy areas was clear not only from other panels' references to climate-related issues, but also from the diversity of the topics discussed by the third panel, 'climate and the environment'. To start with, participants set out their vision of a Europe supplying itself fully with renewable energy, making climate-neutral mobility possible, saving resources and re-using them as much as possible in a circular economy, and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems. However, although the two small groups defined these objectives almost identically, citizens described in detail different ways of achieving them.

With regard to energy supply, all participants called for rapid expansion of renewables and the phasing out of fossil fuels. However, there was disagreement as to when the latter could realistically be achieved, whether nuclear power should continue to play a role in energy supply and which technologies would need to be prioritised for a rapid energy transition. There was also disagreement on how ambitious CO₂ reduction targets should be and the role CO₂ emissions trading should play in efforts to reach them. Some participants also raised concerns about the social impact of climate action and the energy transition.

In the transport sector, citizens wanted better local and long-distance public transport and a shift to e-mobility in private transport. Participants considered the development of modern energy storage technologies to be vital for the energy and transport transitions.

In both small groups, the desire for a circular economy that conserves resources was expressed a number of times. There were also calls for an end to factory farming and the further development of organic farming.

Finally, both small groups also discussed how to increase individual awareness of the urgency of climate action and sustainable consumer behaviour. One of the proposals developed by citizens in the framework of the closing conference offers a possible solution in the form of a public campaign. The other proposal addresses the problem of planned product obsolescence.

First proposal **Regulation on guaranteed product life**



'We recommend that the EU introduce legislation to ensure a product-specific, extended, guaranteed lifetime for products produced and sold in the EU and make it transparent for consumers.'

Resources are finite; this measure could save them and avoid waste, which would benefit the environment, the climate and consumers.'

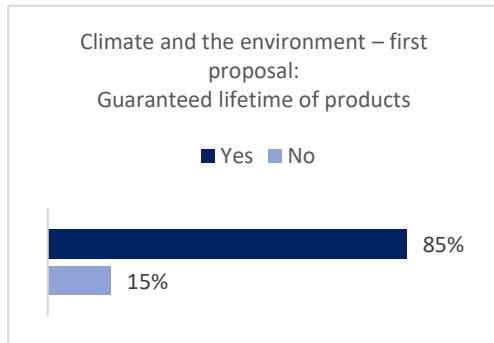
In this way, we want to encourage manufacturers to bring products on to the market that are more durable and repairable.'

Second proposal **Long-term EU campaign for sustainable consumption and lifestyle**

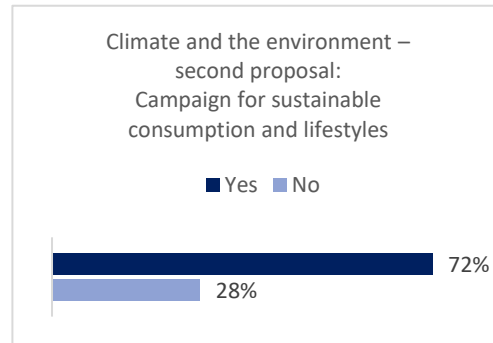


'We recommend that a European body, with branches in EU countries, be provided with its own resources and lead the campaign.'

We aim to ensure that all people in the EU have a common identity, become more mindful of sustainable consumption and lifestyle and adopt this way of life. These goals are important to us because we want to generate an intrinsic motivation for sustainable living.'



Voting in final plenary



Voting in final plenary

Panel 4: 'Social justice'



In this panel, citizens expressed their perception that socio-economic inequality in Europe was on the rise. Discussions identified the need to take action not only in the area of wages, social benefits or old-age poverty, but also in relation to the health system, the lack of affordable housing, education policy, gender equality and the issue of equal living conditions in Europe.

Both small groups identified fair wages as the central issue in the area of social justice. Citizens called for better pay for physically demanding work and critical occupations, as well as – as already called for in the 'Stronger Economy' panel – an EU-wide minimum wage in accordance with common standards. The fight against youth unemployment and poverty in old age also featured prominently.

Education policy was debated intensively by the participants, with both small groups stating that educational opportunities should not depend on the social and economic background of the family and that access barriers such as the question of funding for studies should be removed. Exchange programmes for pupils and students were also identified as an important part of a pan-European education policy.

Another important point for discussion was the implementation of a fair healthcare system. With regard to Germany, some citizens called for the abolition of private health insurance funds which, in their view, give rise to first- and second-class treatment.

Participants also wanted to see improvements in gender equality. In particular, they pointed to high costs for kindergarten places, the lack of a balance between work and family life and the pay gap between men and women. Citizens also called for greater recognition of social professions and work in childcare or care for the elderly.

Finally, citizens called for improvements in inclusion, greater recognition of voluntary work and measures to prevent homelessness and housing exclusion.

As the outcome of the discussions, participants proposed, on the one hand, the introduction of a job-specific basic wage and, on the other hand, the implementation of an easily accessible exchange programme for all pupils in the EU.

First proposal Further development of exchanges for pupils in Europe



'We recommend that the European Union adopt – in addition to the existing ERASMUS programme – a Regulation on an exchange programme for pupils between the ages of 14 and 25, irrespective of background, gender and level of education. The exchange must be systematically established and communicated by local schools. All pupils must have the opportunity to take part in the exchange at any time during their school career. To this end, the European Commission should submit a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.'

We want to ensure that, regardless of educational performance and parental funding, pupils have the opportunity to exchange ideas across Europe. The aim is to establish a culture of exchange in Europe from school age on. Above all, it is important to us that the exchange is easily accessible and free of red tape. We want to establish intra-European solidarity through the exchange programme and reduce language barriers. The programme should support equitable and participatory education in order to enhance intercultural and communication skills.

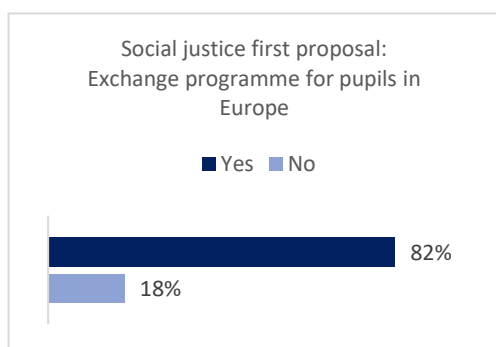
These goals are important to us since they promote European integration, strengthen respect and cooperation and teach European values from a young age, so that Europe's diversity can be understood as an opportunity to be seized.'

Second proposal Introducing a basic job-specific wage

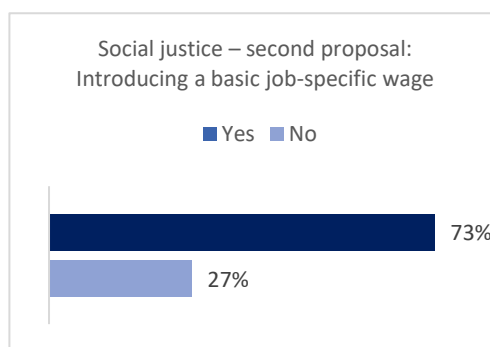


'We recommend that the EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights submit to the European Parliament a proposal for the introduction of a basic job-specific wage in all Member States. The basic wage should be composed of a minimum living wage and a job-specific supplement.

Our aim is for work performed and wages paid to be comparable within the EU in order to strengthen social justice. This goal is important to us to ensure that the basic principle of the EU is reflected in the labour market: comparable living and working conditions, regardless of place of residence and occupation.'



Voting in final plenary



Voting in final plenary

Panel 5: 'Rule of law and values'



The fifth and final panel discussed the fundamental values of the European Union and the topics of democracy and the rule of law. Citizens' visions described an EU that respects and protects fundamental and human rights, combats discrimination, respects diversity, creates equal opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and people on low incomes, and punishes violations of the principles of the rule of law.

The situation as regards democracy and the rule of law in Poland and Hungary was a key point for discussion in both small groups. Citizens agreed that democratic principles and fundamental civil rights and liberties must be respected by all Member States. Breaches of the principles of the rule of law should be swiftly and effectively sanctioned and should be actively addressed outside Europe's borders too. In this context, the abolition of the unanimity rule in the Council of the European Union and greater transparency of political processes in the EU institutions in general were called for.

At the same time however, participants also noted that conflicts between EU Member States could also result from different traditions and cultures. They therefore called for greater mutual understanding, respect for existing diversity and solidarity between states. In particular, different groups and cultures should be brought closer together and participate in exchanges to promote integration and mixing.

Citizens wanted to reduce existing discrimination and create equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, such as those from low-income backgrounds. To this end, good education was identified as a key building block, in particular to provide everyone in the EU with an in-depth knowledge and strong awareness of democracy and the rule of law from an early age.

Finally, both small groups intensively discussed the values and beliefs that are and should be at the heart of the European Union. For example, some participants noted that the EU had accepted a large number of new Member States since the 1990s, but had not questioned or discussed and evaluated their fundamental values. They therefore called for a public debate on fundamental values in all EU Member States and, where possible, with the broad participation of citizens.

During the closing conference, participants developed proposals for action to communicate and promote the core values and principles of democracy and the rule of law in the EU. They discussed whether it was possible to create an emotional connection to the EU, particularly among younger people, for example in the form of a pan-European song competition related to EU values or by communicating in a manner tailored to the target audience. Concrete proposals included, for example, an 'onboarding package' for everyone over 18 in the EU (with information on EU values, but also products to promote identification with Europe, e.g. EU pullovers). Communication was also at the heart of the proposal to set up a European TV channel.

First proposal

Embodying European values and communicating them emotionally



'We recommend that European values be made more tangible and communicated in a more emotional way. This can be achieved, for example, through an 'onboarding' package, the media, interactive elements and more citizen engagement.'

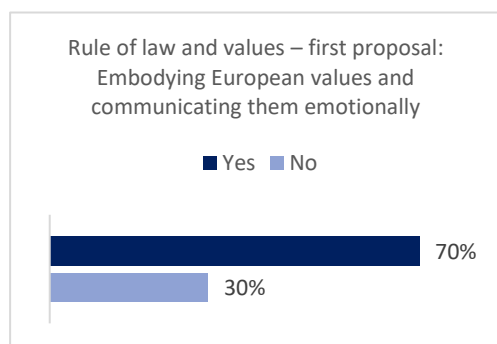
Our goal is for every single person living in the EU to be aware of our common values and identify with them.

This goal is important to us because it forms the basis of our co-existence in our union of values. Our values are far too little known because the personal connection is missing – we need to make this connection.'

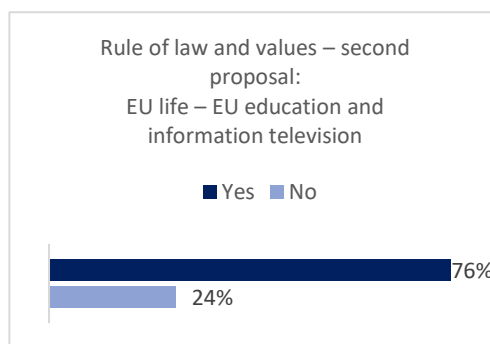
Second proposal 'EU life'



'We recommend that the EU set up its own education and information TV channel. With this proposal, we aim to make all EU citizens more aware of our common values and to ensure easy and barrier-free access for all. These goals are important to us because we want to gain an insight into public opinion in all EU countries, build common ground, foster closer relations in order to achieve more solidarity, and train people in the rule of law to safeguard democracy.'



Voting in final plenary



Voting in final plenary

The participation process

The overall process of the National Citizens' Forum on the Future of Europe can be broadly divided into three phases:

- the preparation of the process and the random selection of participants;
- the organisation and execution of the deliberations;
- the feeding into the broader process of the Conference on the Future of Europe, especially in the plenary sessions.

For a graphical overview of the overall process, see the [Annex](#).

Preparation and selection of participants

The 'stratified random selection method' was used to recruit citizens for the European Citizens' Panels. This was also the method used for the selection process for the German National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe.

The official recommendation of the Common Secretariat of the Conference on the Future of Europe states as follows with regard to the National Citizens' Panels: 'The participants should be a microcosm of the general public. This is achieved through random sampling representing different geographic origins, gender, age, socio-economic backgrounds and/or levels of education in the respective country/region'. This standard was also applied and largely achieved in respect of the National Citizens' Panel in Germany. Random selection followed the principle that, in theory, any German citizen aged 18 or over could be selected. The aim was to reflect as accurately as possible the diversity of people's everyday lives and the structure of German society. The predefined criteria were based on the Federal Republic's census data.

Initially, almost 12 000 letters were sent out, addressed at random to households throughout Germany. Of the nearly 600 interested parties who registered online, 107 citizens were selected after being identified on the basis of demographic, geographical and socio-economic criteria. In the end, around 100 citizens took part in the National Citizens' Panel, more or less reflecting 'Germany in miniature'. It was possible to replace the few participants who dropped out at short notice with individuals on the waiting list.



Sampling criteria for selecting participants in the dialogue on the future of Europe

Size of the Citizens' Panel:	Size of the registration pool:	Size of the contact pool:
100 citizens + 10% waiting list (□ 107 individuals selected)	596 individuals registered (size of pool affects level of representativeness)	Almost 12 000 letters (response rate of approx. 5%)

ifok GmbH is part of an international consortium which has developed the methodology for the four European Citizens' Panels of the Conference on the Future of Europe and drawn up practical guides for the national conferences. At present, ifok is also responsible for the execution of the panels.

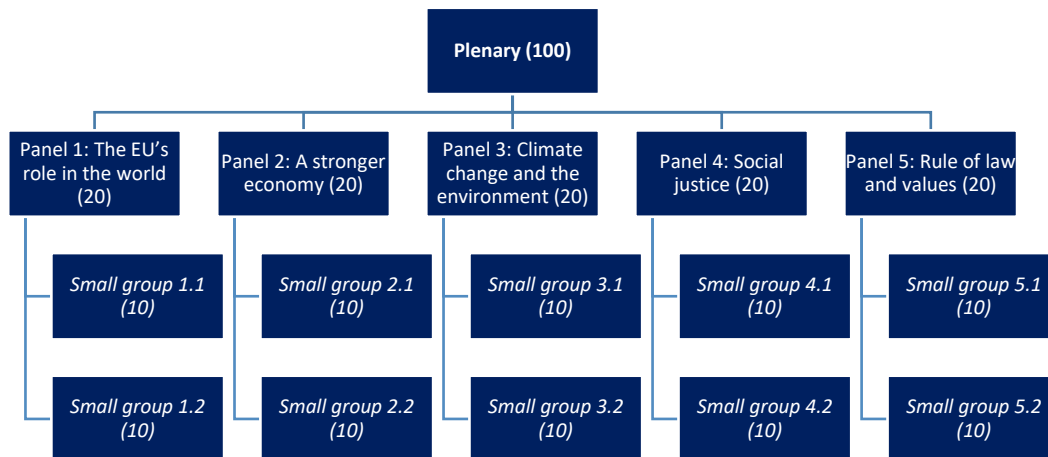
Organisation and execution of the deliberations

The special feature of a deliberative process is that, unlike a survey, it does not gather citizens' individual opinions. Participants address the topic in question, access facts and hold intensive discussions in order to develop new positions that are acceptable to the majority. In the case of the German National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe, this made it possible to realise the objective of using the common positions as a basis for formulating recommendations for action, demands and requests for decision-makers at both national and European level. This was ensured by the panel's structure and organisation:

The National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe was organised in two stages. First, a three-hour digital kick-off workshop was held on 5 or 8 January 2022 for each of the five topic-based panels, in which participants received input from experts and were given an opportunity to ask questions; they also formed small groups to discuss topic-specific visions and prioritise topics.

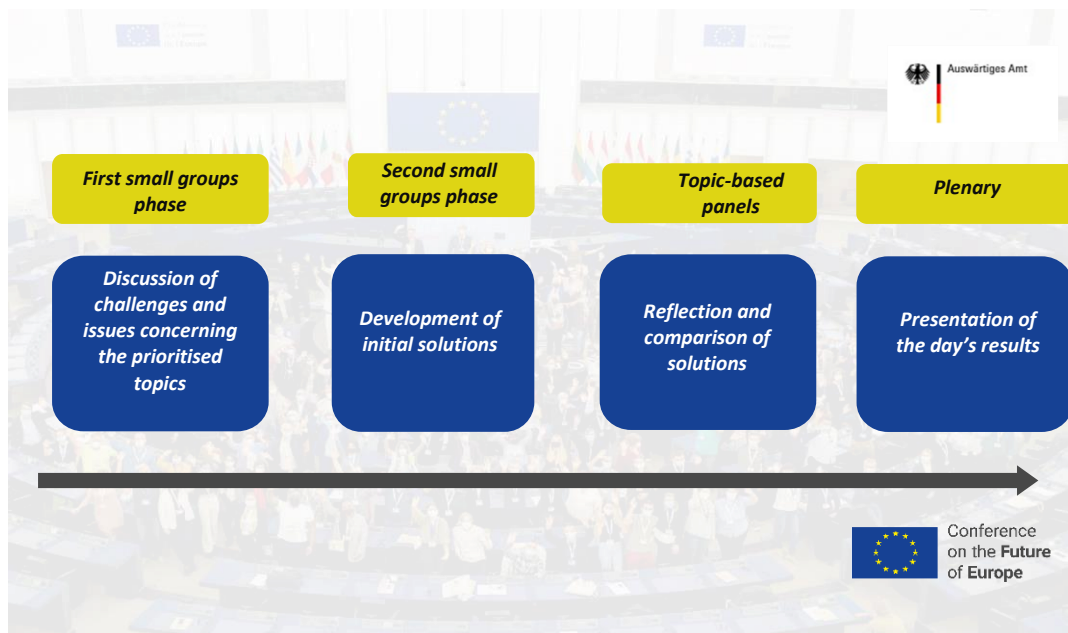
On the basis of the results of those workshops, at a two-day closing conference on 15 and 16 January 2022, citizens – working in small groups, and again with the participation of experts – first identified challenges before going on to develop, compare and prioritise solutions with a view to ultimately putting forward specific proposals for action in each thematic area. Those proposals were presented one by one by individual citizens at the plenary. All participants then cast their votes. Annalena Baerbock, Federal Foreign Minister, received all 10 proposals for action. She submitted comments on the proposals for action, as did the representatives of the Federal Government, the Bundestag and the *Länder* present at the plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the representative of the German Citizens' Dialogues and other high-level representatives of the Federal Government.

In the course of the dialogue, citizens discussed various topical issues in different configurations. General contributions, as well as final deliberations and votes, took place at the plenary and involved all participants. In each of the five topic-based panels, some 20 citizens addressed a single policy area in depth. Topic-specific contributions and exchanges took place at that level. Each of the topic-based panels was in turn divided into two small groups each consisting of around 10 participants, whereby most deliberations took place within the smaller groupings. This was where specific goals and recommendations for action were drawn up with regard to individual aspects of each topic, for subsequent discussion and agreement at the higher levels. This task-sharing approach allowed for more in-depth discussions and greater flexibility for all those taking part. However, it also ensured that the results could be democratically legitimised by the group of participating citizens.

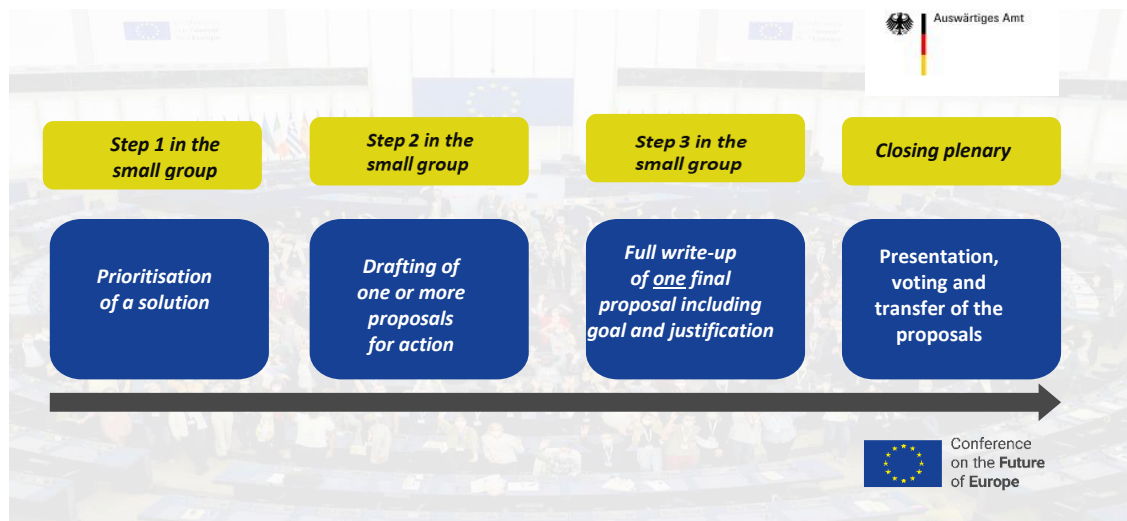


Structure and levels of dialogue (in brackets: number of persons)

Outline of the deliberation process at the closing conference on Saturday 15 January 2022:



Outline of the deliberation process at the closing conference on Sunday 16 January 2022:



Citizens received substantive support in advance in the form of five fact sheets, each providing a concise and factual introduction to one of the topics. In the kick-off workshops held on 5 and 8 January and at the closing conference on 15 January, selected scientific and research experts provided input on each topic and made themselves available for follow-up questions. In addition, ‘fact checkers’ from the relevant federal ministries accompanied the work of the small groups during the deliberative phases and could be consulted on substantive issues. This served to provide citizens with specialist support in view of the complexity of the topics, and to allow for a fact-based and informed discussion.

The [guidelines of the Federal Ministry of the Environment](#) on good civic participation, together with the ‘netiquette’ presented to participants, served as a basis for the moderation process and for the respectful handling of virtual discussions.

In the case of virtual events, it is particularly important to minimise access barriers for all participants. It was therefore ensured that participants had appropriate technical equipment (laptops, headsets, webcams, etc.). During preparatory meetings, citizens were also trained in how to use the online tools they would need. The number of these tools was kept to a minimum. This ensured that participants could focus entirely on the content and discussions during subsequent meetings. Zoom was used as a video platform, offering a simple and intuitive user interface with all the functionalities for group discussion. As a technical tool to support the debate, Mural was used throughout the small group discussions as a virtual whiteboard. This enabled the group moderators to structure the discussions, compile and prioritise topics and record results.

In addition, it was ensured that staff were available at all times by phone and chat as contact points and to provide 'first aid' in case of technical problems and questions. Clear rules for discussion in the virtual space, good moderation and the supervision of chats and technical aspects ensured that proceedings ran smoothly.

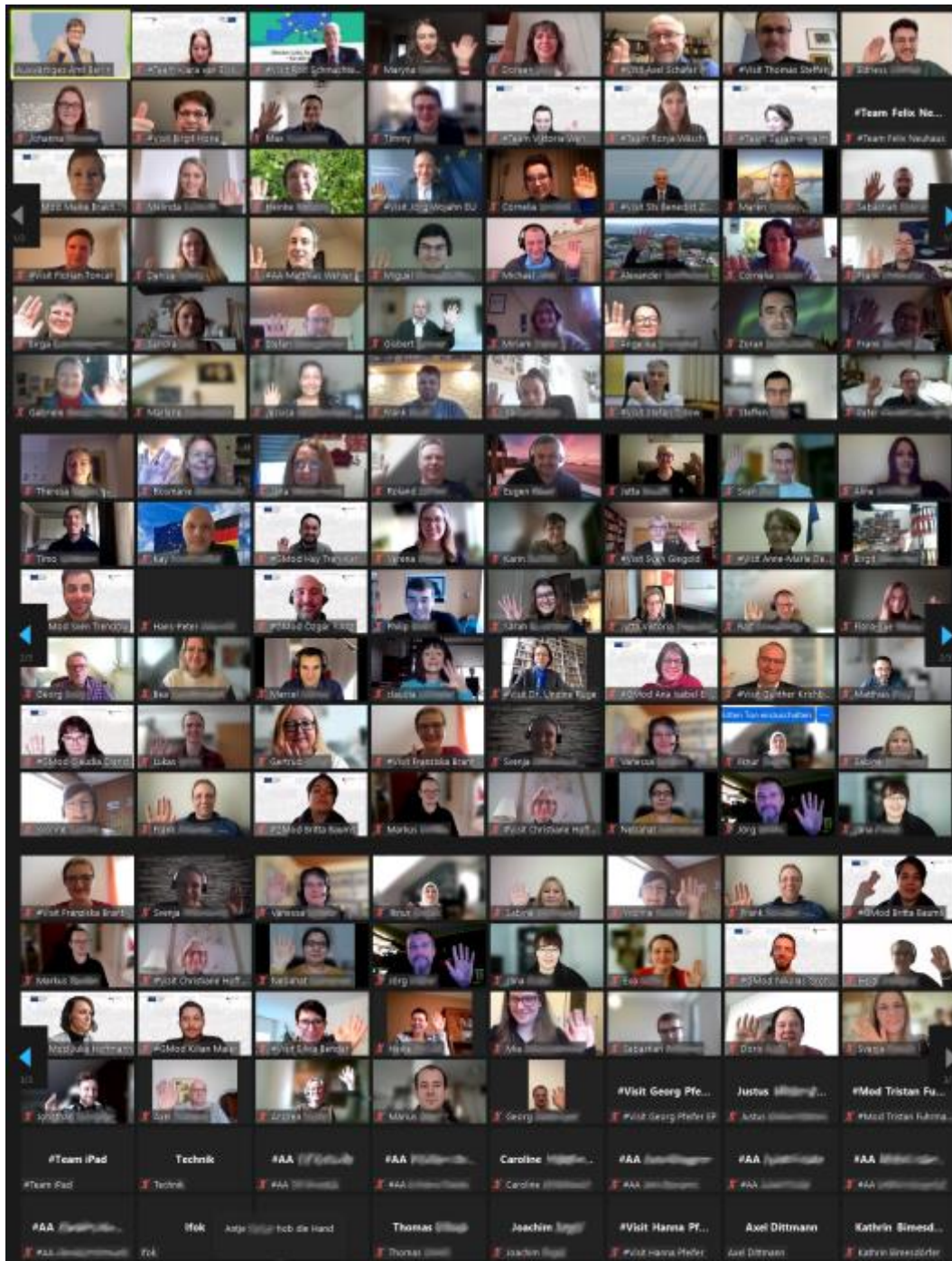
Link to the European Process

The National Citizens' Panel resulted in ten proposals for action which were formulated by citizens during the meetings. The recommendations address demands and wishes for the future of the European Union to policy-makers at various levels. They will be fed into the broader process of the Conference through various channels and communicated to political decision-makers.

- **Digital platform:** the [multilingual digital platform](#) is the main hub of the Conference on the Future of Europe in the virtual space. It gives citizens the opportunity to share their ideas with others across borders, learn about all Conference events and keep up to date with the progress of the Conference. All contributions to the Conference, including those from individuals, national events, National and European Citizens' Panels and Conference plenaries will be thematically compiled on the platform. The content of the platform is regularly analysed and published in reports that also serve as preparatory material for Citizens' Panels and plenaries.
- The recommendations of the German National Citizens' Panel will also be fed into the digital platform and can then be read and discussed by citizens of all EU Member States. They will thus become an integral part of the discussions and reports on the platform.
- **Plenary:** the plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe brings representatives of EU institutions, Member States and national parliaments together with citizens and representatives of civil society. The recommendations made by the National and European Citizens' Panels are discussed here on a thematic basis and without a predetermined outcome. The plenary is prepared by nine working groups – one for each topic of the Conference.
- As the German representative for the citizens' dialogues, Stephanie Hartung presented the German recommendations on 'Values and rights, rule of law, security' and on 'Climate change and the environment' at the third plenary session in Strasbourg on 21 and 22 January 2022 during the presentation of the results of various National Citizens' Panels. Anna Lührmann, Minister of State for Europe and Climate, also referred to recommendations from the National Panel in her statements in plenary on these two issues.

Annex

- Picture of participants at the closing plenary



- Participant testimonials

Guiding questions

- *What was your motivation for participating in the National Citizens' Panel?*
- *What left the greatest impression on you?*
- *What would you like to see from future civic participation projects by the Federal Government?*

Birga Boie-Wegener, 55, Neukloster, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

'How often do you find yourself at the kitchen table saying 'They should let me have a go'?! Well I was given the opportunity to engage with the topic of Europe (on a time-limited basis and with a clear indication of when and how much time I should contribute). Previously I had limited knowledge of the whole set-up and looked forward to discussing the topic and gaining a closer understanding of it.



The thing that has left the greatest impression on me is the coming together (albeit unfortunately only virtually) of people selected at random from all over Germany who were willing to get creative to shape the Europe of the future. I did not have the impression that the 'netiquette' presented to participants in advance was really necessary – everyone was willing to listen to each other and to share their own ideas without verbally attacking each other. I would like to have such opportunities to talk to each other, to come up with creative ideas, and to listen to those in charge and subject-matter experts MORE OFTEN – and preferably live of course, i.e. in face-to-face events.

On a side note, these practical small ideas were sadly not mentioned in the short summary at the plenary. I hope that they have nevertheless been recorded somewhere in writing for those tasked with conveying these summaries to Brussels, to see where feasible small steps have been proposed by us.'



Alexander Eenkhoorn, 51, Vlotho, North Rhine-Westphalia

'I had never heard of citizens' panels before, but thought they sounded like a good idea. While there was some scepticism among my friends about why I should take part, I was very curious and thought it would be exciting to find out what happened there. A visit to the Foreign Office would also have been an out-of-the-ordinary experience.

The composition of my small group on social justice was very strong; we drew up a recommendation for the Erasmus programme for pupils. There was a great dynamism and I found being in the group extremely enriching. In particular, the closing conference on 15 and 16 January left a great impression on me which I will not forget for a long time. The results in all the groups were impressive and I supported all the ideas put forward. I am very hopeful that politicians will take up these topics, since the most diverse people have worked on them and produced great results. I also hope that it will help people change their relationship with politics – as I have already done. I will remember the whole event as being very meaningful. I would also like to say a big thank you to the facilitators. Moderation was instrumental in supporting the outcome and helping to ensure civilised interaction between participants.

The future of the EU is in itself a great topic and I found the days enriching. Therefore I would not like to see any changes at all, but rather more of the same. To begin with I struggled with the topic assigned to me, but I quickly managed to get to grips with it. It would be useful to have a second event to explore the topics in more detail and to really engage in discussion. At the moment it feels a bit difficult to leave it all behind. It would also be nice to be informed about what actually happens next.'

Max Heizmann, 36, Fellbach, Baden-Württemberg 'I wanted to take part in the panel to be heard and express my opinion. The future of Europe matters to me. With my ideas, I wanted to make politicians see different perspectives and what matters to citizens like me.'



The discussion on possible solutions left the greatest impression on me. I think it is good to listen to other people's opinions, especially if they can argue them well.

I would like to see more such projects with citizens. However, I do not think it makes sense to impose topic suggestions. It would be better for participants to identify the thematic areas themselves. The participants could then divide themselves into the groups by thematic area depending on their own preferences. This would highlight which topic citizens are most interested in and where the government has the potential to improve.'

- **Process Chart for the National Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe**

