



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

SUMMARY RECORD

**Working Group on Climate change and environment, Chaired by Ms Pasková, Council / Czechia
17 December 2021, 14:00-16:00**

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

Following the opening of the meeting by the Chair, the Chair reminded the Members that the report of the second session of European Citizens' Panel 3 is available on the Platform, as is the third interim report on the Multilingual Digital Platform. She also announced her intention and request to hold an additional WG meeting in early January 2022, pending the approval the Co-Chairs of the Executive Board of the Conference.

2. Report by citizens from European Citizens' Panel 3 on the state of play of their discussions

Regarding the work done in the European Citizens' Panel 3 (Climate change, environment/ health) on the issue at hand, a representative of the Citizens' reported on the progress made, highlighting reflections around energy sobriety and the need to reduce overconsumption, promote renewables and invest in research. She referred more specifically to the contribution of the Common Agricultural Policy to favour quality consumption and protect natural habitats. The ecological impact of transport can be reduced by favouring rail, reducing sales of new cars, and accompanying consumers in reconverting cars.

The citizen representative further recalled the need for EU policy on hydrogen vehicles and a carbon tax with a bonus-malus system. Finally, she suggested the right of nature should be enshrined in the EU constitution.

Another citizen representative underlined the high pollution rates linked to high-energy demands addressed through fossil fuels. As the high demand cannot be fully replaced by renewable energy, a possible solution consists in the reduction of the energy demand through regulation. Whether nuclear energy is a solution needs to be clarified but is questionable, and he rather defended increased investments in nuclear fusion. He further mentioned that cities are not built sustainably, with funding required to transform and reconstruct sustainable infrastructure, limiting individual transport and promoting nonprofit public transport for all. Finally, he referred to the issue of pollution in groundwater and the need for appropriate restrictions to water pollution by industries and large agricultural plants.

In the exchange that followed, the contribution of the recently adopted reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy was recalled, as well in particular to the green architecture and its support to short supply chains, safe and healthy food and animal welfare. The need to focus on a 'just transition' and to set up structural transition measures, which is one of the most endorsed ideas on the Multilingual Digital Platform, was also stressed. The issue of transport was raised and the need to alter habits to use more environmental friendly modes of transport.



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

3. Discussion on the Third Interim Report from the Multilingual Digital Platform

Regarding the point on the presentation of the Third Interim Report of the Multilingual Digital Platform, members raised the following comments:

- More consideration needed for a just transition; implementation should be accompanied by impact assessment and mitigation measures to create new quality jobs; new green jobs will require good collective agreements;
- The importance of education (including extending of EU competencies in this regard) and information and focusing on real life experiences to develop solutions;
- Need to listen to what citizens need from the EU legislation to help them change their behavior, need to discuss solutions instead of problems.

Furthermore, based on a participants' poll, four topics were covered during the discussions: **energy, transport, sustainable and responsible consumption and pollution**. The topic of agriculture was postponed to the next working group due to time constraints, and will be addressed together with the remaining topics

Suggestions raised, with opposing views during the exchange on:

1. Energy:

- During the energy transition from fossil fuel energy to renewables, nuclear energy should be considered;
- The use of energy should be reduced as a first priority;
- make the most of the potential of microgeneration;
- Fossil fuels should no longer be subsidised: no gas and nuclear labelled as green investment in the taxonomy and no funding for gas infrastructure in the new gas package;
- Also consider hydrogen, geothermic, biofuels, need for price incentives, mobilize risk capital;
- Compare advantages and costs of all energy sources to identify most efficient ones in order to allow citizens to make informed decisions.

2. Transport:

- Adjust cruise fleets; Improve the rail network; encourage cycling; promote shared mobility;
- Ensure accessible, safe and affordable mobility for all - consider different and specific mobility needs (rural areas, low income groups, people with disabilities, women); sharing;
- Limit excessive/overconsumption of mobility (in regards to tourism).

3. Sustainable and responsible consumption:

- Invest in energy storage facilities;
- Make electric and hybrid vehicles affordable (price signal remains key for citizens);
- Educate, inform and raise awareness (lifelong learning);
- Use more environmentally-friendly and easy-to-recycle packaging;
- Give responsibility to producers through regulating what can be marketed and avoid to shift their responsibility to consumers/citizens;



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

- Support bottom-up initiatives and solutions developed by SMEs;
- Consider the entire lifecycle of a product and promote circular economy, give recognition to local / EU production, relocate production in the EU;
- Link sustainable production to the 'Made in Europe' agenda; apply locally sourced, green public procurement.

4. Pollution:

- The impacts along the lifecycle of products should be taken into account in the requirements for placing on the EU market, this is also a driver for imported products and their impacts;
- School curricula should include awareness raising on the use of plastics and non-recyclable materials;
- Reform waste management to enhance recycling, including through price signals (real cost);
- Recognize the key role of forests in reducing CO2 levels; invest in large-scale reforestation to also clean the air; enforce pollution standards
- Investment in technologies to reduce groundwater pollution and monitor more hazardous chemicals;
- Traders should ensure that imported products respect EU environmental and labour standards;
- Use fiscal incentives and subsidies to steer polluting behavior (polluter pays principle), including for industries where it cannot be avoided altogether like in agriculture and fishery;
- Avoid international outsourcing of waste management and processing activities.

Concluding remarks of the Chair

The Chair stated that the item of 'agriculture' will be postponed to the next Working Group meeting and addressed with the issues of biodiversity, landscape and construction, subsidies and taxation and change in behaviour and education. She expressed the hope that the new meeting structure succeeded in making the debate more dynamic and putting the citizens' views in the centre.