SUMMARY RECORD

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

Chaired by Věra Jourová, Vice-President, European Commission

Friday 17 December 2021, 11:00-13:00

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The second meeting of the Working Group took place in remote format. Chair Věra JOUROVÁ opened the meeting by thanking all members for their participation, while hoping that the next session could take place in person. The Chair expressed her enthusiasm that the Group is now able to discuss the final recommendations of European Citizens' Panel 2, and gave a special welcome to the representatives ('ambassadors') from this Panel.

Chair JOUROVÁ emphasised that the Working Group's aim should be to contribute and react to the work of citizens. She saluted the quality of their input. She also indicated to all Working Group members that in case they would not agree with citizens' recommendations or wished to add arguments, they could also formulate written comments.

The Chair finally informed the Working Group members that, time allowing, she may invite them to discuss the third interim report from the Multilingual Digital Platform. She urged participants to limit their interventions to two minutes, like in the last meeting.

Chair JOUROVÁ subsequently invited the representatives from European Citizens' Panel 2, to present the Panel's recommendations relating to "Values and rights, rule of law, security".

2. Discussion

Two of the Panel's representatives presented the recommendations from European Citizens' Panel 2 falling under the remit of the Working Group, namely on non-discrimination, gender equality, protecting human rights and the rights of nature and animals, right to privacy, protecting the rule of law, protecting and strengthening democracy, media and disinformation, security, closer integration, as well as European values and identity. This amounts to some 20 recommendations out of the 39 that were produced by Panel 2.

Chair JOUROVÁ thanked the Panel's representatives for their valuable input and opened the floor to all those who wanted to react to citizens' recommendations.

Many participants first focused on underlying procedural questions. Some argued in favour of the webstreaming of the Working Group's meetings. Some participants also urged the Chair to ensure a more structured discussion, for instance by clustering Panels' recommendations, Conference Platform ideas and other inputs from Working Group members by topics. A few participants supported the Chair's initiative of allowing for written comments and expressed their willingness to be able to communicate in-between Working Group meetings. A few participants also called for interpretation to be provided in more EU languages (SK, LV).

In addition, some participants raised the issue of the 'feasibility' of recommendations and called for clarifications on whether/how these could be implemented, as well as the division of competences between Member States and the European Union. Other Working Group members demanded that also those Panels' recommendations that require major changes are considered, and to reflect on whether the competence level on which they are implemented should be changed in the best interest of the citizens.

On substance, the Working Group members thanked citizens for their ambitious and innovative work and reacted to the Panel's recommendations.
- Several participants supported the Panel's recommendations regarding the need to ensure that fundamental rights are respected across the EU and to protect the rule of law by further developing existing instruments. Others warned before possible cumbersome changes to the current legal framework on rule of law. Some participants also argued in favour of strengthening cultural heritages with a view to making the EU stronger in diversity;
- The importance of supporting media freedom and tackling disinformation was also raised by participants;
- On citizens' participation in EU decision-making, Working Group members acknowledged the Panel's recommendations and mentioned the future role of Conferences like the current one and of the Conference Platform as well as the development of EU citizenship;
- Participants also expressed support to the Panel's recommendations regarding hybrid threats and called for a stronger EU involvement in this field.

Chair JOUROVÁ then informed participants about the main ideas from the Multilingual Digital Platform applying to the Working Group, inviting the Panel's representatives as well as the other Working Group members to react. These ideas included amongst others: an improved judicial and law-enforcement cooperation between Member States, a tougher stance from the EU vis-à-vis China and Russia, the role of Christian values, the inclusion of people with disabilities, intra-EU mobility and the handling of successions.

A representative from European Citizens' Panel 2 called for contributions from the Platform or from other members of the Working Group not to overshadow Citizens' Panels' recommendations, and asked the EU institutions to be bold and to put citizens' ideas into practice. Representatives from Panel 2 demanded that upcoming Working Group discussions should be more structured, go more into detail and aim to explore how citizens' ideas can actually be implemented and that in case Panels'

recommendations would not be implemented, citizens would like to receive detailed and transparent justifications from EU institutions.

3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

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

- A more structured and consolidated debate is needed in terms of substance. While topics should be clustered, sub-groups should not be created within the Working Group. The next meeting should have an annotated agenda clustering the recommendations by topics.
- Interpretation into as many languages as possible should be provided.
- The Working Group should be informed about the current initiatives already on the way with regard to the Panel's recommendations as well as their further implementation. This aspect should be discussed by the Co-Chairs of the Conference, having in mind that the EU should be creative and find ways to deliver on citizens' expectations.
- The issue of webstreaming will be raised again at the next Executive Board meeting. Working Groups should be fully transparent, but it should also be taken into account that citizens might not feel at ease with a public audience. She proposed to make an inquiry among the Citizen members of the WG to see if anyone opposed the webstreaming of the next meetings.