



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

SUMMARY RECORD

**Working Group on European Democracy, Chaired by Manfred Weber, European Parliament
17 December 2021, 14:00-16:00**

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The meeting took place remotely. The discussion covered the points outlined in the agenda circulated before the meeting (see Annex I). The Chair noted that the European Citizens' Panel on "European democracy/ Values and rights, rule of law, security" had adopted its recommendations, allowing the Working Group to work on this basis. He welcomed the possibility to move to discussions on substance and outlined his suggestion to structure work according to five pillars: democracy and elections; decision-making; executive power; procedures and subsidiarity; and citizens' participation and youth. He pointed out that this was an open structure, to which other elements could be added.

2. Discussion

The debate started with a presentation of the recommendations of the European Citizens' Panel on "European democracy/values, rights, rule of law, security", adopted by the Panel in Florence on 12 December.

Two representatives of the panel gave an overview of the recommendations, focusing on those linked to the topics on the agenda of the Working Group meeting and outlining a number of concrete recommendations that in their view could increase citizens' participation and improve the electoral process as well as decision-making in the European Union. They highlighted in particular their panel's recommendations to further harmonise EU electoral law and reinforce the trans-national dimension of European elections, as well as to develop digital platforms that would allow citizens to engage with policymakers, express their opinion on legislative proposals and access reliable information about the European Union. They pointed also to the recommendations to introduce a pan-European referendum and to reassess the voting systems in the EU institutions, for the EU to be more effective, while ensuring appropriate guarantees for smaller Member States. They considered that overall their panel had come up with strong recommendations, supported by a large majority, and highlighted their expectation to have a clear timeline for the follow-up to the recommendations.

In the ensuing debate, Co-Chair of the Conference Executive Board, Commission Vice-President Šuica, recalled that the recommendations of the European Citizens Panel needed to be at the core of the discussions. Several speakers stressed the importance of education and overcoming the information gap on European issues, as highlighted by citizens. There were also some references to the recommendations regarding participatory and deliberative democracy, including the structural embedding of citizens' assemblies. A few speakers highlighted their support for the recommendations on media independence. In line with the specific focus of the meeting, a number of interventions concerned issues related to the European Parliament elections and decision-making.

2.1. Democracy and elections

Several speakers commented on the recommendation of the European Citizens' Panel to harmonise the voting conditions at European elections and to move towards voting for European Union level



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parties with candidates from multiple Member States. The general idea of striving towards harmonisation received support from several members, while different views were expressed on the possible lowering of the voting age to 16. In this regard, the representatives of the European Citizens' Panel noted that the proposal had not gathered a consensus among citizens in the panel, which is why there had been no recommendation on this issue. The suggestion to move towards a system of transnational lists at the European elections received strong support from some members, while others stressed the importance of taking into account all the implications when discussing the issue and a few speakers could not support the idea.

In addition, some members advocated for increasing the visibility of European political parties and linking the outcome of the elections with the appointment of the Commission president through a lead candidate system. Other speakers called for ensuring inclusive participation at elections, including by people with disabilities and minority groups. Some members stressed the importance of building a European democracy beyond elections, including by bringing democracy more into people's everyday experience and by supporting civic participation and active citizenship. The issue of economic democracy was also raised. Some support was expressed to the recommendation to change the names of the EU institutions in order to clarify their functions.

2.2. Decision-making

Speakers also engaged in a discussion on the different aspects of the EU decision-making process. Some members advocated for a stronger role for the European Parliament in the economic area and for giving it the right of legislative initiative, to extend further the use of the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP) and to make sure the Council would reach decisions by qualified majority voting (QMV), rather than unanimity, in a greater number of areas (for instance, when it comes to issues relating to taxation, budget and own resources, social affairs and foreign policy). Others considered important to strengthen the role of national and regional parliaments against the background of a decreasing role of directives compared to regulations over the past two decades, the upward trend of delegated acts and the need to rethink the yellow card procedure in the light of its currently limited role. The importance of better involving social partners and organised civil society was mentioned and the issue of transparency in the EU decision-making process was also raised.

3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

The Chair welcomed the debate, considering that it had given a general flavour of the views among the different members and a clear direction of how the Working Group should contribute to the Conference Plenary. He expressed the will to web stream the next session. He suggested to continue with the discussions at the next meeting and underlined the need to present, as a next step, a summary of the main ideas in order to start finding a common understanding on the direction in which to go in further work, identifying potential vetoes. He considered that this could be done in the context of the next Working Group meeting.



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ANNEX I. Agenda for the meeting on 17 December 2021

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

Friday 17 December – 14:00 – 16:00
(remote)

1. Opening by the Chair
2. Presentation by citizens of the recommendations from European Citizens' Panel relating to European Democracy, followed by a discussion
3. Discussion on the Third Interim Report from the Multilingual Digital Platform
4. Exchange of views on European Democracy
 - 4.1 Democracy and elections
 - 4.2 EU decision-making process
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	Michalakis	ASIMAKIS	European citizens' panels
Mr	Zoltán	BALCZÓ	National Parliaments
Ms	Olga	BAUM	European citizens' panels
Mr	Matouš	BELOHLAVEK	European citizens' panels
Ms	Yamina	BEN NAOUM	National citizens panels/events
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	Vasco	CORDEIRO	Committee of the Regions
Ms	Annemieke	DE CLERCK	European citizens' panels
Mr	Bruno	DIAS	National Parliaments
Mr	Gašper	DOVŽAN	Council
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
Mr	Pat	KELLY	Council
Ms	Antonia	KIEPER	European Citizens panels
Mr	Wepke	KINGMA	Council
Mr	Tomáš	KOZÁK	Council
Mr	Zdzisław	KRASNODEŹBSKI	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	MORKŪNAITĖ- MIKULĖNIENĖ	National Parliaments
Mr	Jorge Luis	PAZOS LOPEZ	European citizens' panels



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Mr	Anti	POOLAMETS	National Parliaments
Mr	Arnoldas	PRANCKEVIČIUS	Council
Mr	Paulo	RANGEL	European Parliament
Ms	Ariane	ROBERT	European Economic and Social Committee
Mr	Hans	ROTHENBERG	National Parliaments
Mr	Domènec Miquel	RUIZ DEVESA	European Parliament
Mr	Hermano	SANCHES RUIVO	Local/Regional representative
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