



Council of the  
European Union

**Brussels, 26 May 2021  
(OR. en)**

**9159/21**

**AG 43  
INST 203**

**COVER NOTE**

---

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Practical modalities of the European Citizens' Panels of the Conference on the Future of Europe and Guidance for National Citizens' Panels

---

Delegations will find attached:

- the practical modalities for the organisation of the European Citizens' Panels of the Conference on the Future of Europe
- guidance for National Citizens' Panels organised in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe

**NOTE to the attention of the Executive Board**

**UPDATE OF THE PRACTICAL MODALITIES OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANELS**

The **practical modalities** for the European Citizens' Panels presented at the Executive Board meeting of 22 April have been **updated to take into account the discussion thereon at that same meeting of the Executive Board as well as the adopted Rules of Procedure of the Conference.**

The Co-Chairs would like **to highlight in particular the following paragraph relating to the topics of the panels:**

The topics for discussion for each of the Panels are based on the themes of the Multilingual Digital platform and will be clustered in this way:

- (1) European democracy/values, rights, rule of law, security;
- (2) Climate change, environment/health;
- (3) Stronger economy, social justice, jobs/ education, youth, culture, sport/ digital transformation;
- (4) EU in the world/migration;

## UPDATE Practical modalities of the European Citizens' Panels of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The Conference on the Future of Europe will rely on a mix of online and offline events, organised by the European institutions, national, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations and citizens, the results of which will be collected, analysed and published on the digital platform. **A central feature of the Conference will be the European Citizens' Panels, organised on the main topics of the Conference.** A number of randomly selected panels representative of EU sociological diversity, organised over several **deliberative sessions**, will come up with ideas and **recommendations** that will feed into the overall Conference deliberations, in particular, into the Plenaries, and ultimately into the report on its final outcome.

### 1. Random selection of citizens, representative of EU sociological diversity

- In order to ensure diversity by applying a credible methodology, and now based on evidence coming from numerous experiences of citizens' assemblies at local, national and European levels, the selection of participants will be done by **randomly selecting citizens, with the aim of constituting "panels" representative of EU sociological diversity** (different groups represented on the basis of 5 criteria: nationality, urban/rural, socio-economic background, gender and age).
- The selection will be done considering the entirety of the population (limited to EU citizens). They will be contacted by phone (**random generation of phone numbers** – fixed and mobile) in several rounds in order to explain the purpose and obtain their consent. If they agree, they will receive a mandate letter explaining exactly what is expected from them and will receive professional support and guidance throughout the process.
- Each European Citizens' Panel will be composed of **200 citizens** in order to strike a balance between diversity (facilitated when number is higher) and the easiness of the deliberation process (as optimal work is done through a combination of plenary meetings and working groups), and to take into account the **degressive proportionality** applied to the composition of the EP.
- As the COFE aims at allowing a specific focus on youth, **one third of the citizens composing a Citizens' Panel will be between 16 and 25 years old**. Furthermore, a special link between this youth group and the European Youth Event event will be created.
- The random selection dimension should lead to the participation of a wide range of citizens, including those who do not usually engage in European affairs. The **selection will therefore follow a methodology that will ensure the appropriate engagement**, through professional and well-trained teams, **with the contacted citizens**. The Commission has signed a contract with an external company for this random selection of participants. They will be supported in these efforts also by the "methodology" contactors (see below).

## 2. Design and methodology

- There will be **four European Citizens' Panels**.
- **The topics for discussion for each of the Panels are based on the themes of the Multilingual Digital platform** and will be clustered in this way:
  - (1) European democracy/values, rights, rule of law, security;
  - (2) Climate change, environment/health;
  - (3) Stronger economy, social justice, jobs/ education, youth, culture, sport/ digital transformation;
  - (4) EU in the world/migration;
- The Panels shall take on board contributions gathered in the framework of the Conference through the Platform and formulate a set of recommendations for the Union to follow-up on and which will be debated in the Conference Plenary. To achieve this goal, the Citizens' Panels need to be **structured around the main topics that will be discussed during the Conference. The European Citizens' Panels will also be informed of any recommendations by National Citizens' Panels.**
- **A rigorous methodology and a clear deliberative protocol**, built up from the now numerous experiences of citizens' assemblies, with input from experts, facilitators and fact-checkers, will guide the participants towards a progressive scaling down of the issues and a series of **collectively designed and owned recommendations**. The Panels could be accompanied by **independent Advisory groups**, composed of different types of experts and stakeholders. A list of experts and stakeholders will be made available to the panels and they will be able to select according to their topics and specific needs.
- To convince citizens to engage, especially those who are not familiar with public affairs, there is a need to develop a **clear narrative for the citizens to understand what would be the purpose of their participation and what commitment would be expected of them**. This will be expressed in a **"mandate letter"** to citizens, to detail the purpose of the panels and the commitment to follow-up, based on the Joint Declaration.
- The Co-Chairs will inform in advance the Executive Board of the development of the practical modalities for the organisation of the European Citizens' Panels.

## 3. Languages, timing and location

- In addition to the necessary time for preparation, information sharing and feedback, the panels shall meet during **at least three deliberative sessions of minimum two days, including a minimum of two in-person sessions if the health context allows**.
- **A hybrid citizens' event is planned** in June. A **final event in order to give feedback** to the panels on the follow-up will be organised in 2022.

- **All Panels will take place in the same overall period from autumn 2021 to spring 2022.** For logistical reasons, the sessions of all Panels will not take place at the exact same time. They would therefore present their conclusions to different meetings of the Plenary (2 Panels would present their recommendations to the Plenary in December and 2 in January).
- The **panels will be multilingual** (24 EU official languages in Panel plenaries and the necessary languages in the working groups).
- A contract with an **external service provider will help design the methodology** of these panels, moderate and facilitate them, **and organise their logistics**, including the possibility to provide interpretation. Nevertheless, these Citizens' Panels would be fully co-ordinated and **overseen by the Common Secretariat and the Executive Board of the Conference.**
- The Panels' in-person sessions will take place, to the extent possible in **different locations** such as Strasbourg, and other locations across the Union. Online sessions might take precedence if the current Covid-19 situation was to continue.
- The **plenary meetings of the panels could be live-streamed**, while the documents of their discussions and deliberations should be made publicly available on the Multilingual Digital Platform. There will also be a **dedicated section for the panels on the Platform**, which will be used also for communication and deliberation purposes.

#### **4. Panel results and their input into the Conference Plenary**

- The Panels' recommendations **will be debated in the Conference Plenary meetings, feed into the final Conference report** and constitute a part of the Conference output on which basis EU institutions will organise the follow-up, in accordance with the Joint Declaration.
- The Citizens' Panels should foresee **an adequate interaction with the Conference Plenary**, as well as with other relevant input from citizens, in particular into the Conference Multilingual Digital Platform, the main hub for collecting all the COFE data, and analysing them in order to produce regular reports.
- Citizens' delegations from each Panel will take part in the Plenary meetings. **20 representatives**, ensuring gender balance, from each of the European Citizens Panels, **of which at least one third would be younger than 25**, will take part in the **Plenary sessions**, will present the outcome of their discussions and debate them with other participants. **These representatives of the Panels will attend Conference Plenaries.**
- The Panels will lead to a **specific analysis/report** based on the original citizens' ideas as expressed during the Panels. It will contain the **final recommendations but also a detailed account of the content of the Panels' discussions.** This will include the argumentations and debates as well as the different deliberative steps that led to these. The reports will be prepared by the service providers in charge of the design and facilitation and endorsed by the

respective Panels, before being made available to the public on the multilingual digital platform.

- A questionnaire will also be submitted at the beginning and at the end of the process to assess the diversity of the panels, the degree of satisfaction with the process, and the **learning curve** they may have experienced due to the deliberative methods of the panels.
- In addition to the feedback meeting, panel **participants will be kept informed about the process** and the follow-up directly and via the digital platform, through regular newsletters and *ad hoc* emailing.

## Guidance for National Citizens' Panels in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The Joint Declaration for the Conference on the Future of Europe foresees the organisation of European citizens' Panels. In addition, according to the Joint Declaration, “*Each Member State and institution can organise additional events, in line with their own national or institutional specificities, and make further contributions to the Conference, such as national citizens' Panels or thematic events bringing together input from different panels*”. The Joint Declaration states that “*National and European events in the framework of the Conference will be organised along a set of principles and minimum criteria reflecting EU values to be defined by the Conference structures*”.

In this context, organisers of events should subscribe to the Conference Charter and participants should adhere to it.

The guidance described below is inspired by the principles of good deliberation, defined notably in an OECD report which has reviewed hundreds of case studies of deliberative processes,<sup>1</sup> and is meant to assist Member States which intend to organise Citizens' Panels at national, regional or local level.

NB: National events, different from citizens' panels, should be organised in line with the purpose and the principles of the Conference, in an open, transparent and inclusive way. Specific guidelines on how to organise such events are available in the form of toolkits on the Multilingual Digital Platform and, especially, in the “Step-by-step guide for event organisers”<sup>2</sup>. The document offers also examples of event formats that could inspire and guide the choice of the Member States. A specific guide on how to make the events inclusive is also available on the platform.

### 1) Purpose

Panels should have a clear purpose and goal: “*the objective should be outlined as a clear task and is linked to a defined public issue. It is phrased neutrally as a question in plain language*”. The role of the citizens and the influence of their input should be clear. Reference should be made to the overall process of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The Multilingual Digital Platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe offers topic suggestions, but Member States are free to choose any other topic related to the European Union that they consider important. According to the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the scope of the Conference should reflect the areas where the European Union has the competence to act or where European Union action would be to the benefit of European citizens. Ultimately, the purpose of the Panels is to provide collective recommendations on specific topics related to the future of Europe.

### 2) Follow-up

“*The commissioning public authority should publicly commit to responding to or acting on participants' recommendations in a timely manner.*” National dissemination and coordination measures that could ensure the uptake and visibility of the outcomes of national Citizens' Panels will enhance the

---

<sup>1</sup> Report available on: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf>. Quotes in this text are taken from the good practice principles for deliberative processes for public decision-making of that report.

<sup>2</sup> [How do I organise an event? - Conference on the Future of Europe \(europa.eu\)](#)

integration of the national/regional/local actions into the wider process of the Conference. This holds true especially given the potential overlap of similar discussions unfolding on the one side at local/national level, and on the other side at EU level.

The three European institutions committed to respond to participants' recommendations in the Joint Declaration: *"The final outcome of the Conference will be presented in a report to the Joint Presidency. The three institutions will examine swiftly how to follow up effectively to this report, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties."*

### **3) Transparency**

*"The deliberative process should be announced publicly before it begins. The process design and all materials [...] should be available to the public in a timely manner."* The Multilingual Digital Platform of the Conference is the main hub for Conference related events, contributions and information, thereby ensuring transparency. All contributions should be published on the Multilingual Digital Platform <https://futureu.europa.eu/> which gathers all input for the European citizens' Panels and the Plenary of the Conference and other related activities and events.

The Joint Declaration provides that the recommendations from the national and European Citizens' Panels are debated by the Conference Plenary. In addition to the Platform, the Member States could use existing Union institutional structures to communicate the results of the national citizens' Panels.

### **4) Inclusiveness**

*"Inclusion should be achieved by considering how to involve under-represented groups".* *"Participation should also be encouraged and supported through remuneration, expenses and/or providing or paying for childcare and eldercare"* as well as providing necessary support and assistance. This applies to both face-to-face events and online events. Similarly to the European Citizens' Panels, an over-representation of young people or other kinds of public could be sought. A particular attention should be given to have an appropriate facilitation of the Panels, with skilled facilitators.

### **5) Representativeness**

*"The participants should be a microcosm of the general public. This is achieved through random sampling"* representing different geographic origins, gender, age, socioeconomic backgrounds and/or levels of education in the respective country / region, as also stated in the *Joint Declaration* for the European Citizens' Panels. The selection of the participants should foresee the possible exclusion related to elected tenures or political responsibilities.

The number of participants per panel is usually between 50 and 200 citizens, depending on the number of inhabitants of the Member State, region or area. Efforts should be made to reach those who normally do not take part in public debates or political discussions, e.g. by choosing settings and places with easy access.

The organisation of on-site citizens Panels, has shown added-value in terms of diversity and quality of interactions and dialogue between participants. In online debates, the need for more breaks should be taken into account. Online sessions can be split up into multiple sessions.

### **6) Information**

*"Participants should have access to a wide range of accurate, relevant, and accessible evidence and expertise"* on the fundamentals of the topic to be discussed in order to enable collective reflection. There should be clear procedures in place to ensure that the knowledge provided to citizens is adequate

and balanced. According to this, citizens should have the opportunity, within the scope of their panel, to choose what specific topics they want to focus on and the type of expertise they need.

#### **7) Group deliberation**

*“Participants should be able to find common ground to underpin their collective recommendations to the public authority. This entails careful and active listening, weighing and considering multiple perspectives, every participant having an opportunity to speak, a mix of formats that alternate between small group and Plenary discussions and activities, and skilled facilitation”.* Organisers should plan to have **facilitated discussions** in the Panel plenary and in smaller subgroups with approximately 10 persons per table. The subgroups discuss and formulate recommendations that should be later discussed and endorsed by the Panel’s plenary. The facilitation should be **neutral and skilled**.

#### **8) Time**

*“Deliberation requires adequate time for participants to learn, weigh the evidence, and develop informed recommendations, due to the complexity of most policy problems”.* **At least 4 to 6 meeting days** (e.g. two to three weekends) could be planned when addressing complex topics in a national deliberation process. Alternatively, several decentralised citizens' Panels could take place across a Member State, using the same method.

#### **9) Integrity**

In order to ensure the integrity of the exercise, *“The process should be run by an arm's length co-ordinating team different from the commissioning public authority”.*

#### **10) Privacy**

National Citizens Panels should ensure participants’ privacy and respect of the EU data protection rules. *“There should be respect for participants’ privacy to protect them from undesired media attention and harassment, as well as to preserve participants’ independence, ensuring they are not bribed or lobbied by interest groups or activists”.*

#### **11) Evaluation**

*“There should be an anonymous evaluation by the participants to assess the process based on objective criteria (e.g. on quantity and diversity of information provided, amount of time devoted to learning, independence of facilitation).* A questionnaire could be submitted at the beginning and at the end of the process to assess the degree of satisfaction with the process and the learning curve they may have experienced due to the deliberative methods of the panels.