



1 **DRAFT PROPOSALS – EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY**

2

3 I. CITIZENS INFORMATION, PARTICIPATION and YOUTH

4

5 **Objective 1: Increase citizens' participation and youth involvement in the democracy at the**
6 **European Union level to develop a 'full civic experience' for Europeans, ensure that their voice**
7 **is heard also in between elections, and that the participation is effective. That is why the most**
8 **appropriate form of participation should be considered for each topic, for example by:**

- 9 1. Improving the effectiveness of participatory mechanisms by better informing on them. Ideally
10 all the information about the participatory spaces should be centralized in an integrated
11 official website with different features.¹ A mechanism should be devised to monitor policy
12 and legislative initiatives which have emerged from participatory democracy processes;²
- 13 2. Increasing the frequency of online and offline interactions between EU institutions and its
14 citizens through different means of interaction in order to ensure that citizens can participate
15 in the EU policy-making process to voice their opinions and to get feedback, and creating a
16 charter for EU officials on citizens' participation;³
- 17 3. Offering a user-friendly digital platform where citizens can share ideas, put forward
18 questions to the representatives of EU institutions and express their views on important EU
19 matters and legislative proposals, in particular youth. The platform should also allow for
20 online elections and polls;⁴
- 21 4. Improving and streamlining existing mechanisms at the European, national, and local level,
22 to make them more secure, accessible, visible and inclusive;⁵
- 23 5. Including in the citizens' participation process regional and local authorities;⁶
- 24 6. Holding Citizens' assemblies periodically, on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants
25 must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be
26 incentivized. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have

¹ ECP2 Recommendation 32, 37, BE, FR and NL National Panels

² FR National Panel

³ ECP2 Recommendation 29

⁴ ECP2 Recommendation 19, 32, BE, DK and FR National Panels

⁵ BE National panel

⁶ *Ibid.*

27 enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the
28 institutions, this should be duly justified;⁷

29 7. Introduce a “Youth-check” of legislation, including both an impact assessment and a
30 consultation mechanism with representatives of young people, when legislation is deemed
31 to have an impact on young people;⁸

32 8. Strengthening cooperation between EU legislators and civil society organisations to utilise
33 the link between decision-makers and citizens which civil society organisations constitute.⁹

34

35 **Objective 2: Make the European Union more understandable and accessible and build common**
36 **European identity, in particular by:**

37 1. Guaranteeing a minimum level of education on the EU and especially its democratic
38 processes, including the history of European integration and European citizenship. People of
39 all ages should be able to benefit from such programmes, which should be designed in an
40 engaging and age appropriate manner, for instance through the development of specific
41 programmes and educational material for children and schools;¹⁰ (*Partially overlaps with*
42 *Education, Culture, Youth and Sport*)

43 2. Making reliable information on the EU easily accessible in an inclusive manner to all citizens.
44 EU institutions should use more accessible language and avoid using bureaucratic terms in
45 their communication, while at the same time maintaining the quality and expertise of the
46 given information and adapting the information to different communication channels and
47 audience profiles.¹¹ It should consider, for instance, creating a mobile application where
48 information concerning EU policies is presented in a clear language.¹² A special effort should
49 be made to reach out to young people through digital media, youth movements and various
50 ‘ambassadors’ (organisations and individuals) promoting the EU project;¹³

51 3. Making a greater use of artificial intelligence and translation technologies to tear down
52 language barriers;¹⁴

53 4. Defending and supporting free media, and encouraging media outlets, including public
54 broadcasters and public news agencies and European media, to cover European affairs more
55 regularly while respecting their freedom and independence, to ensure even coverage across
56 the EU Member States;¹⁵ (*Partially overlaps with Values and right, rule of law and security*);

57 5. Bringing Europe closer to citizens by setting up contact points and dedicated hubs, or “Houses
58 of Europe”, at local level to provide resources, information and advice to citizens on EU

⁷ ECP2 Recommendation 39, BE National Panel 3

⁸ DK National Panel

⁹ DK National Panel

¹⁰ ECP2 Recommendation 24, 36, 38, BE National Panel

¹¹ ECP2 33, BE FR and NL National panels)

¹² ECP2 26

¹³ BE National Panel

¹⁴ ECP2 Recommendation 25

¹⁵ ECP2 Recommendation 31, BE and NL National Panels

59 matters, as well as listen to their concerns and engage in debates with associations to help
60 spread citizens' views at European level;¹⁶

61 6. Taking further steps to strengthen common identity among Europeans, for instance through
62 an EU fund for supporting online and offline interactions (ie. exchanges programmes, panels,
63 meetings) of both short and longer duration between EU citizens, creating common sports
64 events and teams, or making Europe Day (9 May) a European public holiday for all EU
65 citizens.¹⁷

66

67 II. DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS

68

69 **Objective: Strengthen European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting**
70 **participation in European Parliament elections, fostering transnational debate on European**
71 **issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives, in**
72 **particular by:**

73 1. Ensuring the protection of EU values laid down in the treaties, including the rule of law, which
74 are at the core of the European democracy. In its relationship with external countries, the
75 European Union should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders. Only
76 after achieving this, the European Union can be an ambassador of our democratic model in
77 the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue¹⁸
78 *[partially overlaps with Values and Rights, Rule of Law and security]*

79 2. Conceiving a EU wide referendum, to be triggered by the European Parliament, in exceptional
80 cases on matters particularly important to all European citizens;¹⁹

81 3. Working towards amending EU electoral law to harmonise electoral conditions (voting age,
82 election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their
83 financing) for the European Parliament elections, as well as moving towards voting for
84 'transnational lists', with candidates from multiple Member States, while taking into account
85 the views expressed among citizens across the EU Member States on this issue.²⁰

- 86 • Some of the Members of the European Parliament should be elected through a
87 European Union-wide list, the rest being elected within the Members' States;²¹
- 88 • This reform should also aim at facilitating digital voting possibilities²² and
89 guaranteeing effective voting rights for persons with disabilities.²³

90

¹⁶ BE and FR National Panels

¹⁷ ECP2 Recommendation 27, BE National Panel

¹⁸ ECP Recommendations 14

¹⁹ ECP Recommendation 18

²⁰ ECP2 Recommendation 16, NL National Panel 20, National Panel was divided on "transnational lists"

²¹ Based on ECP2 Recommendation 16, Discussion in WG

²² ECP2 Recommendation 19 and MDP

²³ European Economic and Social Committee

- 91 4. Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account
92 national specificities and citizens' desire to be closer to them and have a feeling that their
93 concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament. This
94 is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged;²⁴
- 95 • European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the
96 Commission.²⁵ Therefore, the lead candidate (number 1 on the transnational list) of
97 the European political party that has obtained the highest share of votes at European
98 elections, who is able to be supported by a majority of European Parliament's
99 Members, shall be elected President of the European Commission. In case a coalition
100 majority cannot be reached, the task should be assigned to the next lead candidate.
101 To this end, European political parties may nominate candidates to run for the
102 Commission President's post;²⁶
 - 103 • The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative, in order to
104 define the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to
105 follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations;²⁷
 - 106 • European Parliament should decide on the budget of the EU as it is the right of
107 parliaments at the national level;²⁸
 - 108 • Make political parties, civil society organisations, trade unions more lively and
109 accessible in order for citizens to be more involved and engaged in European
110 democracy.²⁹ This would also contribute to stimulate the inclusion of EU topics in
111 public debates via political parties, organised civil society and social partners, not only
112 during European elections but ahead of national, regional and local elections as well.³⁰
113

²⁴ ECP2 Recommendation 36, BE and FR National Panels

²⁵ BE National Panel 3.2 *"We recommend that the composition of the European Commission be made more transparent, according to some basic rules, so that the composition reflects citizens' voice and citizens know how the selection was made"*

²⁶ Softer formulation of request for "Direct election of the European Commission President" – FR National Panel (*"in the longer term, electing the President of the European Commission by universal suffrage"*), MDP (Final Kantar Report: *"Group of contributions discusses the election of the Commission President and appointment of commissioners, including the Spitzenkandidaten system, and direct election of the Commission President by citizens"*), EYE, pag. 23 *"The candidates for the President of the Commission should not be elected in backroom negotiations among winning parties. We should enforce the so-called "Spitzenkandidaten" system, where each party announces their candidate for the President of the Commission before the election campaign in the case that this party gains a majority. Through active participation in the campaign and direct interaction with the citizens, the future President could become more closely connected to the European population."*, and discussion WG

²⁷ *Ibid.* BE National Panels (3.2), MDP (Final Kantar Report: *"Regarding the European Parliament, contributors most often call for it to be granted real powers of legislative initiative"*)

²⁸ MDP (Final Kantar Report: *"Regarding the European Parliament, (...) There are also calls for it to be granted fiscal powers"*)

²⁹ MDP (Final Kantar Report: *"According to another contribution, parties should become more accessible to people from different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds"*)

³⁰ Committee of the Regions in WG

114 III. EU DECISION MAKING PROCESS

115

116 **Objective: Improve the EU's decision-making process in order to ensure the EU's capability to**
117 **act, while taking into account the interests of smaller Member States and guaranteeing a**
118 **transparent and understandable process for the citizens, in particular by:**

119

120 1. Reassessing decision-making and voting rules in the EU institutions, focusing on the issue of
121 unanimous voting, which makes it very difficult to reach agreement, while ensuring a fair
122 calculation of voting 'weights' so that small countries' interests are protected;³¹

123 • The Kyev moment showed us that unanimity should be abolished, for instance in
124 external affairs, so that Europe can speak with a single voice in the world.³²

125

126 2. Ensuring transparency of decision-making, allowing independent citizens' observers to
127 closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing the right of access to documents,
128 and develop on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and the
129 EU institutions;³³

130 • The EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process and
131 institutions. For instance, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament,
132 including its votes, should be broadcasted online in the same way. This would allow
133 interested citizens to follow EU policy-making, and hold politicians and policy-makers
134 accountable;³⁴

135 • EU decision-making process should be further developed so that national, regional,
136 local representatives, social partners and organised civil society are more involved.³⁵

137

138 3. Considering changing the names of EU institutions to clarify their functions and respective
139 role in the EU decision-making process for citizens;³⁶

³¹ ECP2 Recommendation 20

³² ECP4 Recommendation 21: Decision-making and EU Foreign Policy: "All issues decided by way of unanimity are changed to be decided by way of a qualified majority. The only exceptions should be the admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU as stated in Art. 2 of the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU", Discussion in WG based on ECP2 Recommendation 20, MPD (Final Kantar Report). *Putin's attack happened on the 24th of February 2022, after the Final Citizens' Panel 2P in Florence. The Discussion in the WG, but also in the plenary has urged the Conference on the Future of Europe to give a response to it. To this end, Ukrainian citizens and Members of Parliament were invited to March 12 Plenary*

³³ ECP2 Recommendation 34, NL National Panel

³⁴ Discussion in WG based ECP2 Recommendation 34, NL National Panel, MPD (Final Kantar Report: "Increased transparency and greater involvement of the citizens is supported" in EU decision-making process is also supported

³⁵ WG discussion (presentation by National Parliaments and Committee of the Regions)

³⁶ ECP2 Recommendation 15

- 140 • The EU decision making process should be based on a clearer and more
141 understandable structure, resembling national systems;³⁷
142 • For example, the Council of the EU could be called the Senate of the EU and the
143 European Commission could be called the Executive Commission of the EU.³⁸
144

145 4. Reopening the discussion about the constitution to help us align better on our values. A
146 constitution would help to be more precise as well as involve citizens and agree on the rules
147 of the game. Only then we would have true reform towards a more united and coherent
148 European Union.³⁹

149
150 **IV. SUBSIDIARITY**

151
152 1. Create a system of local EU Councillors, as a way to reduce the distance between the EU
153 institutions and European citizens;⁴⁰

154
155 1. Provide enhanced structural support, financial and otherwise, for civil society, especially for
156 youth civil society and support local authorities in setting up local youth councils;⁴¹

157
158 2. The EU should review the mechanism allowing National Parliaments to assess whether new
159 legislative proposals at the European level doesn't intrude on their legal competences (so-
160 called "Yellow and Orange cards system"). In addition, the EU should elaborate a system for
161 National Parliaments giving the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European
162 level. Such mechanisms should also be enlarged to all regional parliaments within the EU
163 that have legislative power;⁴²

164
165 3. Reform the Committee of Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, for example to
166 make them function more efficiently. Reform the Committee of Regions to encompass
167 adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, or giving it an
168 enhanced role;⁴³

169
170 4. A lively society is crucial for the democratic life of the EU: given the importance of social
171 partners and organised civil society in the European democratic life, they should be better
172 included in the decision-making process.⁴⁴
173

³⁷ Discussion WG based on need expressed in ECP2 15 to "clarify EU institutions functions", MDP (Final Kantar Report: "There are also (...) suggestions to deepen the bicameral legislature in the EU")

³⁸ ECP2 recommendation 15

³⁹ ECP Recommendation 35, FR National Panel

⁴⁰ Final Kantar Report, pag. 85

⁴¹ DK National Panel

⁴² Discussion in WG, National Parliaments

⁴³ Discussion in WG, CoR and EESC; Final Kantar Report, pag. 85

⁴⁴ Discussion in the WG, Social partners and several other members

- 174 V. DELIVERY (*could also go under decision-making*)
175
176 1. The EU has to enhance its delivery in key important areas;
177 ○ For example, by enhancing the role of all European agencies, such as Frontex and the
178 European Asylum Office. The EU should organise process audits on the organisation
179 of Frontex, as transparency is needed in its functioning to avoid all kinds of abuses.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ ECP 4 Recommendation 8