

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

The Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE) 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 **pan-European (EU) Citizens' Panels**, organised **on the main topics of the COFE**. 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 COFE discussions, in particular, into the Plenaries, and ultimately into the final report.

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).
- 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 (EYE) 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. Collective recommendations, a deliberative methodology

- **There will be four Citizens' Panels.**
- **The subjects for discussion for each of the Panels will be defined by the Executive Board based on the contributions on the platform** as well as the debates in the first Plenary if timing allows.
- The panels shall take on board contributions gathered in the framework of the Conference through the digital 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.**
- **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.
- 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 and signed by the Co-Chairs.

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.**
- While a **hybrid information event could be envisaged** to launch the process, a **final event in order to give feedback** to the panels on the follow-up could be decided by the Executive Board.
- **All Panels will take place in the same overall period until early 2022.** For logistical reasons, the sessions of all Panels will not take place at the exactly the same time. They could therefore present their conclusions to different meetings of the Plenary (e.g. 2 Panels would present their recommendations to the Plenary in December and 2 in February).
- The **panels will be multilingual** (24 EU 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**. Nevertheless, **these Citizens' Panels would be fully co-ordinated and overseen by 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.

4. Panel results and their input into the Conference Plenary

- The Panels' recommendations **will be debated in the Conference Plenary meetings and feed into the final COFE report** and constitute a part of the COFE 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 COFE 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. **At least 8 representatives, ensuring gender balance, from each of the European Citizens Panels, of which one third would be younger than 25, take part in the Plenary sessions**, will present the outcome of their discussions and debate them with other participants. **These representatives of the Panels would be invited to attend all subsequent 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 drafted by the service providers in charge of the design and facilitation and 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.