

## **Greens/EFA feedback on the recommendations by EU Citizens Panel 2 regarding Democracy and Values**



The Greens/EFA priorities for the Conference on the Future of Europe can be found here: <http://extranet.greens-efa.eu/public/media/file/1/7033>

### **A) Values (Gwen Delbos-Corfield, Daniel Freund)**

1. “We recommend that the EU provides criteria on anti-discrimination in the labour market (quotas for youth, elders, women, minorities). If companies fulfill the criteria, they get subsidies or tax breaks”. We recommend enhancing employee's awareness about:

- supranational and national institutions (e.g. trade unions).
- mechanisms which ensure companies respect existing rules on non-discrimination in the workplace.
- qualification programmes for social groups that suffer discrimination in the job market (youth, elders, women, minorities).

We recommend the adoption of a two-stage EU law. First, provide subsidies to hire employees from certain categories susceptible to discrimination. Second, the law should oblige employers to employ such groups for a minimum period.”

This is because the EU is responsible for maintaining a balance between free market interests and the protection of vulnerable categories, which should be legally safeguarded.

Heterogeneous groups are desirable for companies as they offer diverse qualifications.

Subsidies are an additional incentive to be provided to companies.

**Greens/EFA: Our priority is to fight discrimination in all areas, not only in the field of employment. Anti-discrimination policies should also have an intersectional approach.** EU anti-discrimination law is fragmented. The Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion and belief, age, disability and sexual orientation only in the field of employment and occupation. However, the Equal Treatment Directive, which is blocked in the Council since 2009, would expand protection outside the field of employment, thus extending protection against discrimination in the EU through a horizontal approach -our Group has the Rapporteurship. In addition, the Women on Boards Directive, which stipulates quotas for women in company boards, is also blocked in the Council. The EP has repeatedly called for urgently unblocking these directives and we should insist on it. The recommendation suggests positive actions to combat discrimination in the labour market. In this regard, the Employment Equality Directive already foresees that Member States could introduce measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to the grounds protected under the Directive. Therefore, we should also insist on the urgent need to ensure the effective implementation of the current legislation. According to the Commission Work Programme (CWP) 2022, the Commission will present a legislative initiative in the third quarter to strengthen the role and independence on equality bodies. However, if one of the legal bases used for such a proposal is Article 19 TFEU, unanimity from the Council will be required for its adoption, which means there is a potential risk that the future proposal also ends up

*blocked in the Council. We should therefore also demand to change Council unanimity to qualified majority.*

2. “We recommend the EU creates an incentive programme that facilitates the creation of affordable kindergartens and playgrounds in big and small companies. Shared facilities are also a viable option for smaller firms to get the subsidy.

We recommend the EU forces companies to create kindergartens in a manner proportional to the number of employees.”

We recommend this because uniting family life and professional life improves job performances, reduces unemployment, and brings parents, especially women, in a situation that enables them to continue their career. Stressing the social dimension, the proposed solution guarantees the safety of the children and reduces parental anxieties.

*Greens/EFA: This recommendation is related to “work-life balance” and “childcare”. We prefer to refer to “childcare” services instead of “kindergartens”, as the former includes the latter, so childcare is broader [1]. In March 2021, the Commission presented a proposal to establish an EU Child Guarantee which is in preparatory phase in the EP. According to this proposal, Member States should guarantee free access to childcare services, especially for children in need. The Commission also presented the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan to push for the implementation of the Pillar. In addition, the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights are mainstreamed across the European Semester. The focus of the recommendation should ideally be on “childcare”, as parents/carers should be able to choose the childcare service that best fits their needs. Even though the recommendation is pretty targeted, we are glad to support it. By including the recommendation in the ongoing work concerning the Commission’s proposals on the EU Child Guarantee, the recommendation could be covered there.*

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*[1] See the EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child, the EU Child Guarantee and the European Pillar of Social Rights - in particular principles 9 (work-life-balance) and 11 (childcare and support to children).*

3. “We recommend to safeguard animals' wellbeing and sustainability in farming by amending directive 98/58 EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. More detailed minimum criteria must be defined. It should be specific, measurable, and time bound. The minimum criteria should be set in a way that leads to higher animal wellbeing standards and at the same time enables a transition towards a climate and environmental sustainability and ecological agriculture”.

We, as citizens, believe that it is important to have stronger minimum standards to be harmonized within the EU regarding animal farming. We are aware that the transition might pose problems in some agricultural sectors that benefit from subsidies, and for those are in transition to ecological and sustainable farming. However we find it very important to ensure that this transition happens.

4. “We recommend to promote more environment and climate-friendly agriculture in Europe and world-wide by taxing all negative emissions, pesticides and extreme use of water, etc... , based on their environmental burden. Custom duties on all agricultural goods that are

imported into the EU must eliminate competitive advantages of third countries without the same standards as the EU. To promote animal-friendly agriculture, we recommend that emissions caused by long range transport of animals should be taxed”.

By establishing such a system we believe it is possible to support the transition towards a climate and environmental-friendly agriculture.

→ Panel 3

*Greens/EFA: The Common Agriculture Policy needs to be reformed. CAP reform could change the general structure of farming in Europe, giving priority to small and ecological farming, restoring biodiversity and fostering animal welfare by actively promoting positive life conditions instead of simply attempting to protect animals from the worst forms of cruelty. This new CAP should be a fair and sustainable CAP, in which payments to large landowners are capped and ensure that small-scale farmers are the main beneficiaries of financial aid. We want to see investment in regional food production, cutting down the distance food is transported, link rural development as well as binding CAP payments to ambitious environmental objectives to ensure the CAP does no harm. Such sustainable rural development will help to bridge the divide to urban centres towards more social cohesion.*

5. “In the actual context of many fake news, we recommend to promote more independent, objective and balanced media coverage by: 1. Developing at EU level a minimum standards directive for media independence. 2. Promoting at EU level the development of media competences for every citizen”.

The EU must produce a directive to ensure the independence of the media and freedom of speech.

***Greens/EFA: (similar input than in recommendation 12) The need to ensure media freedom, pluralism and independence, as well as to promote media literacy, is a priority for our Group.*** *The Commission is expected to release its legislative proposal for a Media Freedom Act in the third quarter of 2022 - the public consultation has just been launched. The proposal should aim at ensuring media pluralism, transparency of media ownership and independence in media management. According to the public consultation, the Commission is proposing a regulation as a type of act and Article 114 TFEU (internal market) as the legal base. We Greens/EFA group want the Act to be as ambitious as possible - the proposal will probably not cover issues such as the promotion of media literacy. This recommendation could therefore be partially covered in the upcoming proposal. Our ambition includes:*

***Regulation of market concentration:*** *The European Commission has strong powers to regulate the internal market. The Commission should investigate if government funding to certain media outlets constitutes a distortion of the media market in a way that disproportionately benefits some media outlets (namely pro-government ones) over others; or in a way that prevents the emergence of new, smaller, independent media outlets, thus undermining fair competition. Public broadcasters should be independent. The Commission should also look into market concentration in the media sector and use its market powers to ensure that any monopolies or oligopolies are broken up in order to promote pluralism, including of course when it comes to online platforms.*

**Media ownership: transparency and eradication of conflicts of interest:** *The European Commission should assess the transparency of the media ownership structures in Europe and ensure that any regulation of media, for example via the audio-visual media services directive, includes binding obligations on the media to proactively publish information about their ownership structures, including their beneficial owners. Clear rules must be put in place to prevent potential conflicts of interest arising in media ownership structures, with a special emphasis on avoiding political interference.*

**EU protections for freedom of expression and information:** *The application of EU legislation on the national level should be closely monitored, and any indication that EU laws such as copyright, trade secrets, the data protection regulation or the Audio-visual Media Services Directive are being (ab)used to undermine freedom of expression should trigger a swift and strong reaction from the EU institutions including the European Court of Justice and a review of said legislation where necessary. Future EU legislation should never include wording that has the potential to undermine freedom of expression, and any future EU mechanism on democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights must enshrine media freedom as an essential pillar of a democratic system. Following the successful adoption of the whistleblower directive, the European Commission should assess the possibility for EU legislation to prevent strategic litigation (aka SLAPP suits) that seek to undermine the role of the press or to limit freedom of expression.*

Our full 10 point plan can be found here: <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/document/greens-efa-proposals-on-media-freedom-in-the-eu>

*The pandemic has shown the need for structural changes in the European news media. From crisis to crisis, small media disappears, seriously affecting pluralism and diversity in the news media and audio-visual sector, hitting particularly hard local and regional media and increasing "news deserts". Greens/EFA believe cross-border cooperation of news media outlets together with a robust Rule of Law, including RoL conditionality for access to EU/public funds, judicial and regulatory independence and guarantees of media pluralism can help address disinformation problems stemming from interference arising from governments, powerful interest groups or third countries, media market distortions and ownership concentration and strengthen diversity in media markets; It is also particularly important for us that any (recovery) funding earmarked for the media is conditional on support for independent journalism, and that this should be properly monitored.*

*Member States are in the process of implementing Europe's so far main piece of media legislation – the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) – transposition into national legislation was due 19 September 2020 but very few of them complied with the deadline and the European Commission launched infringement procedures against 23 Member States. This new AVMSD introduces an obligation for EU member states to designate one or more independent national regulatory authorities to oversee the broadcasting and audiovisual media sector in Europe. These must be legally distinct from the government and functionally independent from their respective governments and from any other public or private body. In regards media literacy the AVMSD requires MS to promote measures that develop media literacy skills and obliges video-sharing platforms to provide effective media literacy measures and tools. This is a crucial requirement due to the central role such platforms play in giving access to audiovisual content. Platforms are also required to raise users' awareness of these*

*measures and tools. We ask the Member States to effectively implement the AVMSD and these specific provisions without any delay and the Commission to monitor.*

6. “We recommend to stop subsidising agricultural mass-production if it does not lead to a transition towards a climate, environmentally sustainable and ecological agriculture. Instead we recommend to redirect the subsidies to support a sustainable transition”.

Instead of subsidising the agricultural sector of mass farming, the subsidies should be redirected to farms that are in transition to comply with the new minimum standards for animal welfare.

→ Panel 3

***Greens/EFA: same answer like recommendation 3: We strongly agree. The Common Agriculture Policy needs to be reformed. CAP reform could change the general structure of farming in Europe, giving priority to small and ecological farming, restoring biodiversity and fostering animal welfare by actively promoting positive life conditions instead of simply attempting to protect animals from the worst forms of cruelty. This new CAP should be a fair and sustainable CAP, in which payments to large landowners are capped and ensure that small-scale farmers are the main beneficiaries of financial aid. We want to see investment in regional food production, cutting down the distance food is transported, link rural development as well as binding CAP payments to ambitious environmental objectives to ensure the CAP does no harm. Such sustainable rural development will help to bridge the divide to urban centres towards more social cohesion.***

7. “We recommend that entities that process personal data shall be licensed at EU level. These entities shall also be subject to independent, external annual data protection audit. These entities shall be punished for data protection violations proportionally to their annual turnover in a stricter way than under the current regulation. The license should be lifted after two consecutive violations, and immediately after a serious violation”.

We recommend all this because current regulations (GDPR) are not sufficient and entities need to be better monitored and sanctioned to make sure they do not violate data protection and the right to privacy.

*Greens/EFA: The GDPR is sufficient in terms of substance, but lacks enforcement. Regarding a licence, even at EU level: Such a necessity would bring every processing of personal data in Europe to a grinding halt, which is not what we aim for. Just one example: Every small shop that sends products to their customers would have to request a license, because they also process the shipping address – which is personal data. Instead, we want to make sure that whenever personal data is processed, it is done in a fair way, with all the controls and limitations in place. Larger companies already have to do a data protection impact assessment.*

*Instead of an un-workable licensing scheme, we insist that Member States finally give sufficient resources to data protection supervisory authorities, so they can do inspections, give advice, and also sanction breaches of the GDPR. The GDPR already foresees sanctions in proportion to the world-wide annual turnover (up to 4%), and the authorities can issue orders to cease certain processing operations already after a first violation. We agree that this*

*enforcement toolkit needs much better use. Last year, the European Parliament “expresse[d] its concern about the uneven and sometimes non-existent enforcement of the GDPR by national DPAs more than two years after the start of its application, and therefore regrets that the enforcement situation has not substantially improved compared to the situation under Directive 95/46/EC; ... 14. Is concerned about the length of case investigations by some DPAs, and about its adverse effect on effective enforcement and on citizens’ trust; urges DPAs to speed up the resolution of cases, and to use the full range of possibilities under the GDPR, particularly if there are systematic and persistent breaches, including with gainful interest and a large number of affected data subjects;*

*15. Is concerned about the fact that the supervisory authorities of 21 Member States out of the combined 31 states applying the GDPR, namely all Member States of the European Union, the European Economic Area, and the United Kingdom, have explicitly stated that they do not have sufficient human, technical and financial resources, premises and infrastructure to effectively perform their tasks and exercise their powers; ...;*

*16. Calls on the Commission to evaluate the possibility of obliging large multinational technology companies to pay for their own oversight through the introduction of an EU digital tax;*

*17. Notes with concern that the lack of enforcement by DPAs and the inaction on the part of the Commission to address the lack of resources of the DPAs leaves the burden of enforcement on individual citizens to bring data protection claims to court; ...; deplores the fact that these Member States are in breach of Article 52(4) of the GDPR; calls on Member States, therefore, to comply with their legal obligation under Article 52(4) to allocate sufficient funds to their DPAs to allow them to carry out their work in the best way possible and to ensure a European level playing field for the enforcement of the GDPR; regrets the fact that the Commission has not yet started infringement procedures against those Member States that have failed to fulfil their obligations under the GDPR, and urges the Commission to do so without delay; calls on the Commission and the [European Data Protection Board] (EDPB) to organise a follow-up of the Commission communication of 24 June 2020, assessing the functioning of the GDPR as well as its enforcement;”*

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0111\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0111_EN.html)

8. “We recommend strengthening the EU competence in: 1) data protection education, 2) data protection raising awareness and 3) protecting personal data of minors. We recommend providing clearer and stricter rules about processing data of minors in the GDPR, including consent rules, age verification and control by legal guardians. We also recommend to introduce in the GDPR a special category for sensitive minors' data (e.g. criminal record, health information, nudity) so that minors are protected from any form of abuse and discrimination”.

This recommendation is needed because minors are especially vulnerable to data protection and privacy violations and currently there is no sufficient data protection awareness among the general population, especially minors, teachers and legal guardians. They all need to learn how to use online and offline data related services and how to protect childrens' privacy rights. Moreover, legal guardians often may consent to the processing of children's data without being fully aware or informed and children may fake parental consent. Last but not least, this recommendation is needed because a proper EU-wide data protection awareness campaign targeted specifically to minors, legal guardians and teachers does not exist, despite its crucial importance.

**Greens/EFA: The EU (in particular the Commission) can (and should) be more active in terms of education and awareness raising when it comes to data protection.** The previous Commission already took some efforts before the date of application of the GDPR in May 2018, but of course does not (and probably will never) have the capabilities of reaching each and every citizen in Europe. Therefore we also call on the Member States as well as the sectorial trade associations to reach out to the population, but also to the companies, to increase data protection awareness.

Regarding the (data) protection of minors, the GDPR already makes clear that consent given by them is not valid if not authorised by their legal guardians. Unfortunately, Member States have different understandings of at which age this protection should kick in. We should indeed aim for a harmonised approach here. Sensitive data (such as health data or criminal records) is already horizontally under stronger protections than „normal“ personal data. We therefore do not see a need to introduce a specific protection for minors on this.

Regarding media literacy: age appropriate data protection-related teaching programmes may be introduced in curricula (maybe as part of the media literacy strategy, see comment on media literacy above);

educational establishments should benefit from support from trained staff to oversee networks and applications and to provide training and assistance on data protection;

the Commission and Member States may, in cooperation with the European Data Protection Board (EDPB), address the specific nature of educational data and the data relating to pupils and learners;

9. “We recommend introducing standardized privacy policies and easily understandable, concise and user-friendly consent forms that clearly indicate what data processing is strictly necessary and what is optional. We recommend that removing consent should be easy, fast and permanent. We recommend forbidding entities to limit their services more than necessary if there is no consent to optional data processing”.

We recommend this because current EU rules are not precise enough, withdrawal from consent is lengthy, temporary and complex, and because entities do not have interest in offering their services to citizens who reclaim their data protection rights.

**Greens/EFA: The Commission has a mandate to develop standardised privacy icons under the GDPR, which are even supposed to be machine-readable. We will continue pushing the Commission to finally deliver.** Removing (withdrawing) consent already has to be as easy as giving it, which is explicitly stated in the GDPR Article 7(3)). Forced consent – where the delivery of services is made dependent on giving consent to additional data processing – does not count as valid consent under the clauses on the prohibition of tying in Article 7(4) GDPR. Again, this needs proper enforcement. We support NGOs such as NOYB („none of your business“) and consumer groups in their respective court cases.

10. “We recommend that the **conditionality regulation** (2020/2092, adopted on 16 December 2020) **is amended so that it applies to all breaches of the rule of law rather than only to breaches affecting the EU budget**”. The conditionality regulation allows for the suspension of EU funds to Member States breaching the rule of law. However, under the current formulation

it only applies to breaches that affect, or risk affecting, the EU budget. Furthermore, the current phrasing of the conditionality regulation is self-protective of the EU's budget and of the EU's institutions rather than the citizens of the Member States concerned. Therefore, we recommend changing the current text of the regulation so that it covers all violations of the rule of law.

*Greens/EFA: We very much share the wish to have strong instruments to defend the fundamental rights of all EU citizens and the rule of law even independent of a link on the EU budget. For the Conditionality regulation, we Greens/EFA wanted to expand the conditionality regime to cover democracy and fundamental rights, but without losing the link with EU budget. It is expected that in the case brought by Poland and Hungary the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) will confirm the need of a direct link with budget in order to use the legal basis of Article 322(1)(a) TFEU, that is the Article on the implementation of the EU budget. This Article allows for legislation without vetoes of individual Member States and therefore was useful in a situation where several Member States' governments attack the rule of law. Financial sanctions for breaches not linked to EU budget can be imposed under Article 7 TEU. Yet this Article can be used only if all Member States except the one accused agree to sanction. With currently more than one government attacking the rule of law systematically, this is difficult to achieve. Of course, a Treaty change should be considered to facilitate these procedures. If Article 7 and treaty changes would remain blocked by few governments, a group of willing Member States could consider to commit to better protections of citizens' fundamental rights and the rule of law and additional rights for the European Court of Justice to intervene.*

11. "We recommend that the EU organises annual conferences on the rule of law following the publication of the annual Rule of Law Report (the Commission's mechanism for monitoring compliance with the rule of law by the Member States). Member States should be obligated to send socially diverse national delegations to the conference that include both citizens and civil servants".

This conference would foster dialogue among EU citizens on rule of law issues as well as dialogue between citizens and experts drafting the annual Rule of Law Reports. We believe that in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and sharing the participants can take best practices and ideas back to their home countries. Furthermore, the conference would bring awareness and understanding to the principle of the rule of law and to the findings and process behind the annual Rule of Law Report. It would also capture the attention of the media, as well as allow citizens to share their experiences and compare them against the findings in the Report.

*Greens/EFA: This suggestion can be properly integrated into the annual Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights cycle proposed by the last Parliament in [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0409\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0409_EN.html) and reiterated in [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0251\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0251_EN.html) by the current Parliament. Parliament proposed an inter-institutional agreement between Parliament, Commission and Council to exactly oblige the three institutions to better work together and with the public to better link the existing and new instruments to defend the rule of law and fundamental rights. Unfortunately the Commission has just refused to initiate interinstitutional*



*negotiations on this, and the Council will do the same. The other institutions should reconsider their no to such an agreement.*

12. “We recommend that the **EU enforces its competition rules in the media sector more strictly to ensure that media pluralism** is protected in all Member States. The EU should prevent large media monopolies and political appointment processes for media outlet boards. We also recommend that **the upcoming EU Media Freedom act entails rules on preventing politicians from owning media outlets or having a strong influence on their content**”.

We recommend this because enforcing EU competition rules fosters a pluralist media landscape where citizens have a choice. Since the Commission is currently developing a law (Media Freedom Act) for the integrity of the EU media market, this law should also reflect that media outlets should not be owned or influenced by politicians.

***Greens/EFA: (similar input than in recommendation 5) The need to ensure media freedom, pluralism and independence, as well as to promote media literacy, is a priority for our Group.** We regularly criticise situations where many media are owned by few persons close to those in government or where governments misuse the control over public media to impose an editorial line. The Commission is expected to release its legislative proposal for a Media Freedom Act in the third quarter of 2022 - the public consultation has just been launched. The proposal should aim at ensuring media pluralism, transparency of media ownership and independence in media management. According to the public consultation, the Commission is proposing a regulation as a type of act and Article 114 TFEU (internal market) as the legal base, which is expected to be built upon the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and complement the EU competition rules. Even though we still do not know how this proposal will eventually look like, we want it to be as ambitious as possible - the proposal will probably not cover issues such as the promotion of media literacy, which are important for us. This recommendation should be covered in the upcoming proposal. See more details on our ambition above in reply to recommendation 5.*

13. “We recommend the EU institutions to play a stronger role with all the tools at their disposal, including national centers for cybersecurity and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), to protect individuals, organizations and institutions against new threats coming from cybersecurity breaches and the use of Artificial intelligence for criminal purposes. We further recommend that the directives coming from Europe and its agencies are correctly implemented and disseminated in all Member States”.

We recommend this because citizens feel helpless and are not aware of what is done by the European Union to combat these threats. We recommend this because these threats are a serious national and European security concern. We recommend this because Europe should be a true innovator in this field.

***Greens/EFA: We agree this call for implementation as we supported the legislation.***

14. “We recommend that, in its relationship with external countries, the European Union should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders. We recommend that only

after achieving this, the European Union can be an ambassador of our democratic model in the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue". We recommend this because we have to look inwards before looking outwards. Because Europe can and should support Member States to strengthen their democracies. Because it is also by leading by example and supporting external countries' efforts towards democracy that we protect ourselves.

***Greens/EFA: It is of course important and a Greens/EFA priority as such to strengthen democracy & rule of law within the EU borders, also with view to its credibility as an international actor advocating democracy & rule of law. But this is not a reason to wait till this is fully achieved within the Union before supporting it internationally.***

17. "We recommend to create an online platform where citizens can find and request fact-checked information. The platform should be clearly associated with EU institutions, should be structured by topics and should be easily accessible (e.g., including a telephone hotline). Citizens should be able to ask critical questions to experts (e.g., academics, journalists) and get factual answers with sources".

Free access to factual information is of highest value for our society, so as citizens are well informed and protected against fake news and disinformation. We need a credible and independent source of information that is not influenced by political, economic and national interests. Moreover, the platform can establish a bridge (i.e., a direct relationship) between citizens and the EU.

*Greens/EFA: Greens/EFA: The EU has set up the so-called "Europe Direct" providing support and information to citizens on a centralised multilingual official website (within the website "Your Gateway to the European Union"), including a phone line available all over Europe free of charge ([https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/call-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/call-us_en)) where the public can ask any question about the European Union, receiving replies by staff made up of native speakers of all the EU's 24 official languages.*

*This staff has a duty to provide support for the public on, inter alia, the following matters:*

- a) Provide immediate answer to general questions about the EU.*
- b) Help navigate on the webpages published by the EU institutions.*
- c) Find more specialised information and, if needed, involving an expert in the European Commission.*
- d) Provide contact details for the best sources of further information and advice.*
- e) Give information that is factually correct and updated, according to the standards of public civil service.*

*As GREENS/EFA Group we support these possibilities deserving more resources and visibility. Apart from that, it wouldn't be smart to give the Union a monopoly to fact-check information and become a ministry of truth. We don't really want to have the Commission position to become a verified fact (e.g. on taxonomy or GMOs). It serves the citizens and the public better to strengthen existing public media and independent fact-checking organisations and networks. EU funds should support more EU content and more multilingual accessibility to contents without influencing the editorial line. However, we do support the creation of a self-standing and well-resourced European Centre for Interference Threats and Information Integrity which identifies, analyses and documents large-scale foreign information*

*manipulation operations, which the EU faces as a whole, and raises public awareness, for example via regular reports.*

21. “We recommend **the EU to make public investments which lead to the creation of appropriate jobs and to the improvement and harmonisation of quality of life across the EU**, between Member States, and within Member States (i.e. at the regional level). There is a need to **ensure supervision, transparency and effective communication towards citizens in the implementation of public investments and to allow citizens to track the entire process of investment**. Investments into quality of life include education, health, housing, physical infrastructures, care for the elderly and people with disabilities, taking into account the needs of every Member State. Additional investments should strive to establish a good balance between appropriate work and personal life in order to allow a healthy lifestyle”. We recommend this because harmonising the level of life across the EU will improve economic progress across the EU, which will lead towards a unified EU. This is a fundamental indicator towards further integration of the EU. Although some of these mechanisms are already in place, we feel there is still room for further improvement.

→ Panel 1

*Greens/EFA: We agree. To prevent our climate from collapsing and putting the lives of hundreds of millions at risk, a fundamental reshaping of the economies and societies we live in is imperative. If we want to escape a state of permanent crisis, we need to address the underlying structures that prevent us from addressing these problems effectively. **A crisis response like the Recovery and Resilience Fund has to be made permanent and turned into a Sustainable Investment Fund integrated in the Union framework under the European budget, with co-decision or full Parliamentary involvement.** This fund should contribute to the financing of the necessary investments in European common goods, to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest, to build an energy efficient and 100% renewable energy-based economy, without nuclear or gas, to foster the Greening of industry and industrial innovation in pursuit of the EU’s open strategic autonomy and to invest into a social transition including in health care and social security. The EU must help addressing the stark contradictions between metropolitan and rural areas and pursue an inclusive internal development strategy.*

22. “We recommend establishing a common basis, according to a set of economic indicators and indicators on quality of life, for all Member States, with the same opportunities and with everyone being at the same level to reach a common economic structure. It is important that the establishment of a common basis follows a clear and realistic timeline set by institutions at the recommendation of experts. Experts should also be consulted on how such a common economic structure should look like. It is also important that indicators defining the common basis are further defined with help of experts”.

We recommend this because if we have a just EU, we will have a more united Europe. To be just, we need to offer equal opportunities and a common basis to all of the EU. A common economic structure can only be reached once a common basis is established.

*Greens/EFA: The European Parliament had similar in mind when calling for a Convergence Code. “The European Parliament ... proposes therefore, in addition to the Stability and Growth*

*Pact, the adoption of a 'convergence code' as a legal act under the ordinary legislative procedure, setting converging targets (taxation, the labour market, investment, productivity, social cohesion, public administrative and good governance capacities); insists that, within the economic governance framework, compliance with the convergence code should be the condition for full participation in the fiscal capacity of the euro area and requires each Member State to come forward with proposals on how to meet the criteria of the convergence code;”, see [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0048\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0048_EN.html), whereas the fiscal capacity of the euro area would be a new budget for countries that adopted the euro, ideally as an enhanced cooperation within the EU budget. The Parliament also let experts produce a study on this concept:*

*[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2018/614502/IPOL\\_IDA\(2018\)614502\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2018/614502/IPOL_IDA(2018)614502_EN.pdf)*

*Today, the EU has the power to adopt legislations and enforce rules in many sectors. However, it lacks competences to ensure that Member States provide satisfactory public services, finance public investment through fair taxation, fight against social and environmental injustices and inequalities, and guarantee fundamental rights and freedom. However, If specific policies will not be mentioned in the Constitution, the Constitution should guarantee some fundamental and opposable rights and objectives for the Union related to civic, economic, social and environmental rights.*

23. “We recommend **taxing big corporations and income from big corporations to contribute to public investments**, and to use the taxation to invest into education and development of each country (R&D, scholarships - Erasmus etc.). It is also important to **focus on eliminating the existence of tax havens in the EU**”.

We recommend this because it will help to prevent tax evasion and creation of tax havens and to help with compliance of legislation.

→ Panel 1

***Greens/EFA: We agree. The post-covid European economy should be based on tax and social justice, which can be ensured by harmonisation of corporate and environmental tax policies, establishing minimum taxation levels and preventing tax havens. This will improve the financial situation of individual countries. It will help us to better fight against social and economic injustices, to invest in ecological transformation, education, and public services; to fund civil society organisations; to ensure multinational companies pay their fair share of taxes; to guarantee social protection and the upwards convergence of social standards laid out in the European Pillar of Social Rights, and to ensure this is done democratically. Also, unanimity voting gives single governments veto power over key decisions. Tax justice, major investment plans, new own-resources are decisive policy areas that cannot remain stuck because one Member State profiting from tax-avoidance schemes refuses to build European solidarity. This is why we want decisions in all policy areas (incl. tax policy, social policy, foreign and security policy) and on all budgetary dossiers (incl. own resources decision, multiannual financial framework) to be taken by the ordinary legislative procedure, meaning with qualified majority in the Council and full involvement of the European Parliament.***

27. “We recommend that the EU creates a special fund for online and offline interactions (ie. exchanges programmes, panels, meetings) of both short and longer duration between EU

citizens, in order to strengthen the European identity. The participants should be representative of the society from within EU that would include targeted groups based on various criteria, ie. demographic, socio-economic and occupation criteria. The goals of this fund need to be clearly specified in order to stimulate the European identity and the und needs to be evaluated on a regular basis”.

We recommend this because these kinds of interactions enable citizens to share ideas, and longer exchanges enable them to understand the different cultures and to share experiences, including professional practices. An EU fund is needed because it is important that everyone can participate, including those who generally do not participate.

***Greens/EFA: A strong citizenship is also based on human encounters, on exchanges and common learning experiences. Europeans share a common destiny but a lot of them never have the opportunity to spend time in another Member State. Erasmus is one of the most significant achievements of the EU in creating a European project that goes far beyond economic-political cooperation, proving that the EU is also a strong cultural and civilisation project. That is why we propose to further extend Erasmus+ into a scheme allowing all European citizens, regardless of their academic background or activity, to spend at least one year in another Member State with an adequate grant.***

*The work of Civil Society Organisations, especially including Youth Organisations, should be better financed. Democratically organised Civil Society Organisations provide a particularly helpful basis for encounters of citizens and growing a European civic spirit.*

*To support in person and online meetings, the European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLOs), existing in all EU Member States, tasked with the role of, inter alia, engaging with the local population and promoting debates on European legislation and on the legislative work of MEPs, could play a stronger role.*

*To achieve the social diversity to have participants represent the wider population, active outreach is necessary. The experience with the EU Citizens Panels set up for this Conference on the Future of Europe can serve as a model for involving citizens in nearly representative quality to learn from and to repeat for relevant questions.*

30. “We recommend that European identity and values (ie. rule of law, democracy and solidarity) should receive a special place within the migrants' integration process. Possible measures could include creating programmes or supporting already existing (local) programmes, to encourage social interactions between migrants and EU citizens or involving companies in the programmes supporting the integration of migrants. At the same time, similar programmes should be initiated in order to create awareness among EU citizens about migration-related issues”.

This recommendation is important because social interaction programmes can support migrants in their new life and enable non-migrants to have insight in the daily life of migrants. If migrants live in ghettos, there is no possibility to integrate them into the society of the country and of the EU. A common policy is needed because once migrants enter EU territory, they can go to every country within the EU. Local initiatives should be supported because local governments will use the funds more effectively in comparison to national level.

**Greens/EFA: The inclusion and integration of migrants is a priority for our Group. A successful integration policy should ensure social, economic and political integration of migrants.** While integration remains mainly a Member State competence, we believe the EU can play a fundamental role through policy guidance and funding. In this regard, one of the key principles in the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 is to provide support at all stages of the integration process. In addition, our Group believes that a comprehensive European approach to migration, through a European Migration Code [1], will fully protect the rights of migrant workers and their families, allow for their successful integration, and bring about advantages for migrants, host societies, and countries of origin alike. We also support a larger role for local authorities, including better access to EU funding for these actors. Migrants should be allowed to play an active role in society and successful integration should also involve the local community. In this regard, the recommendation could be welcomed. However, it mentions the concept of “European identity” and it is important to recall that this term has been politically used as its significance varies according to who uses it. We would also welcome an explicit reference to participation, ensuring that newcomers are informed about ways to actively participate in democratic processes at the local, national and EU level.

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[1] <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/document/the-crucial-role-of-third-country-migrant-workers-in-the-european-union-8867>

## **B) Democracy (Damian Boeselager)**

15. “We recommend changing the names of EU institutions to clarify their functions. For example, the Council of the European Union could be called the Senate of the European Union. The European Commission could be called the Executive Commission of the European Union”. We recommend this because it is currently hard for citizens to understand the roles and functions of each institution of the European Union. Their names do not reflect their functions. Citizens cannot be expected to distinguish the Council of the European Union, the European Council and the Council of Europe. It is important to avoid overlap.

**Greens/EFA: we support the idea to clarify the functions of each institution. An emphasis has to be put there instead of on the names of the institutions.**

*In Europe, both common interest of the whole EU and specific interest of member-states and regions have to be represented. This is the fundamental principle of federalism: a balance between unity and diversity, and this is the reason why we want a federal Europe. This federal Europe will have the European Commission as its government. The candidates for the Presidency of the Commission will compete as leading candidates on transnational lists. Like in any parliamentary system, the President of the Commission will be elected by the European Parliament on the basis of a political majority and a political agenda. The composition of a smaller, more political and gender-balanced Commission, including notably a Minister for Foreign Affairs, a Finance Minister, a Minister for Social affairs, will then be freely determined by the President of the Commission. This will be without any interference from the Member States and appointed by the European Parliament, following a reinforced process of hearings.*

*The Parliament should have the right to replace the President of the Commission with a new one. Equipped with a fully-fledge right of initiative, the European Parliament will decide on an equal footing with the second Chamber (today the Council) the budget and European legislation. The ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision between the EP and the Chamber representing the federated entities) applies on every legislative file. The EP should also have the right to request a launch of infringement procedures. The second Chamber representing the Member States and, where relevant, regions, forms the legislature together with the European Parliament. It shall exclusively exercise legislative functions. It shall be composed of representatives of the governments or Parliaments, including where it is relevant at regional level, of the Member States. This democratic Union will have a consequent and own-resources based budget to be decided in normal legislative procedure.*

16. “We recommend adopting an **election law for the European Parliament** that harmonizes electoral conditions (voting age, election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their financing). **European citizens should have the right to vote for different European Union level parties that each consist of candidates from multiple Member States.** During a sufficient transition period, citizens could still vote for both national and transnational parties”.

We recommend this because the European Union needs to build a sense of unity, which could be achieved by a truly unified election of the European Parliament. This common election will hold accountable the Members of the European Parliament and to focus the election campaign on shared European topics.

*Greens/EFA: the reform of the electoral law is a Greens/EFA priority. We support moving towards an harmonized system, the introduction of zipped lists, and the creation of a pan-European constituency for a part of the seats where indeed European Union level parties would run with transnational lists consisting of candidates from multiple Member States. We now have a unique opportunity to do so with the seats vacated by MEPs of the United Kingdom. This would be a first step that should be revised in the following term.*

18. “We recommend that there should be an EU-wide referendum in exceptional cases on extremely important matters to all European citizens. The referendum should be triggered by the European Parliament and should be legally binding”.

There should be more direct influence of EU citizens on important decisions on EU-wide matters. However, referendums should only be held in exceptional circumstances because the costs are too high to hold them regularly. We are aware that this recommendation might require a treaty change and the adaptation of national constitutions.

*Greens/EFA: We support the introduction, in the Treaties, of a provision to allow for a referendum at EU level on matters relevant to the Union’s actions and policies. Any referendum would have to respect European Values and could therefore not target minorities.*

19. “We recommend creating a multifunctional digital platform where citizens can vote in online elections and polls. Citizens should be able to give their reasoning behind their vote on important

issues and legislative proposals coming from European institutions. The platform should be secure, widely accessible and highly visible to each and every citizen”.

The objective of this platform is to increase participation in European politics and facilitate citizens' access to consultation and voting processes. Existing tools and processes are not visible enough, and this is why we need a new integrated tool for these different functions. More participation leads to better decisions, more trust among European citizens, and to a better functioning of the European Union overall.

***Greens/EFA: Greens/EFA support the idea to increase citizen participation through different means, such as citizens' assemblies, citizens initiatives, public consultations, citizens' dialogues, participative budgeting, referendums, etc.***

*We support to raise awareness of the existing tools and improving the platform for public consultations, while reserving also the possibility to organize a referendum for crucial matters. Polling tools are also useful to raise awareness of public opinion but need to be differentiated from direct democracy tools and consultations where citizens can contribute on a voluntary basis and where there is no mechanism to ensure the representativity of the sample.*

20. “We recommend that the **voting systems in the EU institutions should be reassessed focusing on the issue of unanimous voting**. Voting 'weight' should be calculated fairly, so that small countries' interests are protected”.

Unanimous voting poses a significant challenge to decision making in the EU. The large number of member states makes it very difficult to reach agreement. If necessary, European treaties should change to address the issue of unanimity.

***Greens/EFA: We strongly support treaty change. We want decisions in all policy areas (incl. tax policy, social policy, foreign and security policy) and on all budgetary dossiers (incl. own resources decision, multiannual financial framework) to be taken by the ordinary legislative procedure, meaning with qualified majority in the Council and full involvement of the European Parliament. Means within current treaties should also be used until then, for example via the passerelle clauses and enhanced cooperation.***

24. “We recommend that education on democracy in the European Union should strive to improve and achieve a minimum standard of knowledge across all Member States. This education should include, but not be confined to, democratic processes and general information on the EU which should be taught in all EU Member States. This education should be further enriched by a set of differing concepts teaching the democratic process, which should be engaging and age appropriate”.

This recommendation and the reasons which justify it are important because, if implemented, it will lead towards a more harmonious and democratic life in the European Union. The justifications are as follows: young people would be educated on democratic processes; this education could limit populism and disinformation in public debate; lead to less discrimination; and finally educate and involve citizens in democracy beyond just their duty to vote.

***Greens/EFA:***



*Education is a fundamental enabler of an active and informed citizenship and thus, for democratic participation. There is a strong standing political consensus among the EU institutions on the need to strengthen (EU) but a glaring gap when it comes to actual implementation. A gap between policy and practice, but also between general policy goals and actual plans to achieve them. This same conclusion is reached regarding the teaching of common European values, understood as the values inscribed in Article 2 TEU, where there is weak implementation in education policy in terms of concrete curriculum instruments and in supporting measures.*

*In order to bridge those gaps we Greens/EFA believe the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) could serve as a basis. The Framework is a set of materials that can be used by education systems to equip young people with all of the competences that are needed to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies.*

*Asks the Commission to propose a recommendation containing an indicative primary and secondary school curricula on EU and global civic education taking into account the RFCDC and following a whole-community whole-school approach.*

*On the other hand, we believe citizenship education should be mainstreamed across EU programs and that all EU funds (maybe all public funds?) should have a citizenship component in it. The digital agenda and the Green Deal open opportunities for citizenship education since they both can be fully achieved with a citizenship education dimension to them.*

25. "We recommend that existing and emerging translation technologies such as artificial intelligence are further developed, improved and made more accessible so as to reduce language barriers and strengthen common identity and democracy in the European Union". This recommendation and the reasons which justify it are important because, if implemented, it will help to build a common European identity by improving communication between citizens of all Member States.

***Greens/EFA: We agree that emerging translation technologies, which can be Artificial Intelligence (AI) based, can be made more accessible. It should, however, be ensured that the deployment of AI in the European Union does not contribute in undermining democracies but strengthens European values.***

*Additional input: Multilingualism represents one of the greatest assets of cultural diversity in Europe and, at the same time, one of the most substantial challenges for the creation of a truly integrated EU. Overcoming language barriers becomes crucial for the EU in the digital era. According to the STOA study from 2017 (at our initiative) language barriers are likely to have significant social consequences such as limiting citizens' engagement and participation in the political process or hampering mobility. English is the most widely spoken language online but 60% of the European does not speak or use English. Language technologies can contribute to addressing this. The recent breakthroughs in language technologies offer very cost-effective multilingual solutions.*

*Although smaller or minority languages are the ones to gain most from language technologies, tools and resources for them tend to be scarce—in some cases almost non-existent. In fact, there is a widening technology gap between English and the other official, co-official or non-official EU languages, some of which might already be facing digital extinction. Encouraging policies based on a few languages, besides being unfair to speakers of smaller and minority languages, would create a profound digital barrier, leaving behind less educated and older populations as well. Also living in a country without properly speaking the official language imposes a burden over the migrants who are unable to find a job or successfully access basic public services, such as government, health or emergency services.*

*We believe that no European languages should remain under-resourced to ensure no one is left behind and this way contribute to establishing a fair, inclusive and sustainable society based on equality. Putting all European languages on an equal footing will also act as a multiplier of opportunities in regards the Digital Single Market. We believe there is also a need to instigate regional, national and EU-wide collaboration among scientists from academia and industry. The Commission is moving in this regard and has recently announced the European Language Data Space that complements what is already being done in this regard in Horizon Europe, the digital strategy and the pilot project mentioned above.*

26. “We recommend that verifiable information be made easily accessible, in understandable terms, to citizens via a mobile device application in order to improve transparency, public deliberation and democracy. This app could disseminate information regarding, for example, legislation, discussions within the EU, treaty changes etc”.

This recommendation and the reasons which justify it are important because, if implemented, it will facilitate communication in terms of more informed deliberation between citizens of the respective Member States, via an app which could have many different functions. This app should be designed to be relevant to all, as well as to stimulate further curiosity and make technical information more accessible and engaging. The app should be understood as a supplementary source, which disseminates information officially verified directly by the EU to improve trust, transparency in public debate and to help to build a common European identity.

***Greens/EFA: Transparency is a priority for our group.*** *Tools to disseminate existing information of the institutions are sensible. Existing public media and independent fact-checking organizations and networks should be strengthened to ensure neutral fact-checking as well. For citizens to have full access to information on the legislative process, all EU institutions have to proactively publish information that citizens have the right to know, concerning Member States positions in the Council and its preparatory bodies by fully implementing the recommendations of the EU Ombudsman and concerning Trilogue negotiations.*

28. “We recommend that the EU invests in countering disinformation swiftly, by supporting existing organisations and initiatives, such as the Code of Practice on Disinformation and the European Digital Media Observatory, and similar initiatives in the Member States. The counter-measures could include fact-checking, creating awareness about disinformation, providing easily accessible statistics, appropriately sanctioning those who spread disinformation based on a legal framework, and tackling the sources of disinformation”.

This recommendation is important because misinformation and disinformation, coming from within and outside of the EU, create conflicts among EU citizens, polarise the society, put democracy at risk and damage the economy. Given the complexity of the topic, significant human and financial resources are needed.

*Greens/EFA: We support the idea of countering disinformation. Supporting existing organizations and initiatives should also include the strategic communications (StratCom) division in the EEAS. Additionally, we support creating a taskforce in the Commission and a self-standing and well-resourced European Centre for Interference Threats and Information Integrity which identifies, analyses and documents large-scale foreign information manipulation operations, which the EU faces as a whole, and raises public awareness, for example via regular reports.*

29. “We recommend 1) to increase the frequency of online and offline interactions between the EU and its citizens (ie. by asking citizens directly about EU matters and by creating an user-friendly platform to ensure that every citizen can interact with EU institutions and EU officials), and 2) in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policy-making process, to voice their opinions and to get feedbacks, we recommend to create a charter or a code of conduct or guidelines for EU officials. Different means of interactions should exist so that every citizen can participate”.

We recommend this because several means to reach EU institutions exist (online platforms, representatives bodies), but they are not known, not effective and not transparent. There are huge differences in accessibility between countries. More frequent and better quality interactions will lead to a sense of ownership of EU citizenship.

*Greens/EFA: We support both proposals. The creation of EU participation guidelines seems sensible to ensure citizen participation is inclusive. We want to reach all citizens, adapting the communication channels and participatory procedures to the reality and necessities of different groups. We want to avoid discriminatory language and processes and we want to ensure participatory mechanisms that are gender responsive and inclusive to all groups.*

31. “We recommend that the **EU provides more information and news to European citizens.** It should **use any means that are necessary while respecting freedom and independence of the media.** It should **provide media outlets with resources as well as a broad and reliable information** about EU activities and policies. The EU should guarantee that the information is broadcasted evenly across all Member States by National and European media and should ensure that Member States encourage public broadcasters and public news agencies to cover European affairs”.

We recommend this because based on our personal experience and based on the data from Eurobarometer, the majority of European citizens are informed through the traditional media (press, radio and television) and the information currently offered in these channels about the EU is very scarce. The media, particularly the public, have a public service function, so reporting on EU issues that affect the European population is essential and indispensable to fulfill that function. We recommend that the information issued in the different Member States about the EU be the same in order to promote integration and avoid different information on different issues in each country. Using the already existing media channels is more feasible, and less

expensive than creating a new channel and achieves the same outcome. The pre-existing channels also have the advantage that they are already known by citizens. No citizen should need to choose between different channels to be able to access different (national or European) content.

***Greens/EFA: Strengthening existing public media and independent fact-checking organisations and networks is a very good approach. However, neutral and independent media is key to ensure independent and impartial control mechanisms - something governments cannot do. We support more financial and practical support to public media for more European content as long as the editorial independence of media is guaranteed.***

32. "We recommend the EU to create and advertise multilingual online forums and offline meetings where citizens can launch discussions with EU representatives, no matter the topic and no matter the geographical scope of the issue raised. Those online forums and offline meetings should have a defined short-term time limit in which responses to the questions are received. All the information about these spaces should be centralized in an integrated official website with different features; such as a frequently asked questions space, the possibility to share ideas, proposals or concerns with other citizens and with a mechanism to identify the most supported ones. In any case, access to it should be easy and a non-bureaucratic language should be used".

We recommend this because it will create a direct channel between European citizens and European representatives to talk and engage together, giving the citizens an easy access to information about the EU and making them more aware of the existing information. It will create a more transparent and open EU and will help citizens to share their problems and thoughts, receive answers and policy solutions and allow them to engage and share perspectives and experiences with other citizens.

***Greens/EFA: We fully support this as we hold that all the above-mentioned resources must be strengthened, deserving more visibility in order for the public to know them better and exploit fully all related opportunities offered.***

*On the existing aforementioned centralised multilingual website, and in cooperation with the European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLOs), existing in all EU Member States, tasked with the role of, inter alia, engaging with the local population and promoting debates on European legislation and on the legislative work of MEPs, the proposed online forums and offline meetings can be better created - and better advertised - in order for citizens to improve their direct dialogue with EU representatives as well as share ideas, proposals or concerns with them and with other citizens.*

33. "We recommend the EU institutions and representatives to use a more accessible language and avoid using bureaucratic terms in their communications while, at the same time, maintaining the quality and expertise of the given information. The EU should also adapt the information it provides to citizens with different communication channels and audience profiles (e.g. newspapers, television, social media). The EU should make a special effort to adapt communication to digital media in order to increase its outreach capacity to young people".

We recommend this because having understandable information will allow the EU to reach more European citizens and not only the engaged ones. By having specific new and modern tools to target specific audiences, citizens will better understand EU activities and policies, particularly the young people who are not feeling close or attached to the EU.

***Greens/EFA: We support Recommendation 33 as improvements in the EU Institutions' way of communicating can be made more accessible, keeping untouched high quality levels of the given information.***

*This would be undoubtedly beneficial to inform better citizens and engage more the younger generations, but we should be careful that this does not mean that the Union should provide general fact-checked information, thereby becoming a ministry of truth (see comments on 17, 26, 31). In addition, as for Recommendation 32, we believe that all existing online and offline resources at EU level offering support and information to the public in the easiest possible way must be better known and made much more visible.*

34. "We recommend that independent citizen observers should be present during all EU decision making processes. There should be a forum or permanent body of citizens representatives in order to carry out the function of broadcasting relevant and important information to all EU citizens as defined EU citizens. Those citizens would engage with all other European citizens in the spirit of top-down / bottom-up connection, which would further develop the dialogue between citizens and the institutions of the EU".

Because it is obvious that citizens deserve to be kept informed about any and all issues, and to make sure that politicians cannot not hide certain issues from citizens that they would rather they did not know. This would bridge the divide between citizens and elected representatives by establishing new avenues of trust.

***Greens/EFA: This recommendation addresses both how to widen the access of all EU citizens to information regarding the EU decision making process and how this could better reach citizens. We strongly agree and work since long to increase the transparency of EU decision-making processes. To realize this recommendation we need to have a mandatory lobby register for all persons involved in the legislative process and more ambitious transparency and access to documents rules, including documents related to international negotiations.***

*Additional input: The Council's activities should be as transparent as those of the European Parliament. The positions defended by the representatives of the Member States, already at the level of the Working Groups of the Council, should be made public so that citizens, media and civil society can know what position their government took on their behalf at the EU level and so that scrutiny of EU decision making by national parliaments is enhanced. This should apply to all decisions, from legislative files to implementing and delegated acts. The use of secrecy exceptions for Council documents should be applied in a coherent system with external oversight. Other bodies with even less levels of transparency such as the Eurogroup should as a first step be submitted to the Council's rules of procedure, making available to the public the voting procedures, publication of minutes, results, and explanation of votes and its deliberations. In the overall context, we are also fighting for an independent EU Ethics Body to inter alia enforce these transparency rules.*

*Regarding how this information could better reach citizens, the recommendation asks for a permanent citizens body to broadcast to other citizens. We believe that independent journalism is best suited to hold politicians to account, work possible for months and years on difficult investigative stories and then reach many citizens by publications. On Greens/EFA initiatives, the EU already funded investigative journalism holding EU institutions and Member States acting on European policies to account. This should be made permanent and investment strengthened.*

35. "We recommend that the **EU reopens the discussion about the constitution of Europe with a view to creating a constitution informed by the citizens of the EU**. Citizens should be able to vote in the creation of such a constitution. This constitution in order to avoid conflict with the member states should **prioritize the inclusion of human rights and democracy values**. The creation of such a constitution should consider previous efforts that never materialized to a constitution".

Because this constitution would engage young people with politics at the EU level and counteract increasing forces of nationalism. Because it would provide a common definition of what is meant by democracy in Europe, and make sure that this is implemented in an equal way amongst all member states. Because the EU has shared values regarding democracy and human rights. Because this would enable citizens to be included in the decision making process, and allow citizens to identify more as being from the EU - having participated in the process.

***Greens/EFA: In order to become a stronger democracy, the EU needs a concise and comprehensible Constitution that protects citizens' fundamental rights; defines European institutions and their respective powers; describes the legal procedures, and lays down the distribution of competences between the different levels. Heads of States and Governments cannot prepare this Constitution in the framework of an intergovernmental conference alone. It is time to give EU citizens the opportunity to elaborate together.***

*Additional input: Through a democratic constituent process, allowing a wide, open and collaborative phase, the result will be the text that will organize their society. A gender-balanced constituent Assembly should be elected. The text it will prepare shall be validated through a European-wide referendum according to a double majority system: a qualified majority of states and a majority of European citizens.*

36. "We recommend that politicians are more responsible in representing the citizens that they are elected to represent. Young people in particular are specially alienated from politics and are not taken seriously whenever they are included. But alienation is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged more than what they currently are".

Because the definition of what democracy is needs to be refreshed. We need to remind ourselves what democracy really is. Democracy is about representing the people (EU citizens). Because young people are fed up and disillusioned with politicians who they view as elites who do not share their views. That is why people should be included more than they currently are in novel and engaging ways. The education system, then social media, and all other forms of media could carry out this role throughout the lifecycle and in all languages.

***Greens/EFA: We support the idea to put a special focus on the participation of young people. In particular, we defend measures such as the organisation of specific citizen panels of young people or decreasing the voting age to 16. As Greens/EFA, we also support the use of technologies to foster e-participation and to explore new channels and social networks to reach out young people.***

37. “We recommend that the EU should be closer to citizens in a more assertive way, which means involving the Member States in the promotion of citizens' participation in the EU. The EU should promote the use of the mechanisms of citizens' participation, by developing marketing and publicity campaigns. The national and local governments should be obliged to be involved in this process. The EU should guarantee the effectiveness of participative democracy platforms”.

We recommend this because the platform that already exists needs to be made stronger and efficient: there needs to be more feedback to the EU from the citizens and vice versa. There is not enough debate within the EU, both between the citizens and governments. Because the citizens do not engage in submitting petitions either because they do not know that the process exists or they do not believe in the success of such a petition.

***Greens/EFA: We support the establishment of permanent participatory mechanisms at European, national, regional and local level to allow for citizens' participation in EU decision-making and for adequate horizontal and vertical coordination among institutions in different levels. For that reason, we support the idea expressed by citizens under recommendation 37 and propose to establish a network of multi-level governments that should serve as a transmission chain between European institutions and citizens and would ensure vertical coordination. It is important that participation not only collects inputs but also provides feedback to not create false expectations and even more alienation.***

38. “We recommend that the EU creates and implements programmes for schools about what is being done in the EU in terms of the existing mechanisms of participation. These programmes should be included in the school curricula about European citizenship and ethics with content adequate to the age. There should also be programmes for adults. There should be lifelong learning programmes available to citizens to further their knowledge about the possibilities of EU citizen participation”.

We recommend this, because it is important for the future of our children. The citizens want to know how to express their voice. It is important that they know the exact mechanisms and how they can be used, so that their voice is heard by the EU. It is important for the equal inclusion of all European citizens. As European citizens, we need to know how to use our rights. By virtue of being European citizens, we are entitled to this knowledge.

***Greens/EFA: we support introducing in the school curricula education on the EU and the rights linked to European citizenship among other EU related aspects.***

*Additional input: Education is a fundamental enabler of an active and informed citizenship and thus, for democratic participation. There is a strong standing political consensus among the EU institutions on the need to strengthen (EU) but a glaring gap when it comes to actual implementation. A gap between policy and practice, but also between general policy goals and*

*actual plans to achieve them. This same conclusion is reached regarding the teaching of common European values, understood as the values inscribed in Article 2 TEU, where there is weak implementation in education policy in terms of concrete curriculum instruments and in supporting measures.*

*In order to bridge those gaps we Greens/EFA believe the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) could serve as a basis. The Framework is a set of materials that can be used by education systems to equip young people with all of the competences that are needed to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies.*

*Asks the Commission to propose a recommendation containing an indicative primary and secondary school curricula on EU and global civic education taking into account the RFCDC and following a whole-community whole-school approach.*

*On the other hand , we believe citizenship education should be mainstreamed across EU programs and that all EU funds (maybe all public funds?) should have a citizenship component in it. The digital agenda and the Green Deal open opportunities for citizenship education since they both can be fully achieved with a citizenship education dimension to them.*

39. “We recommend that the European Union holds Citizen’s Assemblies. We strongly recommend that they are developed through a legally binding and compulsory law or regulation. The citizens' assemblies should be held every 12-18 months. Participation of the citizens should not be mandatory but incentivised, while organised on the basis of limited mandates. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativity criteria, also not representing any organisation of any kind, nor being called to participate because of their professional role when being assembly members. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. Decision-making will be in the hands of citizens. The EU must ensure the commitment of politicians to citizens' decisions taken in Citizens' Assemblies. In case citizens' proposals are ignored or explicitly rejected, EU institutions must be accountable for it, justifying the reasons why this decision was made”.

We recommend the implementation of Citizens’ Assemblies because we want that citizens feel closer to EU institutions and that they contribute directly to decision-making hand to hand with politicians, increasing the feeling of belonging and direct efficacy. Furthermore, we want political parties and their electoral programs to be accountable to citizens.

***Greens/EFA: We support the creation of Citizens’ Assemblies as a permanent mechanism of citizen participation reserved for relevant topics.*** *As Greens/EFA, we believe that the citizens’ panels organised in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe should serve as a pilot for the future institutionalisation of this mechanism as a permanent one. It is important that participation not only collects inputs but also provides feedback to not create false expectations and even more alienation. This could mean that the Parliament Plenary would vote how to deal with the recommendations of a Citizens Assembly or their recommendations could be put to a referendum.*