



Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe



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“Trust is as grand as it is fragile. You cannot buy it, you cannot force it. You have to earn it again and again.”

Helmut Kohl (1930–2017)

“Europe’s destiny and the future of the free world are entirely in our hands.”

Simone Veil (1927–2017)



I. Listening to citizens

On 1 March 2017, ahead of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the European Commission presented a White Paper on the Future of Europe, setting out the main challenges and opportunities for the coming decade. The Commission presented five scenarios for how the European Union could evolve by 2025 depending on the choices it makes for its future.



(<https://goo.gl/hMVtd6>)

The White Paper is a significant step in the process of the EU-27 deciding on the future of their Union. To encourage citizens' participation, the Commission hosted a series of 'Future of Europe debates' across Europe's cities and regions. This open debate involves national Governments and Parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society at large.

The Commission believes that every European's voice should be heard. The Citizens' Dialogues, which are a regular feature of the daily work of the Juncker Commission, have been central to the 'Future of Europe debates'. All Members of the Commission have travelled to regions and cities across Europe to engage in dialogue with citizens and listen to their views and expectations concerning the future of the Union. The Commission's Europe Direct network has also reached out to citizens and collected their ideas and concerns for our continent in the years to come.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS



1 March 2017

European Commission
White Paper on the
Future of Europe



13 September 2017

President Juncker's
State of the Union
address 2017
outlining his vision
for the future



June 2019

European
Parliament
elections



FUTURE EUROPE

PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Jean-Claude Juncker



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Citizens' Dialogue in Valletta, Malta
30 March 2017



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Citizens' Dialogue in Ljubljana, Slovenia
2 March 2017



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Citizens' Dialogue in Bucharest, Romania
11 May 2017





II. In the minds of Europeans

When discussing Europe's future in Citizens' Dialogues, it emerged that citizens have three main issues in mind when they think about which direction the Union is heading in over the next 8-10 years. In people's eyes the future of Europe depends on the answers given by the Union as regards the social aspects of the EU, the opportunities it provides for young people and its stance against 'anti-European' attitudes.



Social Europe: Concerns about social issues (such as the future of pensions or the harmonisation of social standards throughout the EU) came up in many of the Citizens' Dialogues when discussing the future of Europe.

Young Europe: Many students and young people took part in the Citizens' Dialogues. When discussing the future of Europe, they demanded more influence in policymaking and participation in shaping the future EU. Some expressed their wish to be consulted also on the White Paper and its scenarios. They also asked for youth policies and the mainstreaming of the youth dimension within other policies. Some young people also expressed their concerns that the younger generation is becoming more and more Eurosceptic. Many young students wanted to see more mobility and exchange programmes for young people in the future EU.

'Anti-Europe': When discussing the future of Europe, participants all around the Union expressed concern about the consequences of Brexit for the remaining 27 Member States and specifically for their own Member State. They were worried about the spread of populism and Euroscepticism, and how the future EU could be shaped after a big Member State leaves the bloc, or whether there is a real risk of the EU breaking apart into two or more Unions. Many other participants had questions about the practical consequences of Brexit, such as its impact on concrete projects like Energy Union, the digital single market or Erasmus +, on trade with the United Kingdom and on British people living or studying in the EU and EU citizens living or studying in the United Kingdom.



Concerning the different scenarios set out in the White Paper, citizens were often worried that their country would lag behind and become a kind of 'second-class' Member State. In general, citizens were concerned about the current uncertainties Europe is facing and the prospect of less stability in all respects — political, economic, social and cultural. This sense of instability seems to have brought citizens closer to Europe and its core values. A strong Union that moves forward together is seen as the best scenario for the future.

*'Where will the EU be in 50 years
and what can young people do to shape it?'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Mainz, Germany

'If you want to build Europe, everyone should do Erasmus.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Barcelona, Spain

'I would like the EU to become a fully fledged democracy.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in The Hague, the Netherlands

*'If free movement of people is threatened,
European culture will not exist.'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Ioannina, Greece

'Has the danger of the split of the EU passed?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Osijek, Croatia

'We cannot let Brexit define the future of the EU.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Barcelona, Spain

'Is the best answer to Brexit an ever-closer Union?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Dublin, Ireland





Citizens' Dialogue in Maastricht, the Netherlands
8 December 2016

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FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Frans Timmermans

Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations,
the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights



Citizens' Dialogue in Stockholm, Sweden
11 May 2017

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Citizens' Dialogue in Madrid, Spain
31 March 2017

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**129 dialogues
in more than
80 towns**

attended by over 21,000
citizens and followed by
144,000 viewers on
Facebook Live



1,535 events

organised or supported by
the Representations of
the European Commission
and the Europe Direct
Information Centres (EDICs)
in Member States, reaching
251,000 participants



**120 outreach
and engagement
sessions**

with the European Political
Strategy Centre (EPSC)
gathering 4,000 participants



709 groups

informed about the White
Paper process through
participating to events in the
Visitors' Centre of the
European Commission in
Brussels, amounting to
21,000 visitors



106,000 tweets

related to the Future of
Europe, from 43,600
different accounts



49 visits

of the Commissioners to
national Parliaments



519

TV/radio appearances and
606 press articles/interview
on the topic of the future of
Europe

TOTAL POTENTIAL OUTREACH: 34 MILLION EUROPEANS¹

¹ This estimate is calculated on the basis of the attendance of the events mentioned, readership/audience, as well as social media outreach.

III. Reflection Papers



(<https://goo.gl/5wqB4g>)

1. The social dimension of Europe

Social issues were widely discussed throughout the 'Future of Europe debates'. For citizens, social issues are key if European integration is to succeed. Citizens showed their will to have the social dimension maintained and strengthened by means of common legislation, for example. Some dialogues saw calls for a more social Europe, including an increase of the EU budget to deal with social issues, and the reduction of inequalities both between and within Member States. Another issue that came up on several occasions was the ageing population and concerns about the sustainability of pensions in Europe.

'More solidarity is needed between EU countries.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Ioannina, Greece

'The future of Europe needs strong social rights and rights for children.'

> Online participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Helsinki, Finland

'We need to achieve social and not only economic convergence in the euro area.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Turin, Italy



HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY/
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION

Federica Mogherini



Citizens' Dialogue in Rome, Italy
24 March 2017

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Citizens' Dialogue in Prague, Czech Republic
11 January 2016



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Citizens' Dialogue in Milan, Italy
9 May 2015



(<https://goo.gl/KmwFH4>)

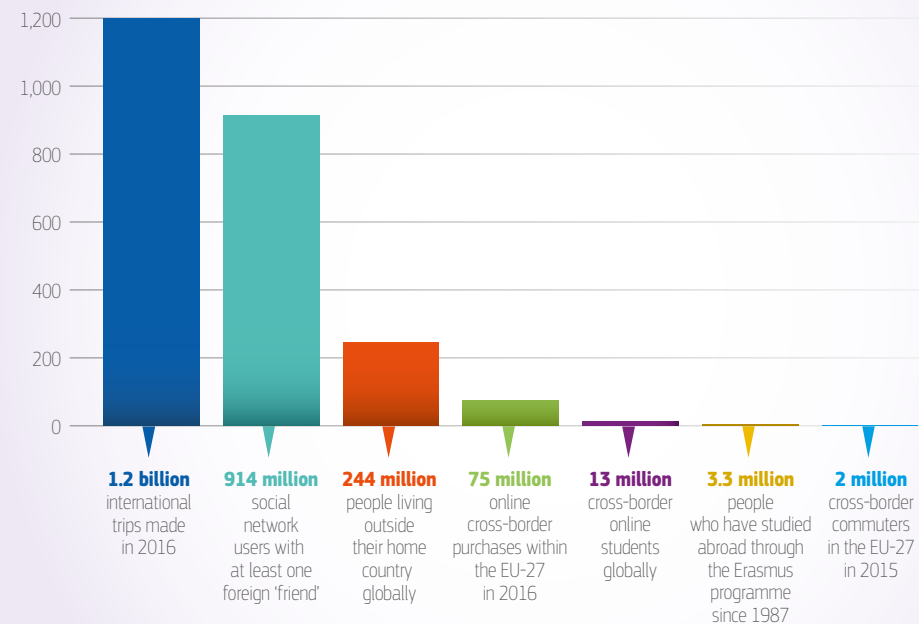
2. Harnessing globalisation

Globalisation and its effects are often a source of concern for European citizens, especially its effects in increasing social inequalities ⁽¹⁾. They expect the EU to play a role in tackling these challenges and protecting citizens ⁽²⁾. In their discussions with citizens, Members of the Commission heard concerns about unemployment due to the economic crisis and the pressure of a globalised world. The economic crisis, often blamed on globalisation, is seen as one of the causes of Euroscepticism in many EU countries. In this context, solidarity among Member States was often mentioned during the dialogues, most often in relation to the refugee crisis.

⁽¹⁾ Special Eurobarometer 461 'Designing Europe's future', April 2017.

⁽²⁾ Idem.

Global is today's reality



Data for 2016 or latest available (2015)

Source: McKinsey Global Institute, United Nations, World Tourism Organisation, OECD, European Commission

'How is the EU planning to harness the negative effects of globalisation?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Rome, Italy

'What can we do about the loss of jobs caused by increasing automation?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Turin, Italy

*'I'd love to see a Europe that shows more solidarity with refugees.
Will the European Solidarity Corps be helpful for building
a European identity?'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Bruges, Belgium

*'How do you foresee EU enlargement, taking into account Russian foreign
policy and the situation among other countries and the rise of nationalism,
populism and anti-globalisation?'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Stockholm, Sweden

*'What are the prospects for future EU enlargement? Is it still on the
agenda?'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Mainz, Germany





(<https://goo.gl/w68iaM>)

3. Deepening Economic and Monetary Union

For citizens, Economic and Monetary Union will not be complete if it does not go hand in hand with integration in other areas such as security and social rights. Given its complexity, the topic of the future of Economic and Monetary Union was mostly discussed in institutional terms such as whether there should be more democratic control over the euro area and EU economic policies or about the creation of a euro-area finance minister and own financial resources for the EU.

'Will the strict application of the euro stability criteria not automatically lead to a multi-speed Europe as set out in scenario 3 of the White Paper?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Mainz, Germany

'The euro area and EU economic policies will require a bigger role for the European Parliament.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Brussels, Belgium

'Should the euro area be enlarged in the future?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Brussels, Belgium



VICE-PRESIDENT
Andrus Ansip
Digital Single Market

Citizens' Dialogue in Bucharest, Romania
28 April 2017

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Citizens' Dialogue in Berlin, Germany
10 December 2015

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Citizens' Dialogue in Tallinn, Estonia
29 June 2017

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(<https://goo.gl/FX9LA1>)

4. The future of European defence

The possibility of having a genuine common European defence policy and a European army was mostly welcomed by citizens, in particular by young people. Most opinions were in favour of creating a common army and defence policy. Many were in favour of it for economic reasons, believing that common defence and procurement would bring savings in national defence budgets. On the other hand, some participants expressed their opposition to the creation of an EU army, stating that the EU is a peace project and should not be involved in military activities. The need for stepping up security to face challenges like terrorism and cyberattacks and to manage the external borders were other topics underlined by participants.

'Will there be any progress soon on European defence?'

>Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Paris, France

'I think it's a very good idea to set up a common EU defence because unfortunately we live in a world with a lot of conflicts!'

>Comment in a Facebook live Citizens' Dialogue

'Why does each Member State procure its own weapons separately instead of doing it in a coordinated and common way, with the subsequent savings?'

>Comment in a Facebook Live Citizens' Dialogue



VICE-PRESIDENT
Maroš Šefčovič
Energy Union

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Citizens' Dialogue in Lisbon, Portugal
18 July 2017



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Citizens' Dialogue in Esbjerg, Denmark
1 June 2017



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Citizens' Dialogue in Bratislava, Slovakia
1 December 2016





(<https://goo.gl/WL3Paq>)

5. The future of EU finances

Citizens were either in favour of increasing the EU budget, or strengthening the EU's own resources. In some cases there was concern about the possible reduction of EU funds in sectors like agriculture and there was a call for the simplification of rules governing EU funds.

'For the EU to become stronger, budget contributions need to be increased, yet many Member States are not willing to pay more.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Tallinn, Estonia

'Brussels needs to simplify rules governing EU funds.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Turin, Italy

'Why can we not tax those big companies that have been avoiding taxes in Europe and feed the money into the EU's own resources?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Brussels, Belgium



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Citizens' Dialogue in Copenhagen, Denmark
3 February 2017

VICE-PRESIDENT

Valdis Dombrovskis

Euro and Social Dialogue, Financial Stability,
Financial Services and Capital Markets Union




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Citizens' Dialogue in Bratislava, Slovakia
5 November 2015



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Citizens' Dialogue in Riga, Latvia
8 January 2015



IV. Five scenarios for the future



Scenario 1: Carrying on

The EU-27 focuses on delivering its positive reform agenda in the spirit of the Commission's [New Start for Europe](#) from 2014 and of the [Bratislava Declaration](#) agreed by all 27 Member States in 2016.



Scenario 2: Nothing but the single market

The EU-27 is gradually re-centred on the single market as the 27 Member States are not able to find common ground on an increasing number of policy areas.



Scenario 3: Those who want more do more

The EU-27 proceeds as today but allows willing Member States to do more together in specific areas such as defence, internal security or social matters.



Scenario 4: Doing less more efficiently

The EU-27 focuses on delivering more and faster in selected policy areas, while doing less where it is perceived not to have an added value.



Scenario 5: Doing much more together

Member States decide to share more power, resources and decision-making across the board.

When discussing the five scenarios put forward in the White Paper, citizens are mostly interested in knowing what the different options would mean in practical terms, for themselves and for their country, especially those scenarios that propose a more 'flexible' integration or a 'multi-speed Europe'.

Some participants questioned whether this is the right time to be ambitious about the future instead of tackling current problems first.

When subject to a vote, in most cases an overwhelming majority gave their preference for scenario 5 ('Doing much more together'). However, scenario 3 ('Those who want more do more') and its benefits and disadvantages was by far the most discussed.

*'What are the benefits and disadvantages of a multi-speed Europe?
Could various levels of integration one day lead to the option
of creating a federation?'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Valletta, Malta

'How many speeds of the European Union are you planning?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Madrid, Spain

'Is federalism still an option for the future of the EU?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Brussels, Belgium

*'Is further integration still possible or will the crises we face result
in further fragmentation?'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Ljubljana, Slovenia

*'It is logical that some countries advance more than others.
That is the most rational option for the EU.'*

Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Berlin, Germany

'Won't a multi-speed Europe endanger the entire EU project?'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Bratislava, Slovakia

*'Why talk about "multi-speed" Europe when we could refer, more positively,
to "driving countries" or "pioneers"?''*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Paris, France

*'The scenario in which "those who want more do more" is very democratic.
Nobody should be forced to cooperate in areas such as migration.'*

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Tallinn, Estonia



Citizens' Dialogue in Sofia, Bulgaria
21 July 2017

VICE-PRESIDENT

Jyrki Katainen

Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness



Citizens' Dialogue in Bucharest, Romania
1 September 2016



Citizens' Dialogue in Helsinki, Finland
23 March 2017





V. Real-life stories

Citizens' ideas

- A young participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in Brussels said that Europe should find a big research project that would unite Europeans in excitement, hope and pride, as was the case in the United States with the trip to the moon during the Kennedy presidency. This could be something like the cure for cancer or for Alzheimer's — a big common project financed by the EU and with the participation and coordination of researchers throughout the continent.
- A citizen in a dialogue in Vienna suggested that all EU Member States' flags should include the EU stars to visualise unity.
- Schoolchildren in the Netherlands said that all children should have an email pen pal from a different EU country.

'It's not that the EU is not communicating, it's that it's not communicating something that people can understand. Its messages are good examples, but they do not speak to me. We need to find a story that people can relate to. Maybe something cultural, values that make us European in all Member States — that would be a story worth telling.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in The Hague, the Netherlands

'I am Libyan-British and I hold both passports. As someone who is a very passionate member of this community here in The Hague, of the international community and of the European community, I am wondering what does Brussels think about those of us who are still UK citizens and who are still very non-sympathetic with the recent Brexit movement? As someone who studies European law I am passionate about the very start-from-scratch way this happened, I am passionate about the internal market, the cohesive nature, the culture, the inclusivity and the incredible way the European Union brings together every language and every identity and still manages to find a way to communicate with every single citizen.'

> Participant in a Citizens' Dialogue in The Hague, the Netherlands



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Citizens' Dialogue in Athens, Greece
5 April 2017



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Citizens' Dialogue in Valletta, Malta
29 March 2017



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Citizens' Dialogue in Toruń, Poland
29 May 2017



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Carlos Moedas

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and Innovation



Julian King

Security Union



Mariya Gabriel

Digital Economy and
Society





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EUROPE
IT'S ABOUT
YOU
Let's talk

https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/citizens-dialogues_en



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