European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security

Citizens' recommendations and the EU context: Panel 2 of the Conference on the Future of Europe
In the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe, four European citizens' panels have discussed the development of European integration in broad subject areas. For each of the 39 recommendations put forward by European Citizens' Panel 2: European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security, the present paper sets out a selection of the most recent and relevant European Parliament resolutions on the matter and looks at existing EU legislation and other EU funding programmes, supporting and coordinating actions. However, this paper is not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of all European Parliament resolutions and EU-level action in the area, but rather aims at feeding debate and discussion during the Conference plenary.

This paper has been produced at the request of Guy Verhofstadt, chair, on behalf of the European Parliament’s delegation to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

AUTHORS

Production of this paper was coordinated by the Members’ Research Service within the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS).

The following policy analysts in DG EPRS contributed to the paper: Lasse Boehm, Polona Car, David de Groot, Micaela Del Monte, Maria Diaz Crego, Costica Dumbrava, Gregor Erbach, Clement Evroux, Vivienne Halleux, Martin Höfimayr, Ivana Katsarova, Monika Kiss, Silvia Kotanidis, Karoline Kovald, Tambiama Madiega, Maria Margarita Mentzelopoulou, Hendrik Mildebrath, Maria Niestadt, Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, Rachele Rossi, Beata Rojek, Rosamund Shreeves, Stefano Spinaci, Sofija Voronova, and Ionel Zamfir.

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To contact the authors, please email: eprs@ep.europa.eu.

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eprs@ep.europa.eu
http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu/ (intranet)
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank (Internet)
http://epthinktank.eu (blog)
Executive summary

Coming from all Member States, 800 randomly selected citizens have met in four European Citizens' Panels to debate and brainstorm about the future of the European project within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe, from September 2021 to February 2022. In addition, citizens and organisations have been able to submit their ideas and contributions to the broader discussion via a multilingual digital platform, which provides information about events, seminars and conferences linked to the Conference taking place around Europe. By 31 January 2022, some 13 584 ideas and 19 180 comments had been submitted to the digital platform, and 5 005 events were organised in the framework of the Conference. The result of this giant exercise in participatory democracy is a set of many different recommendations from citizens. These will be further debated during the Conference plenary, which will elaborate the final proposals from the Conference.

The 800 citizens were divided among four panels, each one covering a set of policy areas: Panel 1 dealt with stronger economy, social justice, jobs / education, youth, culture, sport / digital transformation; Panel 2 with European democracy / values, rights, rule of law and security; Panel 3 with climate change, environment and health; and Panel 4 with EU in the world / migration. For European Citizens' Panel 2: European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security, the citizens' recommendations range from upholding the rule of law to a better quality life, from education to citizens' participation, from institutional reforms to fundamental rights, and from languages to European identity. The recommendations are clustered into five work streams: i) ensuring rights and non-discrimination; ii) protecting democracy and the rule of law; iii) reforming the EU; iv) building European identity; and v) strengthening citizen participation. Some of these recommendations look at the broad picture, while others touch upon specifics, of EU electoral reform, for example. Citizens expressed particular interest in themes such as information on the work of the EU, deeper citizen involvement in the EU decision-making process, and EU institutions that are closer to citizens. Recommendations on measures against disinformation, media plurality and independence, education on democracy and on the functioning of the EU, and on European identity, were also put forward by the citizens taking part.

Some recommendations could be implemented using the EU's existing legislative, executive and budgetary capacities, while others would require enhancing the instruments provided for in the Treaties. Some recommendations could be implemented by unlocking the 'untapped potential' of the existing Treaties, i.e. the existence of still unused or under-used possibilities for the EU institutions to deliver, while other recommendations would require revision of the current EU Treaties – with the accompanying hurdles of the ratification process.

History teaches us that sometimes the European project is a 'leap into the unknown', to quote a reply given by Robert Schuman in spring 1950. Despite the great variety in scope of these recommendations, they all underline a renewed interest among citizens in the European project.

For each of the 39 recommendations put forward by European Citizens' Panel 2, this paper presents a selection of the most recent and relevant European Parliament resolutions on the matter and looks at existing EU legislation and other funding programmes, supporting and coordinating actions.
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1. Introduction

'Improving citizens' participation and transparency at EU level is key to bringing the Union closer to citizens and increasing citizens' trust and confidence in EU institutions, as well as achieving a real multi-level democracy'.

European Parliament Resolution of 7 July 2021 on Citizens' dialogues and Citizens' participation in EU decision-making (2020/2201(INI)).

In the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe, citizens’ panels were designed and organised to give citizens a voice in the most inclusive way. For the EU, this has been the first time ever that citizens are involved in a consultative process at such a structural level.

European Citizens' Panels, an idea originally launched by the European Parliament in its resolution of January 2020, consist of four transnational forums of European citizens. While randomly selected, these citizens are nevertheless representative of the EU population according to set criteria, such as age, geographical origin, gender, socioeconomic background and/or level of education. One third of each citizens' panel is also composed of people younger than 25. Each of the four European Citizens’ Panels cover a set of policy areas.

From September 2021 to February 2022, the four European citizens' panels met and debated about the future of the European project in three deliberative sessions that took place in Strasbourg (the first), in hybrid mode (the second) and in prestigious educational establishments around Europe (the third). Their task was to identify issues, discuss and propose recommendations for the institutions to follow up, while also taking account of the ideas provided by the broader public, submitted to the Conference's multilingual digital platform.

The Conference on the Future of Europe establishes a new innovative link between the participatory and the representative dimensions. Citizens’ panels convey their recommendations to the Conference plenary and, at the same time, 20 selected 'ambassadors' from each European Citizens' Panel represent the four panels in the Conference plenary. These representatives of the European Citizens’ Panels also sit in the Conference's working groups, to ensure a fair and inclusive discussion on the EU matters that interest citizens. In this way, the institutional component becomes permeable to the citizens' component of the Conference, and vice-versa.

At the Conference plenary of 21-22 January 2022, the 'ambassadors' of European Citizens' Panels 2 and 3 presented the recommendations of their respective panels and debated the results with the members of the plenary. The other two panels (1 and 4) will present their recommendations to the plenary on 11-12 March 2022. The Conference plenary, the institutional component of the Conference, has a very diverse composition. In addition to the 20 ‘ambassadors’ per European Citizens’ Panel, it comprises Members of the European Parliament, three European Commissioners, representatives of national parliaments, national governments, civil society, social partners, local and regional elected representatives, national citizens' panels, and consultative bodies (European Committee of the Regions and European Economic and Social Committee).

After this phase of mutual recognition, dialogue and exchange between citizens' panels and Conference plenary, the Conference's plenary and working groups are due to carry on their work with a view to elaborating the proposals to be submitted to the Executive Board. This is an important phase, because the plenary proposals should be adopted by consensus – to be reached, under the
rules of the Conference mandate – at least between representatives of the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission, as well as representatives from national parliaments, on an equal footing. If representatives of citizens from national events and/or European or national citizens’ panels present a clear, diverging position, this should be expressed in the report by the Executive Board.

The European Parliament has consistently supported citizens' participation and engagement in the European project. This support is reflected since 2017, in its resolution (2014/2248(INI)) looking at the possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union; up to a very recent resolution (2020/2201(INI)), which looked at citizens' dialogues and citizens' participation in EU decision-making. Parliament stressed the importance for the EU institutions to engage with citizens, and debate with them in an open, transparent, transnational and inclusive way. As the only directly elected EU institution, Parliament is a natural venue for political discussion and interaction. Parliament therefore encourages civic engagement through online fora, town halls, national, local and regional initiatives, and any other event that helps to build bridges. Parliament has strongly supported the citizens' panels, an exercise in deliberative democracy, since their inception.

Against this background, and with the aim to assist decision-makers in the next steps of the process, this paper presents some of the most recent and significant Parliament resolutions for each recommendation delivered by citizens’ panels. This paper also indicates the existing EU legislation, programmes and/or initiatives relevant for each recommendation, to give a picture of the current state of affairs.

This paper therefore looks at the **39 recommendations** endorsed by European Citizens' Panel 2: European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security during the final panel meeting, which took place at the European University Institute in Florence (Italy) on 10-12 December 2021. The recommendations are presented following the order put forward by the panel. The title of each section corresponds to the title of each sub-stream.

This paper is not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of all European Parliament resolutions and existing action at EU level on the matter. It shows how Parliament has actively proposed concrete measures in the areas dealt with in the 39 recommendations, or has encouraged other institutions (e.g. the European Commission) to take legislative initiatives in many of the areas in question. In some fields, the EU already possesses the means to meet citizens' expectations, and in this respect, this paper stimulates a further reflection on how to improve the existing tools. For those interested in obtaining more information, a couple of publications on the European Parliament Think Tank site are also presented for each recommendation.

Three further papers will look at the recommendations put forward by Panel 1: A stronger economy, social justice and jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation; Panel 3: Climate change, environment / Health; and Panel 4: EU in the world / Migration.
2. The Conference on the Future of Europe – Infographic

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a bottom-up exercise allowing European citizens to express their opinion on the Union’s future policies and functioning. Tools such as the digital platform and citizens’ panels enable discussion of topics that matter to them.

**Conference Plenary**
- 449 representatives
- Per Member State

**Representatives**
- European Parliament: 108
- National parliaments: 108
- European Citizens’ Panels: 80
- Council: 54
- National events and/or panels: 27
- Committee of the Regions: 18
- Economic and Social Committee: 18
- Social partners: 12
- Civil society organisations: 8
- Local elected representatives: 6
- Regional elected representatives: 6
- European Commission: 3
- President of the European Youth Forum: 1

**Debates and discusses**
The recommendations from the Citizens’ Panels
The input from the multilingual platform

**Work prepared**
By 9 thematic working groups

**Puts forward**
Proposals to the Executive Board (on a consensual basis)

**Consensus**
To be found at least between the European Parliament, Council, Commission, and national parliaments

**Joint Presidency**
- European Parliament: Roberta Metsola
- Council of the EU: Emmanuel Macron*
- European Commission: Ursula von der Leyen

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**Executive Board**
- 9 representatives
- Co-Chairs: Guy Verhofstadt (Parliament), Clément Beaune* (Council), Dubravka Šuica (Commission)

**Observers**
- from the European Parliament, Council, national parliaments, Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, other EU institutions and European social partners

**Common Secretariat**
- Equal number from the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission
- Ensure functioning of the Conference, assist the Executive Board and the Plenary

---

**European Citizens’ Panels**
- Forums where citizens discuss specific themes and provide a set of recommendations to the Conference plenary for the EU institutions to follow up

**Four citizens’ panels set up, between them covering the nine topics shown above**

- 200 citizens on each panel, selected at random
  - At least 1 man and 1 woman per Member State, applying degressive proportionality as in Parliament
  - ¼ should be between 16 and 25 years of age

- Representatives of each panel take part in plenary
  - At least ¼ between 16 and 25 years of age
  - To present their recommendations

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**European Democracy**
- Values, respect and trust, rule of law, security
- Education, culture, youth and sport
- Digital transformation
- A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
- Health
- Climate change and the environment
- Other topics proposed by citizens

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Moderation of platform supervised by the Executive Board

Source: EPRS, 2022.
3. Citizens’ recommendations

3.1. Non-discrimination/Gender equality

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<td>1</td>
<td>'We recommend that the EU provides criteria on anti-discrimination in the labour market (quotas for youth, elders, women, minorities). If companies fulfil the criteria, they get subsidies or tax breaks. We recommend enhancing employees’ 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.'</td>
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European Parliament position

Parliament has long called for and supported anti-discrimination measures for disadvantaged groups. It has proposed and obtained the insertion of an article in the Amsterdam Treaty allowing the adoption of anti-discrimination measures at EU level and supported anti-discrimination directives approved on that basis, covering race, as well as disability, religion, age and sexual orientation in employment. Parliament also strongly supported the 2008 Commission proposal on anti-discrimination beyond employment, currently blocked in the Council.

In 2010, Parliament called on the Member States to introduce affirmative action measures for young people in those areas of the labour market where youth is underrepresented, to overcome the consequences of previous age discrimination and achieve a truly diverse workforce. It also pointed to good experience on affirmative action in combating discrimination. Parliament called on the Member States to use or examine the introduction of compulsory workplace diversity quotas, in particular for persons with disabilities. The European Parliament has strongly supported legislative action with the key objective for listed companies in the EU to aim to reach a target of at least 40% of non-executive directors of the under-represented sex. In relation to older people, Parliament called on Member States to increase spending from EU funds to encourage companies to employ older workers (2021).

Existing proposals/acts on the issue

The legislative framework for non-discrimination in the labour market, especially Directives 2000/43, 2000/78 and 2006/54, bind EU Member States to prohibit any discrimination in employment based on gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief, age and disability, and to establish complaint mechanisms and judicial redress. EU law permits positive action but does not require the introduction of quotas. Such issues consequently remain mainly in the hands of Member States. The proposed gender balance on boards directive would change this in relation to gender equality, setting specific binding targets. The current equality legislation does not provide for incentives for companies to comply with these rules, but rather envisages enforcement on the basis of sanctions for non-compliance. However, there are EU policies that do provide for positive incentives, like taking social considerations into account in public procurement (socially responsible public procurement).

EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information

The fight against poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, Fact Sheets on the EU Topical Digest: Gender Equality, EPRS, October 2021.

<table>
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<th>2</th>
<th>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.</th>
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| European Parliament position | The European Parliament has consistently called for better provision of affordable childcare, drawing attention to its role in improving outcomes for children, enabling parents – particularly mothers – to enter, stay in or return to employment and achieving gender equality. Parliament has also highlighted that childcare benefits businesses in the long term and called on Member States to use EU funding programmes, including recovery funding, to invest in childcare services. See for example:
- Resolution of 14 September 2017 on A New Skills Agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI))
- Resolution of 15 November 2018 on Care services in the EU for improved gender equality (2018/2077(INI))
- Resolution of 29 April 2021 on The European Child Guarantee (2021/2605(RSP)) |
| Existing proposals/acts on the issue | EU research shows that provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) has positive impacts for children, parents and society. There is also evidence that companies can play an important role in supporting working parents. While there is currently no EU legislation requiring companies to set up childcare facilities, childcare provision is addressed in EU policies on children’s wellbeing, education, employment, work-life balance and gender equality and through EU funding programmes. Children’s right to affordable childcare and parents’ right to access care services are key principles in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the related action plan adopted in 2021. The EU strategy on the rights of the child and European child guarantee and the EU gender equality strategy urge the Member States to invest in childcare. For such investments, EU recovery and structural funding is available, this being a specific objective of the ESF+ programme. In 1992, a Council recommendation on childcare already urged governments to work with companies to provide child-care services and companies to make a financial contribution to their creation and/or operation. In 2018, assessment of progress towards EU-wide childcare targets, set by the European Council in 2002, found that some countries have introduced incentives for companies. The European Commission proposes to revise these targets in 2022, under the pillar of social rights action plan and its forthcoming proposal for an EU care strategy. |
| EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information | After parental leave: Incentives for parents with young children to return to the labour market, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, November 2020 (in particular 5.1.5. Childcare at work). |
3.2. Protecting human rights and the rights of nature and animals

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<th>European Parliament position</th>
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<td>'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.'</td>
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Parliament consistently highlights and advocates animal welfare in its work on various legislative files (e.g. animal health, cloning and official controls proposals), and in resolutions on animal welfare issues, e.g. a new animal welfare strategy, on protection of farm rabbits and responsible care of equidae. Recently, it debated a report on the implementation of EU legislation regulating animal welfare on the farm, in which it called for updated rules based on scientific data, impact assessments and a species-by-species approach, as well as for uniform implementation. In an earlier report, Parliament stressed the importance of a high-quality animal welfare system, emphasising that a high level of animal welfare is integral to sustainable development and is essential for superior food quality, and called for stronger harmonisation of the legal framework for animal husbandry in the EU, using common, science-based animal welfare indicators. The Intergroup on Welfare and Conservation of Animals within the Parliament gathers Members from all political groups to debate animal welfare issues. Its working group on cage-free farming actively supported the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the cage age', on which Parliament adopted a resolution. In 2020, Parliament set up a Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport (ANIT) to investigate Commission enforcement and Member State implementation of EU rules. Its report on alleged contraventions of EU animal law on animal transport was adopted in January 2022.

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<th>Existing proposals/acts on the issue</th>
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<td>The EU has established a large body of legislation aimed at protecting animal welfare. To ensure animal welfare on the farm, a horizontal directive lays down general standards for livestock protection, while specific acts cover the treatment of pigs, calves, laying hens and chickens. Rules exist on welfare standards for farmed animals during transport and at the time of stunning and slaughter. In 2012, the Commission adopted an EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals, bringing many improvements, but assessment of its implementation showed persisting weaknesses. Following this assessment, the Commission 'farm-to-fork' strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, adopted in 2020, announced a plan to revise EU animal welfare law by the end of 2023, including a fitness check of the legislation on the protection of farmed animals. In this context, the Commission has mandated the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to develop scientific opinions on the welfare of various species of animals. The aim of the revision is to align legislation with the latest scientific evidence, to broaden its scope to include other species, to make it easier to enforce, and ensure a higher level of animal welfare. To facilitate and promote dialogue and coordinated action, in 2017, the Commission established the 'EU Platform on Animal Welfare' expert group. It brings together public institutions, international organisations, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and independent experts, who exchange information, best practices and advice on animal welfare issues relevant at EU level.</td>
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<td>Animal welfare on the farm, EPRS, June 2021.</td>
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<td>Patterns of livestock transport in the EU and to third countries, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, June 2021.</td>
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| European Parliament position | Environmental or green taxes include taxes on energy, transport, pollution and resources. Energy taxes are taxes on fuels used for transport, such as petrol and diesel, and for other purposes, such as fuel oils, natural gas, coal and electricity used in heating. Taxes are usually a Member State competence. Any proposal at EU level requires unanimity in Council – the Parliament is only consulted. Parliament has long been in favour of tax policy that reflects climate and energy objectives. In a January 2020 resolution, Parliament stressed ‘the importance of ensuring a level playing field between different modes of transport’ and called on the Commission to make proposals for coordinated measures to end tax exemptions for aviation and maritime fuels in the Member States. Parliament also called for a more harmonised approach on energy taxes in particular, reflecting the EU’s environmental and climate policies. In 2020, Parliament called for a comprehensive European approach to energy storage, and in April 2021, it called for more efficient and cleaner maritime transport. Parliament has condemned the distortion of competition on the European market between fossil fuels and clean alternative fuels from renewable sources, and called on the Commission to address this situation by proposing to restore fair competition rules and apply the ‘polluter pays’ principle to maritime transport. |

| Existing proposals/acts on the issue | Taxation remains largely set by Member State governments. When it comes to tax rates, EU legislation only sets harmonised minimum rates of taxation to avoid market distortions. Taxes are among the instruments available to implement the ‘polluter pays’ principle, set out in Article 191 TFEU, whereby those causing harm to the environment should bear the costs incurred. Individual Member States set certain environmental taxes, charges or seek to add extra costs to the use of products and services that reflect the environmental harm caused. At the EU level, the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) lays down structural rules and sets out minimum excise duty rates for the taxation of energy products used as motor fuel and heating fuel, and for electricity. The European Commission recently put forward a proposal to revise the ETD that aims to align taxation of energy products with the EU’s energy and climate policies, by promoting clean technologies and removing outdated exemptions and reduced rates that could be encouraging the use of fossil fuels. It aims at introducing a new structure of tax rates based on the energy content and environmental performance of fuel and broadens the taxable base by including more products in the scope. The EU also seeks to reduce emissions across sectors by driving up the price of greenhouse gases emitted. While, due to their fluctuating price and tradeable nature, the EU’s emission trading system (ETS) is not a tax, it nevertheless requires industry to purchase certificates for each ton of CO₂ emitted. The ETS, currently undergoing revision, is set to be supplemented by a proposal to establish a ‘Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism’ that would require importers of certain products, such as fertilisers, to purchase certificates reflecting the carbon-content of their goods. Finally, the revised common agricultural policy (CAP) incentivises farmers to produce according to environmental objectives (‘greening’), and provides financial incentives to this effect. The post-2022 CAP will take this approach forward, reflecting higher green ambitions and providing stronger incentives for agricultural practices beneficial for the environment and climate. They shall include measures to operationalise the EU carbon farming initiative launched by the Commission as part of the ‘farm to fork’ strategy (the Commission adopted the related Communication.' |
on sustainable carbon cycles in December 2021, which sets out short- to medium-term action aiming to address current challenges to carbon farming). Carbon sequestration has also been included in the Taxonomy Regulation as an economic activity that shall qualify as contributing substantially to climate change mitigation.

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In the actual context of much 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.

Since 2013, Parliament has actively promoted media freedom across the EU, including by calling for minimum standards at EU level through amendments to the Audiovisual Media Service Directive. In 2018, it called on the Member States to take appropriate measures to safeguard and promote a pluralist, independent and free media landscape. In several other resolutions (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021), Parliament recalled the importance of ensuring media freedom and pluralism, including on online platforms. Parliament’s concerns touched upon the deteriorating situation as regards protection of the right to information and the journalistic profession, the lack of transparency of media ownership and, the lack of independency of media regulators in several EU Member States. Moreover, Parliament demanded action at EU level to protect journalists against abusive civil and criminal lawsuits. Parliament also called for a comprehensive EU strategy on media and information literacy and education, to help citizens identify disinformation.

Media freedom and pluralism are part of the rights and principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 11) and in the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10).

The European democracy action plan and the action plan for the media include action to support the recovery and transformation of the media and audiovisual sector after the coronavirus pandemic, protect and empower journalists and ensure media freedom and pluralism across the European Union.

EU funds are also devoted to supporting media freedom and media pluralism, in particular, the Creative Europe programme will support, inter alia, actions to ‘monitor and assess risks to media pluralism’ in 2021-2027. Other actions tackle disinformation and misinformation, including the European Digital Media Observatory, Code of Practice on Disinformation, action plan on disinformation, and Media Pluralism Monitor, among other things. This latter, for instance, assesses the risks faced by media pluralism based on a set of 25 key indicators. The EU has also put several instruments in place to enhance citizens’ media competence, especially in the field of digital culture. Legislative initiatives included the revised Audiovisual Media Service Directive and the new Copyright Directive.

The Commission's 2022 work programme includes a forthcoming proposal on media freedom, aimed at improving transparency, accountability and independence in relation to media freedom and pluralism.

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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.'

European Parliament position

Ahead of the presentation of the European Commission's 2018 proposals on EU common agricultural policy (CAP) reform, Parliament set out its priorities for the future of food and farming. These include less money for larger farms (through degressive amounts and a mandatory payment ceiling) and more targeted support for diverse agricultural systems, including small and medium family farms. Moreover, Parliament stressed that farm payments should support farmers who are actively farming to earn their living, and that such support should help both food production and the protection of environmental and animal welfare standards. These principles were at the core of Parliament’s position during the three-year negotiations on the post-2022 CAP, on which EU legislators reached a deal in 2021.

In a resolution on the ‘farm to fork’ strategy launched by the Commission in May 2020 in the context of the European Green Deal, Parliament stressed the need to support the transition to sustainability and reduce the environmental impact of food chains, as well as to take action in areas such as sustainable farming and better animal husbandry. Parliament stressed the need to promote animal welfare, calling for revision and better application of the existing rules (including on animal transport) as a key element of the sustainability transition in agriculture. In 2021, Parliament endorsed the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) on gradually ending caged farming, calling for a food policy that supports a shift towards more sustainable food systems and that prevents small and medium-sized farms from abandoning livestock production, leading to further concentration in a few large farms.

Existing proposals/acts on the issue

The CAP dates back to the 1960s, with objectives – set out in Article 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU – focusing on food security and the modernisation and competitiveness of the farming sector. Farmer’s income support represents the bulk of CAP financial interventions, mostly provided to farmers in the form of a basic payment per hectare of land. As such, farms with larger farmland get more money. However, over the years, constant demands to make the CAP more responsive to emerging needs have brought new objectives, such as protecting the environment and preserving natural resources. This has led to greener CAP payments by linking the financial support to EU rules on the environment and human, plant and animal health, and to mandatory action and investment that contributes to the sustainable management of natural resources. The future 2023-2027 CAP strengthens environmental conditions and standards necessary to benefit from farm payments, and expands the set of environmental actions available to farmers. The new rules on the national CAP strategic plans (under which each EU country will define the CAP interventions for achieving set objectives), include measures such as: the possibility for Member States to apply capping and degressivity to the highest farm payments granted to a farmer for a given year; the redistribution of direct payments from larger to smaller or medium-sized holdings by providing for a mandatory redistributive income support; and the eco-schemes to reward farmers’ actions in favour of climate and the environment, including animal welfare. Innovative actions to mitigate climate-change shall include measures to operationalise the EU carbon farming initiative launched by the Commission as part of the farm to fork strategy (the Commission adopted the related Communication on sustainable carbon cycles, which sets out short-to medium-term actions aiming to address current challenges to carbon farming in December 2021).

<table>
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<th>further information</th>
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</table>
The Green Deal and the CAP: policy implications to adapt farming practices and to preserve the EU’s natural resources, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, 2020. |
### 3.3. Right to privacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>'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.'</th>
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</table>

**European Parliament position**

The 2021 *Special Eurobarometer on Digital Rights and Principles* revealed that the use and abuse of personal data ranks among the top three most worrying aspects of the widespread adoption of digital tools and the internet. The European Parliament has repeatedly called for more stringent and consistent enforcement of the EU *data protection rules*. In a March 2021 *resolution*, Parliament urged Data Protection Authorities (DPAs) ‘to speed up the resolution of cases, and to use the full range of possibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), particularly if there are systematic and persistent breaches, including with gainful interest and a large number of affected data subjects’. It called on ‘Member States ... 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’. Parliament also called 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’. In a May 2021 *resolution*, it called on the Commission to start infringement procedures against Ireland for not properly enforcing the GDPR.

**Existing proposals/acts on the issue**

In the EU, personal data and privacy are principally protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the *e-Privacy Directive* 2002/58/EC. The GDPR sets out binding principles and conditions for the processing of personal data, enshrines legally enforceable data subjects’ rights, and establishes enforcement mechanisms. In principle, data controllers may only process personal data if they can rely on one of the GDPR’s six legal bases. The GDPR provides for individual, collective and public enforcement instruments, including enforceable individual rights and supervisory powers. Supervisory authorities are equipped with investigative, corrective, as well as authorisation and advisory powers. Most prominently, supervisory authorities may impose fines of up to €20 million, or 4 % of total worldwide turnover. Investigative powers include data protection audits. Controllers and processors may voluntarily subject themselves to external audits, not least by voluntarily applying for data protection certification under the GDPR, which requires a compliance check with certification criteria. Accredited certification bodies may sanction infringements of these certification schemes in accordance with contractual sanction policies. In its impact assessment accompanying the *draft data governance act*, the European Commission had contemplated making ex-ante certification procedures compulsory for data intermediary services and data altruism organisations. In its proposal, the Commission opted for a compulsory notification-and-monitoring scheme and a voluntary registration-and-monitoring scheme – neither making a comprehensive compliance check compulsory before starting operations.

**EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information**

We recommend strengthening the EU competence in: 1) data protection education, 2) data protection awareness raising 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.'

The European Parliament has always insisted on the need to strike a balance between enhancing security and safeguarding human rights, including data protection and privacy. For example, the Parliament ensured the inclusion of privacy-preserving safeguards in the recently adopted regulation, which temporarily exempts the scanning of internet-based communications for online child sexual abuse from certain e-Privacy requirements. In a 2017 resolution, Parliament also called for an action plan to protect children’s rights online and offline in cyberspace.

In relation to children’s data rights, in a recent resolution Parliament regretted that the Member States’ use of the facultative specification clauses (e.g. processing on the basis of the Member State’s law) has been detrimental to the achievement of full data protection harmonisation. It also highlighted that the Member States have adopted a different age range for parental consent and called for assessment of the impact of this fragmentation on children’s activities and on their protection online.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which became directly applicable as a law in all EU countries on 25 May 2018, recognised the specific circumstances and risks posed to children when their personal data is collected and processed (i.e. due to their age, maturity and developmental capacity) for the first time. In addition, the GDPR enables children to exercise their data protection rights, e.g. to have their personal data erased by online services so that they are not burdened in adulthood with decisions they made when they had less understanding of the consequences of sharing their data online. The minimum age of consent is laid down in Article 8 GDPR, which allows Member States to fix this age between 13 and 16 years old. Below this age, consent should be provided by parents or guardians.

Differing derogations, implementations and interpretations of the GDPR present challenges for GDPR compliance. In some cases, where Member States exercised their discretion – such as concerning consent given by minors – they inadvertently produced fragmentation in the GDPR framework. In 2019, to ensure legal certainty, the Council suggested drafting a sector-specific code addressing children’s data, in accordance with Article 40 GDPR. In its guidelines on consent, the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) provides clarifications on children’s consent and parental responsibility and recommends some practical solutions for verifying the age of users and the parental responsibility.

Promoting public awareness on data protection is a national data protection authority (DPAs) task under Article 57 GDPR, including a focus on activities addressed to children. The European Commission supports national DPAs’ outreach activities through dedicated funding (e.g. the rights, equality and citizenship programme). The EU legislators have also recently adopted temporary legislation derogating from EU privacy rules to enable tech companies to detect and remove child sexual abuse material online. Long-term law to better protect minors online is in the pipeline.

Mildebrath H., Understanding EU data protection policy, EPRS, January 2022.

'We recommend introducing standardised 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.'

The European Parliament has continuously promoted a high level of data protection and privacy as co-legislator, as well as through own-initiative reports and resolutions. In a recent resolution, Parliament recalled that, under the GDPR, 'consent' means 'any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes' and that this also applies to the e-Privacy Directive. Parliament regretted that 'the implementation of valid consent continues to be compromised by the use of dark patterns, pervasive tracking and other unethical practices'. It also regretted that 'individuals are often put under financial pressure to give consent in return for discounts or other commercial offers, or are forced to give consent by conditioning access to a service through tying provisions, in breach of Article 7 of the GDPR'. Parliament recommended ensuring fair and transparent processing by providing consumers with easy-to-use options to give and withdraw consent to the processing of personal data, as provided for by the GDPR.

The data subject's consent to the processing of personal data is explicitly mentioned in Article 8, para. 2 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as a legal basis for legitimate processing. The GDPR, which applies directly in all Member States from 25 May 2018, provides detailed and strict rules on consent (which should be 'freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous'), including on the withdrawal of consent. Consent also plays an important role in the e-Privacy Directive, currently under reform, which sets out rules to ensure the confidentiality of electronic communications. According to the directive, it is unlawful to place cookies or other similar devices in the data subject’s terminal equipment to gain access to information stored without the consent of the user. It also bans unsolicited communications without consent.

The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) adopted a set of guidelines, including on consent, specifying that 'consent is only an appropriate legal basis for processing if the data subject is offered 'a genuine choice' to accept or decline the terms offered and can decline the terms without detriment'. Moreover, the guidelines clarify that a service provider cannot prevent data subjects from accessing a service on the basis that they do not consent, and that access to services and functionalities must not be made conditional on the consent of a user to the placement of cookies in his/her terminal equipment.

Mildebrath H., Understanding EU data protection policy, EPRS, January 2022.

Regulating targeted and behavioural advertising in digital services. How to ensure users' informed consent, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, September 2021.
### 3.4. Protecting rule of law

| 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.' |

**European Parliament position**

The rule of law is one of the essential values upon which the European Union is founded, which according to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) are common to all Member States. Respect for these values has to be ensured throughout all Union policies. This includes the EU budget, where respect for fundamental values is an essential precondition for sound financial management and effective EU funding.

The European Parliament has repeatedly called on the Member States to fulfil their obligations and to move towards a shared culture of the rule of law as a universal value to be applied by every Member State. As ‘guardian of the treaties’, the European Commission also plays an important role in protecting these values.

The European Parliament therefore supported the initial Commission proposal for a regulation on rule of law conditionality, put forward in 2018, aimed at establishing legally binding rules for the protection of the Union’s budget in the case of generalised deficiencies regarding the rule of law in the Member States – without these necessarily affecting the EU budget. At first reading, the European Parliament also proposed a new article to define what constitutes generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law, such as endangering judicial independence, or failing to prevent, correct and sanction arbitrary or unlawful public authority decisions. To advance adoption of the regulation, Parliament finally agreed to the current text, which includes the condition that generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law must also affect the EU budget.

**Existing proposals/acts on the issue**

Measures under Regulation 2020/2092 on rule of law conditionality, as finally adopted on 20 December 2020, can only be taken where such breaches affect the sound financial management of the Union budget or the protection of the financial interests of the Union in a sufficiently direct way. It does not apply to a generalised deficiency of the rule of law in an EU Member State as initially proposed by the Commission and supported by the European Parliament at first reading.

The regulation includes measures such as the suspension of payments or the suspension of the approval of programmes or the reduction of pre-financing.

Despite the amendments introduced in first reading, the European Parliament’s role under this regulation is also limited: it only has the right to be informed of any procedure.

The regulation entered into force on 1 January 2021. On 11 March 2021, Poland and Hungary lodged actions against the regulation before the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The Advocate General issued his conclusions in December 2021. The ECJ ruling is expected on 16 February 2022.

**EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information**

Karoline Kowald, Protection of the Union’s budget in case of ‘rule of law’ deficiencies, EPRS, December 2020.

Maria Diaz Crego, Rafał Mańko and Wouter van Ballegooij, Protecting EU common values within the Member States. An overview of monitoring, prevention and enforcement mechanisms at EU level, EPRS, September 2020.
**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 obliged to send socially diverse national delegations to the conference that include both citizens and civil servants.**

**European Parliament position**

Parliament has always welcomed proposals aiming to strengthen the EU’s mechanisms to address rule of law shortcomings in Member States, including the Commission’s annual rule of law reports (2020, 2021). It has also underlined that Union institutions are to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society at all levels (2020). Parliament has notably organised, through its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, debates, events, and Inter-Parliamentary Committee meetings on the rule of law situation in the EU. The aim is to exchange views with national parliamentary committees, civil society organisations and experts (2020, 2021). Parliament has also repeatedly called on the Commission and the Council to establish, together with the Parliament, an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, underpinned by an interinstitutional agreement signed by the three institutions (25 October 2016, 14 November 2018, 7 October 2020). The proposed mechanism would have a wider scope than the current annual rule of law reports and would seek to involve other EU institutions, national authorities and civil society in an annual monitoring exercise. The mechanism would consist of an annual monitoring cycle on all EU values (Article 2 TEU), which would apply to all Member States. The cycle would have three stages: a) preparatory phase; b) publication of the annual report, with country-specific recommendations; and c) follow-up, in which Parliament and the Council would publicly discuss the annual report and adopt a position. Although Parliament supports stronger dialogue with citizens and citizens’ participation at EU level, it has focused to date on dialogue with national parliaments, civil society and representative organisations.

**Existing proposals/acts on the issue**

The latest proposal put forward by the European Parliament to create an EU Mechanism on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights was adopted on 7 October 2020 (2020/2072(INI)), on the basis of Article 295 TFEU. The European Commission replied to Parliament’s proposal on 3 March 2021, supporting Parliament’s objectives, but favouring cooperation under existing mechanisms and proposing to assess the need for a new mechanism at a later stage. The current annual rule of law reports are prepared on the basis of the Commission Communication on Strengthening the rule of law within the Union. A blueprint for action. This communication indicated that stakeholders would be involved in the process of information gathering for the annual report and proposed to follow up on the idea of an annual rule of law event open to stakeholders and civil society organisations, without making a specific proposal to involve citizens.

**EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information**

Diaz Crego, M., Manko, R. and van Ballegooij, W., Protecting EU common values within the Member States: An overview of monitoring, prevention and enforcement mechanisms at EU level, EPRS, September 2020.

### 3.5. Strengthening democracy/Media and disinformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>European Parliament position</th>
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<tr>
<td>'We recommend that the EU enforce 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.'</td>
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<th>Existing proposals/acts on the issue</th>
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<tr>
<td>The European Parliament considers that the EU has the competence to legislate to guarantee, protect and promote freedom of expression and information, media freedom and pluralism, even though these competences are shared with the Member States. In 2013, Parliament called for the application of lower competition thresholds for the media sector, to counter the formation of large media monopolies and has repeatedly called for rules to avoid conflict of interests and political interference in the public and private media sector. In 2018, the EU legislator called for concrete action to counter threats to media pluralism, notably those related to the evolving digital media ecosystem, such as unlawful and arbitrary surveillance, undue control of information by intermediaries, and the ever-growing spread of disinformation. Several other resolutions focusing on the murder of Slovak journalists Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová (2018, 2019) and their Maltese counterpart, Daphne Caruana Galizia (2019, 2021), underline the importance of media freedom, media pluralism and journalists’ protection for democracies. In 2020 and 2021, Parliament requested the Commission act to protect journalists, particularly investigative journalists, who are increasingly victims of abusive civil and criminal lawsuits that aim to avoid public scrutiny and prevent public accountability. Members were also concerned by the deterioration of media pluralism in Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. In 2021, Parliament drew attention to the fact that the pandemic risks affecting media by accelerating news media consolidation and called on competition authorities to remain vigilant and to examine the long-term impact of mergers and acquisitions.</td>
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| Media freedom and pluralism are key features of the rights and principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 11) and in the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10). They also form part of the Copenhagen criteria for membership of the EU, related to democracy and human rights. The European Parliament has recently adopted the 2021-2027 Creative Europe programme, which supports projects monitoring and assessing media pluralism. Additional funding is provided through the Media Pluralism Monitor, a scientific tool designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism. To counter the growing politicisation of the media in some Member States, the European Commission has committed, in its work plan for 2022, to propose a media freedom act in the autumn. The initiative aims to complement the EU’s legislative arsenal to ensure the integrity and independence of the EU media market and uphold media freedom and pluralism. Similarly, the European democracy action plan and the action plan for the media bring forward action to speed up the recovery and transformation of the media and audio-visual sector after the pandemic, to protect and empower journalists, and to ensure media freedom and pluralism are respected across the Union. Most recently, in September 2021, the Commission launched a Media Ownership Monitoring System to improve the understanding and public availability of media ownership information. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Del Monte M., Addressing abusive legal actions aimed at silencing journalists, EPRS, November 2021.</td>
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### 3.6. Security

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<td>13</td>
<td>'We recommend the EU institutions play a stronger role with all the tools at their disposal, including national centres for cybersecurity and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), to protect individuals, organisations 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.'</td>
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#### European Parliament position

The European Parliament has repeatedly called for EU action to fight cyber threats and ensure cybersecurity. In its seminal 2016 resolution on the digital single market, Parliament demanded the Commission put a strong cybersecurity policy in place and improve EU resilience to cyber-attacks. It called in particular to increase the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA)'s role and financial means to ensure cooperation between the European cybersecurity industry, the public and the private sector. Furthermore, in a 2021 resolution, Parliament called for stronger EU cyber defence capabilities and enhanced mutual assistance and operational cooperation between Member States, especially in the event of major cyberattacks. Parliament also sought concrete initiatives at EU level to protect EU citizens more effectively against cybersecurity threats. A 2017 resolution on the fight against cybercrime called for action to promote a security-by-design approach for connected devices. More recently, Parliament also urged the Commission to propose legislation imposing cybersecurity requirements on apps, software and operating systems and for artificial intelligence systems.

#### Existing proposals/acts on the issue

With cyber-attacks increasing in number and scale, cybersecurity has become a priority for the Union. The European Commission proposed a number of actions in the 2017 cybersecurity package and adopted a new EU cybersecurity strategy for 2020-2025.

The 2016 Network and Information Security (NIS) Directive was the first piece of EU-wide legislation on cybersecurity. It aimed to achieve a high common level of cybersecurity across the Member States. The directive, which lays down common rules to increase Member States cybersecurity capabilities and foster cross-border cooperation, is currently under review. In addition, EU lawmakers are discussing the adoption of a NIS2 Directive and of a Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive to impose additional measures and to fight cyber-attacks, especially in critical sectors like energy, transport or banking. Furthermore, a European Cybersecurity Network and a Cybersecurity Competence Centre have been created to help the EU retain and develop cybersecurity technological and industrial capacities.

To achieve these goals, EU funding for cybersecurity initiatives is envisaged for the 2021-2027 programming period through a mix of instruments such as the Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe and the European Defence Fund. The Commission work programme for 2022 includes a proposal for a European cyber resilience act, to be presented in autumn, which would establish common standards for cybersecurity products. The proposed artificial intelligence act currently under discussion would impose a number of cybersecurity requirements for the use and supply of AI technologies in the EU.

#### EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information


**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, can the European Union be an ambassador of our democratic model in the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue.'

### European Parliament position

The European Parliament is a strong advocate for reinforcing respect for democratic norms both internally and externally. In its October 2020 report, it proposes the establishment of an internal EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, consisting of an annual monitoring cycle on the Union values enshrined in Article 21 TEU. Parliament’s January 2021 resolution on human rights and democracy in the world and EU policy on the matter in 2019 takes a self-critical view, stating that 'the EU will be credible and effective on the global scene in promoting democracy only if it ensures the internal and external coherence of its policies, and calls for the EU and its Member States to lead by example'. The January 2020 resolution on human rights and democracy in the world stresses that EU support for democratic and effective political pluralism should be 'context-sensitive', taking account of the cultural and national background of third countries.

Parliament’s Monitoring Group on Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights monitors potential breaches of democratic standards within EU Member States. Externally, the European Parliament provides assistance to selected third countries’ parliaments and takes part in EU and OSCE electoral observation missions.

### Existing proposals/acts on the issue

The EU's external action on democracy is inspired by its democratic values, traditions and practices, but is equally guided by the universality and indivisibility of human rights and respect for international norms, in line with TEU Article 21). Moreover, the EU is committed to provide development aid in line with the universally accepted Sustainable Development Goals, specifically with SDG16.

The need to ensure consistency between internal and external policies is emphasised in various EU policy documents. The 2020 EU democracy action plan stated that 'the way we nurture and bolster our democratic foundations in the Union and Member States has impact on the strength of our external action', and announced a series of legislative, policy and funding proposals to strengthen democracy and democratic actors in the EU. The 2019 Council Conclusions on democracy (point 3), as well as the 2009 Conclusions on democracy support in the EU's external relations (point III.3) also highlight the need for consistency. Enhancing coherence and breaking down silos between internal and external policy areas is among the objectives pursued by the 2020-2024 EU action plan on human rights and democracy, which defines EU priorities for external action.

The need for dialogue-based partnerships is highlighted in the 2009 Conclusions, which stressed that 'democracy cannot be imposed from the outside'. EU financial and political support can only assist 'locally driven processes'. The conclusions commit the EU 'to act in genuine partnership with third countries, international and regional organizations, and civil society'.

The 2020-2024 EU action plan on human rights and democracy stresses that 'the EU has a strategic interest in advancing its global leadership on human rights and democracy with the aim of bringing tangible benefits to people around the world'.

### EPRS/POLDEP publications for further information

Zamfir I., Support for democracy through EU external policy: New tools for growing challenges, EPRS, February 2021.

van Ballegooij W., Addressing violations of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, EPRS, September 2020.
## 3.7. Institutional reform

<table>
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<tr>
<th>15</th>
<th>'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.'</th>
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| **European Parliament position** | Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament has repeated the need to address the shortcomings of EU governance, flaws that have become apparent in the light of the successive crises faced by the Union in the last decade (economic, migratory, Brexit, pandemic). In this vein, Parliament has put forward some ideas to restructure and strengthen the European Commission as the principle executive authority, or government, of the EU. Parliament has called for a reduction in the number of commissioners and to reduce vice-presidents to the Finance Commissioner, who would also be the President of the Eurogroup, and the Foreign Affairs Commissioner.  

As regards the Council and the European Council, in 2017, Parliament proposed to merge the Council and the European Council and transform them into a Council of States that would become the second chamber of the EU’s legislature. The new Council of States’ decisions would be adopted by a single legislative configuration, and the current ten specialised Council configurations would become preparatory bodies, similar to parliamentary committees within the European Parliament. Parliament suggested leaving a wide margin of discretion to Member States to decide on their national representation in the Council, allowing them to opt between being represented by representatives of their national parliament, government, or a combination of both. In addition, the rotating six-month Presidency of the Council should be replaced by a system of permanent chairs, similar to that used by Parliament itself. |
| **Existing proposals/acts on the issue** | The names of EU institutions is set in Article 13 TEU. Although there are currently no formal proposals to modify that Treaty provision, in 2018 the Commission proposed institutional changes to make the EU’s institutional framework more efficient, including strengthening the lead candidate procedure for electing the Commission president, or merging the Presidencies of the European Council and the Commission. |
We recommend adopting an election law for the European Parliament that harmonises 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.

Parliament has reiterated the need to enhance the European dimension of European elections, including through possible harmonisation of EU election rules or (in some votes) the creation of an EU-wide constituency in which a number of members of Parliament would be elected through transnational electoral lists. In its **resolution of 26 November 2020** on a stocktaking of the European elections, Parliament highlighted the need to harmonise electoral campaign rules throughout the Union. It reiterated its call for the establishment of a European electoral authority, with a mandate to monitor the implementation of the guidelines and provisions related to European electoral law.

Parliament also proposed to enhance the visibility of European political parties and movements, for example by placing their names and logos on the ballot papers. Since the adoption of the **European Electoral Act** in 1979, two main amendments to the Act have been adopted, in 2002 and 2018, on the basis of prior proposals put forward by Parliament (**Anastassopoulos Report**, A4-0212/98; and Hubner-Leinen Report, **P8_TA(2015)0395**). Those amendments further harmonised national electoral rules applicable to European elections by requiring, for example, to use a proportional system or the establishment of an electoral threshold of between 2% and 5% for constituencies with more than 35 seats. Parliament's proposals leading to the adoption of the 2002 and 2018 modifications of the European Electoral Act also included the idea of creating an EU-wide constituency and transnational electoral lists for European elections. That idea, also discussed by Parliament in the context of other reports (**First Duff Report** – 2011, **Second Duff Report** – 2012), was never retained by the Council.

Parliament is currently discussing another proposal to modify the European Electoral Act and create an EU-wide constituency in which a number of Members of the European Parliament would be elected through transnational electoral lists (**Devesa Report**, 2020/2220(INL), but the draft report has not yet been adopted by the Parliament Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO). The same committee has also started working on the proposal for the recast of the regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations. The proposal was published in the framework of the European democracy action plan package on 25 November 2021, after the adoption, on 11 November 2021, of the Parliament **resolution** on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations.

**EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information**

- Kotanidis S., [European Union electoral law: Current situation and historical background](https://doi.org/10.2754/2018994), EPRS, October 2019.
### 3.8. Decision-making

<table>
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<th>'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.'</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>European Parliament position</strong></td>
<td>In its <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-016-2013-0035-00_EN.pdf">June 2017 resolution</a> on online platforms and the digital single market, the European Parliament stressed the significance of fighting fake news and asked the online platforms to enable fake content to be reported. It also asked the Commission to explore possible legal actions to restrain disinformation. In October 2018, following the use of Facebook users’ data by Cambridge Analytica, Parliament urged online platforms to work with independent fact-checkers and academia to expose and correct, if possible, far-reaching disinformation. In its <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-016-2012-0053-00_EN.pdf">October 2020 resolution</a> Parliament welcomed the creation of a <a href="https://www.european-digital-media-observatory.eu/">European Digital Media Observatory</a>, which works with independent fact-checkers, raises awareness on online disinformation and helps monitor digital media.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Existing proposals/acts on the issue</strong></td>
<td>In 2018, the Commission issued a <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">communication on tackling online disinformation</a> to tackle a widespread citizen concern regarding fake news. It included a commitment to support the creation of an independent European network of fact-checkers, and a commitment to launch a secure European online platform on disinformation to support the independent European network of fact-checkers and relevant academic researchers. As a follow-up, the <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis (SOMA)</a> was launched to help European fact-checking organisations and researchers cooperate to counter disinformation. The communication included a call to establish a <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">Code of Practice on Disinformation</a>, which was published by online platforms, social networks and the advertising industry in September 2018, to fight online disinformation. The signatories participated in a dedicated <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">monitoring programme on coronavirus-related disinformation</a>. A <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">June 2019 Joint Communication</a> on the implementation of the action plan against disinformation called on the online platforms to intensify cooperation with fact checkers and empower users to better detect disinformation. In 2020, the <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)</a> project was launched to support the work of a multidisciplinary fact-checking community in Europe, aiming at a better understanding and at limiting the spread of disinformation. The EDMO has received more than €11 million to create eight regional hubs to help implement and expand its work in the Member States. In May 2021, the Commission published <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">guidance</a> to strengthen the Code of Practice on Disinformation and announced it will become a co-regulatory instrument within the proposed digital services act legislative framework. The new measures include reduced financial incentives to disinformation, empowering users to understand and flag disinformation, and increased fact-checking across Member States and languages. In May 2021, a call for proposals to draft a code of professional integrity for independent European fact-checking organisations was published. The <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/content-library/act/communication-disinformation_en">European fact-checking standards project</a> began in January 2022 and is guided by a consortium of six European fact-checking organisations.</td>
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<td>European Parliament position</td>
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<td>'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.'</td>
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<td>Parliament called for a consultative referendum on a possible European Constitution in 2000, to be held on the same day in all Member States. Such a referendum would 'ensure the quality of the democratic debate and create a bond between the peoples and their Constitution'. The idea was to confer a strong democratic legitimacy upon an act of fundamental importance in view of the development of the European project.</td>
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<td>In a 2017 resolution on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the EU, Parliament stressed that 'citizens should be endowed with more instruments of participatory democracy at Union level'. Parliament proposed 'the introduction, in the Treaties, of provision for a referendum at EU level on matters relevant to the Union’s actions and policies be evaluated'.</td>
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<td>In its 2021 resolution on citizens’ dialogues and citizens’ participation in EU decision-making, Parliament stressed the importance of strengthening any reform of the Union by directly engaging with citizens through participatory mechanisms.</td>
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<td>A call for an EU-wide referendum gained momentum during the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002. Indeed, 35 members of the Convention proposed an EU-wide referendum on a European constitution. The proposal became a petition, signed by 97 Convention members, although ultimately it was not endorsed.</td>
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<td>Article 10(3) TEU provides that 'every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union' and that 'decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen'. Article 11 TEU mandates the EU institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society.</td>
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<td>According to Article 24 TFEU, Parliament and the Council adopt the provisions for the procedures and conditions required for a citizens’ initiative within the meaning of Article 11 TEU and every citizen of the Union shall have the right to petition Parliament.</td>
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Tilindyte L., Referendums on EU issues, EPRS, May 2016.
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."

**European Parliament position**

Parliament is a strong advocate of innovating the ways in which citizens can participate in EU decision-making. In a July 2021 resolution, Parliament stressed that technology should be used as a complementary instrument that encourages citizens' participation. Parliament also called on Member States to develop accessible innovative and inclusive tools for citizens’ dialogues, making better use of digital technologies. The EU should also promote new and innovative ways for multilingual dialogues with citizens. Parliament called on the Commission to embrace further digital possibilities for citizens’ participation in all EU official languages.

**Existing proposals/acts on the issue**

The **Regulatory fitness and performance (REFIT) programme** was established in 2012 to make EU law simpler and to reduce unnecessary costs of regulation while still achieving benefits. Currently a number of online consultation tools are available at EU level:

- **Online platform Debating Europe** allows discussion of EU issues.
- **The Fit for Future Platform** is a high-level expert group composed of representatives of Member States, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, and stakeholders representing civil society, business and non-governmental organisations. The group assists the Commission in improving EU laws by providing opinions on potential for simplification, burden reduction and modernisation opportunities of existing EU laws.
- **Have your say** empowers citizens and businesses to share their views on new EU policies and existing laws online.

Current mechanisms allow citizens to provide feedback on existing proposals or actions.

**EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information**


## European Parliament position

Over the years, Parliament has been a steady and open supporter of the use of **passerelle** (or bridging) clauses, allowing a switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council and from a special legislative procedure to the ordinary legislative procedure (also requiring qualified majority voting in the Council), without an ordinary revision of the EU Treaties. Parliament reiterated its endorsement in two resolutions of 16 February 2017, calling on the European Council to make use of the general **passerelle clauses** provided for under Article 48(7) TEU. Parliament reiterated its position more recently in its resolution of 17 January 2019 on differentiated integration, and its resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the pandemic and its consequences. In the latter resolution, Parliament deemed it necessary to suggest the activation of the general **passerelle** clause to 'ease the decision-making process in all matters which could help to cope with the challenges of the current health crisis'.

Parliament has also pushed to switch to qualified majority voting in specific policy areas, making use of the special **passerelle** clauses provided for under the Treaties. Since 2013, Parliament has called on the European Council to make use of the **passerelle** clause in Article 312(2) TFEU, to abandon the unanimity requirement for the adoption of the multiannual financial framework (MFF). Parliament reiterated its position in its resolution of 14 March 2018 on the post-2020 MFF and, more recently, in its interim report on the 2021-2027 MFF. Parliament expressed a similar point of view in relation to enhanced cooperation (Article 333 TFEU) or to the **Common Foreign and Security Policy** (CFSP – Article 312(2) TFEU). In relation to the latter, Parliament supported the use of **passerelle** clauses in CFSP as early as 2013, and reiterated this invitation in 2018, in selected areas such as human rights issues, sanctions and civilian missions.

## Existing proposals/acts on the issue

Neither the two general **passerelle** clauses (Article 48(7) TEU), nor the six special **passerelle** clauses ((i) CFSP – Article 312(2) TFEU; ii) family law with cross-border implications – Article 81(3) TFEU; iii) social policy – Article 153(2) TFEU; iv) environmental policy – Article 192(2) TFEU; v) MFF – Article 312(2) TFEU; vi) enhanced cooperation – Article 333 TFEU), has ever been used.

The Commission proposed the introduction of **passerelle** clauses in specific policy areas ((i) CFSP; ii) tax policy; iii) energy and climate policy; and iv) social policy) between 2018 and 2019. However, the Council has never reacted to the proposal.

## EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information

Kotanidis, S., Passerelle clauses in the EU Treaties: Opportunities for more flexible supranational decision-making. EPRS, December, 2020.

Bassot, E., Unlocking the potential of the EU Treaties. An article-by article analysis of the scope for action, EPRS, May 2020.

### 3.9. Closer integration

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<td>'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.'</td>
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<td>In its 2015 <a href="#">resolution</a>, Parliament called on the European Commission to define its concept of <a href="#">social fairness</a>. In a 2020 <a href="#">resolution</a>, Parliament set out priorities for a <a href="#">strong social Europe for just transitions</a> and called for the integration of the European Pillar of Social Rights and of a social progress protocol in the Treaties. In the field of education, the Parliament resolution on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19 pleads for investment in digital equipment and connectivity – in particular in rural and remote areas – and for the reinforcement of the Erasmus+ budget. The resolution on shaping <a href="#">digital education policy</a> stresses the contribution of European funds ([European structural and investment funds (ESIF)], [Connecting Europe Facility], [Horizon Europe], [European Solidarity Corps], [Creative Europe] and [Erasmus+]) to the digital education action plan. Concerning healthcare, the resolution on the EU public health strategy post-COVID-19 calls for transparency of public funding and for non-exclusive licences, and stresses that long-term investments and commitments are needed in hospital infrastructures and health services. Another resolution demands investment in social and affordable housing, and sustainable and green housing projects. Through a resolution with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect, Parliament aims to protect worker’s rights to privacy and a healthy work-life balance. In July 2021, Parliament stressed that investment in the care economy is essential to ensure a decent life for all those in need of care (childcare and care for older and dependent people) and the carers. Member States should make use of all available EU instruments such as ESIF, the [European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)], [Horizon Europe], [European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)] Next Generation EU investment and the Connecting Europe Facility.</td>
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<td>European Parliament position</td>
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<td><a href="#">InvestEU</a> provides long-term EU financial instruments to support investment, making EU funding for investment projects simpler, more efficient and flexible. The new ESF+ instrument aims at increasing employment levels and building social protection. The 2017 <a href="#">European Pillar of Social Rights</a> contains 20 principles and rights, under three priorities: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion aiming to update EU labour markets and welfare states to modern work and life. The 2020 <a href="#">European Skills Agenda</a> for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience aims to grant the right to training and lifelong learning across Europe. The 2020 <a href="#">digital education action plan</a> is a renewed EU policy initiative to help education and training systems in EU Member States adapt to the digital age. Through the <a href="#">EU4Health programme</a>, the EU will invest €5.3 billion in four health objectives: improving health, protecting from cross-border health threats, improving medical products, and strengthening health systems.</td>
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<td>Existing proposals/acts on the issue</td>
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Kiss, M., [The future of work: Trends, challenges and potential initiatives](#), EPRS, January 2021. |
| EPRS/POLDEP publications for further information |   |
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.

Parliament actively supports convergence between Member States and ensuring equal opportunities. In June 2018, Parliament adopted a legislative-initiative report on a statute for social and solidarity-based enterprises, and is currently working on an own-initiative report on the EU action plan for the social economy for a fair and inclusive recovery, and the green and digital transition. The Just Transition Fund (JTF), established in May 2021 by Parliament and Council, supports the inhabitants, the economy and the environment in territories facing severe socio-economic difficulties in the process of the green transition. In the context of the Covid-19 crisis, the EU established the Recovery and Resilience Facility, aiming to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion by mitigating the social and economic consequences of the crisis. In October 2021, Parliament adopted a resolution to draw lessons from this crisis, and work towards the implementation of an improved sustainable governance architecture in the EU based on solidarity, social justice and integration. The European Semester plays an integral part, ensuring convergence and stability in the EU, in which the Parliament plays a crucial role of surveillance and accountability.

The idea of equal opportunities has been at the heart of the EU from its advent (see for example Article 3 TEU). In 1986, the Single European Act established a Community policy of economic and social cohesion to counterbalance the effects of the completion of the internal market on less-developed Member States and to reduce discrepancies in development between regions. These were followed by a non-binding Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of Workers in 1989. In 2009, social and labour rights became legally binding through the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFREU). In 2001, the Treaty of Nice set up the Social Protection Committee to monitor the development of social conditions in the Member States and to cooperate on policy. The three main European Pillar of Social Rights priorities, endorsed in 2017, are equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion. A Social Scoreboard, with 14 composite indicators measures progress through the European Semester. Parliament called for a scoreboard indicator on skills gaps in a 2021 resolution. The 2021 action plan sets out future action, inspired by the 2020 Parliament resolution on 'a strong social Europe for just transitions'. On the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, Parliament highlighted that the revamped MFF and Europe's recovery strategy should be based on principles of economic and territorial cohesion. Parliament stressed that the recovery should be based on upward social economic convergence, social dialogue and improved social rights and working conditions, with targeted measures for those in precarious forms of work. To increase resilience and convergence, Parliament called for a budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness, such as a European Monetary Fund. Several own-initiative reports were formulated to initiate legislation on fair working conditions, rights and social protection for platform workers, reducing inequalities with a special focus on in-work poverty, decent and affordable housing for all, ageing policy post-2020, and to create an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable European tax system.

| 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.' |

**European Parliament position**

Parliament attaches great importance to fair taxation, and to combating tax evasion. Its own-initiative report on **reforming the EU policy on harmful tax practices**, Parliament called for reform of the Code of Conduct on business taxation. It stressed that the proliferation of recent tax scandals involving multinationals (**LuxLeaks**, **Panama Papers**, **Paradise Papers**) has revealed the scale and seriousness of harmful tax practices and the urgency of finding definitive solutions. Parliament also adopted a **resolution** demanding change to the 'confusing and ineffective' EU list of tax havens. Parliament promotes the importance of education, research and innovation, as well as the key role of young people, researchers and innovators, to achieving the political priorities of the EU. A 2021 resolution on a **new ERA for research and innovation** recalls that EU research and investments offer options for Europe to address pressing societal, ecological and economic challenges, aggravated by the Covid-19 crisis. It also stresses the importance of spreading opportunities throughout the whole territory of Europe, strengthening links and synergies between different research and innovation communities. As for education, a 2020 resolution on the future of European education in the context of Covid-19 'underlines the central role that education plays in the green and digital transitions, (...) recalls that well-functioning education systems require high level of public spending'. Parliament reflects these positions in its stance on the EU budget. For example, in a 2021 resolution on **general guidelines for the preparation of the 2022 budget**, Parliament emphasises the continued need to boost investment massively in research, development and innovation, to enable the EU to drive delivery of the European Green Deal and the digital transition. Those guidelines led the Parliament to obtain increased funding in 2022 for Horizon Europe (+€100 million above the Commission’s draft budget) and ERASMUS+ (+€35 million).

**Existing proposals and/or acts on the issue**

**Country-by-country reporting (CBCR)** requires enterprises with global revenues exceeding €750 million a year to publish key information on where they make their profits and where they pay their tax in the EU, on a country-by-country basis (CBCR). The European Commission has proposed a directive to ensure a **global minimum effective tax rate of 15%** for large groups operating in the EU, to implement the global tax reform agreement reached by the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS). Under the European Semester, the Council regularly adopts **country specific recommendations** and **recommendations for the euro area**, addressing inter alia aggressive tax planning, tax evasion and tax avoidance. **Recovery and resilience plans** are expected to address the recommendations issued under the European Semester.

With the proposal for a **Council decision amending Decision (EU, Euratom) 2020/2053 on the system of own resources of the EU**, the Union is expected to establish a new own resource based on the residual profit of multinational enterprises reallocated to Member States. Under **TFEU**, research and innovation policy is a shared competence (Title XIX), whereas the EU has a competence to coordinate, support or supplement action on education, vocational training, youth and sport. **ERASMUS+** (budget of €26.2 billion), and **Horizon Europe** (budget of €95.5 billion) are the two main Union programmes supporting education, the young generation, research and innovation between 2021 and 2027. Whereas ERASMUS+ aims at supporting no less than 12 million persons, Horizon Europe supports the whole continuum from research to innovation. However, **oversubscription to Horizon calls** for funding, means that not every excellent proposal can be funded by the available EU budget, making the case for the effectiveness of investing additional EU resources in those programmes. The
national recovery and resilience plans funded by [Next Generation EU](https://nextgeneration.eu) will also drive investments in education, research and innovation.

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<td>Harmful tax practices within the EU: definition, identification and recommendations, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, May 2021.</td>
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3.10. Education on democracy

| 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.' |

| European Parliament position | Parliament considers that knowledge, skills and competences are needed for the participation in democratic processes at both national and EU levels. Students' representatives' participation in decision-making process, as well as games adapted to the age of participants and lifelong learning for teachers can contribute to this aim. Education on the functioning and the role of the EU has an important place in democratic education. History curricula in particular play an important role in democracy education, as stated by the Council of Europe's Observatory on History Teaching in Europe. Parliament notes the Erasmus+ programme's potential role in promoting democratic values and active citizenship, in particular for the development of transferable skills needed for active civic participation. Such an objective requires an EU component in civic education and teacher training, particularly on EU rights and citizenship. The Culture and Education Committee is currently analysing the implementation of citizenship education actions. It is looking at the contribution to citizenship education of funding programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, Europe for Citizens and its continuation via the citizens, equality, rights and values programme 2021-2027, and European Solidarity Corps. On the implementation of the EU youth strategy, Parliament considers that there is insufficient space for democratic dialogue and a lack of on- and offline tools to empower young people, to participate in decision-making processes. It highlighted volunteering, solidarity and community engagement as instruments of youth civic engagement. |

| Existing proposals/acts on the issue | The 2020 EU democracy action plan proposes actions to empower citizens and strengthen the democratic resilience of our societies. Democratic engagement and active participation beyond elections are important for achieving this aim. Media and democracy education reinforced with critical thinking are essential elements in democratic engagement. As digital platforms and social media play an important role in political engagement, the digital education action plan aims at enhancing digital skills and competences to fit the needs of digital participation and engagement. In this context, Erasmus+ (2021-2027) envisages specific actions, aiming at enhancing youth participation. Local and transnational initiatives by young people or their organisations shall help them engage and learn how to participate in democratic life. Awareness about EU common values and fundamental rights are part of the process. Common engagement of young people and decision-makers at local, national and European level may contribute to achieving EU common goals in this domain. Policy development and cooperation are more experimental actions; they involve high-level public authorities in several countries in field trials on policy measures. The EU youth dialogue at national level helps enhance such democratic engagement. |

'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.'

The European Parliament has repeatedly called for EU action to develop and improve artificial intelligence. For example, in a 2020 resolution, it asked the European Commission to establish a legal framework of ethical principles for the development, deployment and use of AI, robotics and related technologies in the EU. More specifically, in its 2021 resolution, Parliament called 'on the Commission and the Member States to step up their financial support for the development, deployment and use of AI in the area of the automatic subtitling and dubbing of European audiovisual works'. Parliament has also repeatedly emphasised the importance of preserving and promoting multilingualism (e.g. in a 2021 resolution on the budget for the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the EU, in a 2018 resolution on language equality in the digital age).

Parliament has set up a special committee on artificial intelligence in a digital age (AIDA committee), which analyses the future impact of artificial intelligence on the EU economy and its different sectors. The question of whether automatic translation AI-based systems are almost or even completely risk-free is debated, given the risks at stake (such as the risk of repeating and reinforcing linguistic or societal discrimination). Parliament has yet to vote on the committee's draft report in plenary.

Linguistic diversity is a fundamental value for the EU. Article 3 TEU states that the EU 'shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity'. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU prohibits discrimination on grounds of language (Article 21) and obliges the Union to respect linguistic diversity (Article 22).

The EU supports research, innovation and deployment of language technologies to reduce language barriers and strengthen common identity and democracy. It is dedicating funds to advance emerging translation technologies, in particular through its Horizon 2020 research programme, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the digital Europe programme.

The European Commission has developed a range of basic language tools, ranging from an interactive terminology database to a speech recognition project. These tools are created using AI technologies. One of the main tools is the online machine translation service, e-translation. A free of charge automated translation tool (funded by the CEF), eTranslation, allows its users to translate text excerpts or complete documents. It is available to small and medium-sized enterprises, employees of public administrations across the EU and to information system owners. eTranslation also offers speech transcription, named-entity recognition and a social media translator.

In April 2021, the European Commission made a new legislative proposal for an EU regulatory framework on AI, which aims at creating the conditions for the development and use of trustworthy AI systems in the Union.


| 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.' |

**European Parliament position**

The website of the European Parliament provides information about the work of the Parliament, legislative process, news, debates, etc. The Parliament also launched a mobile application (Citizens’ app) and web portal (What Europe does for me) providing information about EU actions and their impact on citizens across the EU. Parliament called for an ambitious EU media action plan to foster a plurality of opinions by promoting high-quality journalism to deliver reliable, fact-based and verified information. Parliament also stressed the need to support the digital transformation in the news media sector, acknowledged the importance of independent journalism, and underlined the need to promote media and information literacy.

**Existing proposals/acts on the issue**

The European democracy action plan set out measures to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and pluralism, and counter disinformation to empower citizens and build more resilient democracies.

A forthcoming European media freedom act, building on a revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive, will seek to safeguard the pluralism and independence of the media in the EU internal market.

The EU funds actions to support media freedom and pluralism, such as developing a Media Pluralism Monitor, supporting investigative journalism, and tackling disinformation. The News initiative in the Creative Europe programme will support the news media sector during 2021-2027 (€75 million).

The European Commission set up the European News Media Forum to maintain a regular dialogue with news media organisations, professionals, representatives of civil society and international organisations. The Publications Office of the EU maintains a website with some 40 mobile applications created by the EU institutions and other bodies.

**EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information**


### 3.11. European values and identity

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<th>'We recommend that the EU create a special fund for online and offline interactions (i.e. exchange 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, i.e. 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 fund needs to be evaluated on a regular basis.'</th>
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<td>The road to a European identity seems long and complex. As early as 2017, Parliament supported the idea of a European identity card in addition to national identification documents. However, European identity goes far beyond identification, and according to Parliament, exercising active citizenship and encouraging civic participation is key to reinforcing the sense of belonging to a political project, to foster the development of a shared sense of European identity. Consequently, Parliament has consistently stressed the need for adequate funding for initiatives such as the citizens, equality, rights and values programme that helps sustain and develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. Most recently, Parliament underlined that education and culture are key to fostering European citizenship and pleaded for more funding to speed up the development of digital education. Moreover, Parliament’s strenuous defence of the rule of law, both within and outside the EU, remains key to EU civic legitimacy.</td>
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<td>There is a vast amount of literature on the concept of European identity. Most experts agree that European identity is a supranational component beyond national identity. Given the diversity of languages, religions and cultures on the continent, several axes of action to help building a European identity have been considered so far. Those include actions to promote EU shared values and citizens’ rights, EU culture and actions on education and youth. The well-known flagship programme Erasmus+, which has offered opportunities to over nine million people so far, will celebrate its 35th anniversary this year. Providing a common understanding of European history and European integration is also necessary to foster European identity. The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe – a cooperation project between the EU and the Council of Europe, co-funded under Erasmus+ – strives to do just that. It looks for what unites the participating European countries and tries to bring them closer to a convergent, if not common, identity. Additionally, the 2020 EU democracy action plan includes a set of actions to empower citizens and strengthen democratic resilience. In March 2021, the European Commission proposed a digital compass for Europe’s digital transformation by 2030, which evolves around four cardinal points: skills, government, infrastructure and business. Most recently, in June 2021, the Commission proposed a framework for an EU digital identity which should help EU citizens, residents, and businesses to prove their identity and share electronic documents and can be used for both online and offline public and private services across the EU. In January 2022, the Commission proposed a declaration on digital rights, fostering participation of citizens in the digital public space.</td>
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|   | Towards a more resilient Europe post-coronavirus, Promoting a common European identity, EPRS with the Directorates-General for Internal Policies and External Policies, April 2021.  
Thinking about the future of Europe, European Identity, EPRS, February 2019. |
| 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.' |

| European Parliament position | The European Parliament called for greater collaboration between online platforms and law enforcement authorities to tackle illegal content, urged to strengthen education policies that promote media and information literacy, and called for more EU funding for media literacy programmes and to actively engage in the promotion of reliable, fact-based and fact-checked information. Parliament urged the establishment of a clear legal framework for content moderation by online platforms. It also urged stricter regulation of targeted advertising to ensure adequate consent, clear identification of paid advertisements and public scrutiny of advertisements. Parliament has strongly condemned foreign electoral interference and disinformation in national and European democratic processes. In September 2020, Parliament set up a temporary special committee (INGE) on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the EU, including disinformation. In January 2022, the INGE committee adopted its final recommendations, which are due for vote in Parliament at its March 2022 session. |

| Existing proposals/acts on the issue | The EU proposal for a regulation on a single market for digital services (digital services act) seeks to increase transparency and accountability of online platforms with regard to removal of online content. Parliament approved its mandate to negotiate with the Council in January 2022. The proposal for a regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising imposes strict transparency requirements for political ads. The EU Code of Practice on Disinformation lays out self-regulatory standards for online platforms, and is supplemented by European Commission guidance. The European Digital Media Observatory established a hub for fact-checkers, academics and other stakeholders to support policy-makers. The EU digital education action plan, and the EU media and audiovisual action plan include measures to increase media and information literacy. The European democracy action plan sets out measures to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and pluralism, and counter disinformation. A Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis was launched with support from the EU to help European fact-checking organisations and researchers cooperate to counter disinformation. |

| 29 | 'We recommend 1) to increase the frequency of online and offline interactions between the EU and its citizens (i.e. 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 feedback, 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.' |

| European Parliament position | Ahead of the Conference on the Future of Europe, Parliament stressed the need to involve citizens, organised civil society and a range of stakeholders at all levels, European, national, regional and local. In previous years, Parliament stressed the need to promote civic participation in the EU project and organise regular citizens' consultations and to restore citizens' confidence and trust into the EU project. Parliament has also supported citizens' involvement through the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and its reform. Most recently, in 2021, Parliament stressed the need ‘to facilitate public participation in wider political debates and equip citizens with the opportunity to influence political outcomes’ and that this bottom-up approach should complement representative democracy. Parliament considered that citizen engagement should be structured to respond to citizens' expectations. |

| Existing proposals and/or acts on the issue | Article 10(3) TEU provides that ‘every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union’ and that ‘decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen’. Article 11 TEU mandates the EU institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society. Article 227 TFEU provides a right to petition to the European Parliament and Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights a right to good administration. Regulation (EU) 2019/788 on the European citizens’ initiative and Rule 222 of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure provide for public hearings and debates on citizens’ initiatives. The citizens, equality, rights and values programme provides civil society organisations with several opportunities to participate into the democratic life of the Union. It encourages civic and social participation and cultivates the rich diversity of our society. A guide to the obligations of officials and other servants of the European Parliament is in place, as well as a code of good administrative behaviour for staff of the European Commission in their relation with the public. There are also several opportunities for citizens to contribute to the different steps of the policy cycle, notably through public consultations and feedback mechanisms. Increasing citizens’ awareness and participation is one of the objectives of the Better Regulation Agenda. |

We recommend that European identity and values (i.e. 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.”

Parliament has adopted several resolutions to foster the inclusion of migrants and refugees. In April 2016, it adopted a resolution underlining the importance of refugee integration through programmes offering accommodation, literacy and language courses, inter-cultural dialogue, and professional training. In a resolution of July 2016, Parliament called on the EU to take action and ensure refugees are swiftly and fully integrated into the labour market and society, while it underlined the importance of education and sport, and called on EU countries to help migrant teachers and professors find teaching jobs. A report, approved by the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committee in April 2017, states that asylum seekers should be able to work in the EU no later than two months after applying for asylum and calls for access to language courses from the moment they file their asylum application. In its resolution of 20 May 2021, Parliament noted that the divergent implementation of the existing directives by the Member States can hinder integration and that enhanced intra-EU mobility would allow third country nationals already in the EU to improve their integration prospects. In its resolution of 25 November 2021, Parliament puts forward several recommendations to the European Commission on legal migration policy and law, such as the establishment of a Union-wide transnational advisory service network and the revision of several directives, which would strengthen the effective access to labour rights and to effective remedies, and promote professional mobility.

Local and regional authorities are the main facilitators of integration and social cohesion, however the EU supports Member States’ integration and inclusion efforts since the Treaty of Amsterdam first introduced shared responsibility for integrating migrants from non-EU countries in the 1990s. The 2004 common basic principles for immigrant integration represent the basis for EU action. The Commission’s 2005-2010 common agenda for integration provided the framework for implementation of EU integration policy. In June 2016, the Commission adopted an action plan on the integration of third-country nationals, providing a comprehensive framework to support Member States’ efforts in developing and strengthening their integration policy. In 2016, the Council adopted conclusions on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU. In November 2020, the Commission presented an EU action plan on integration and inclusion (2021-2027). Based on the overarching principle ‘inclusion for all’, the action plan envisions: inclusive education and training; improving employment opportunities and skills recognition; better access to health services; and access to adequate and affordable housing. On 14 December 2021, the Commission published a toolkit on the use of EU funds for the integration of people with a migrant background, for 2021-2027, aiming to assist stakeholders at European, national, regional and local levels in the design and implementation of integration policies targeted at people with a migrant background.


### 3.12. Information about EU

| 31 | 'We recommend that the EU provide 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.' |

**European Parliament position**

In the past ten years, the audiovisual market has rapidly evolved, leading to the gradual convergence of all audiovisual media. Reflecting on this major shift, the European Parliament asked the European Commission to align traditional television broadcasts and video-on-demand services, as well as to set out minimum common standards at EU level for all audio-visual media services (2015). The EU legislator also highlighted the need to reduce regulation and strengthen co- and self-regulation – creating a framework under which authorities draw up their own regulations to achieve certain objectives and take full responsibility for monitoring compliance with those regulations (2013). As part of a series of observations (2014), Members of Parliament also put forward the idea that EU countries should step up the promotion of European works through on-demand services. Most recently, in 2021, Parliament underscored the importance of placing the European audiovisual and news media sectors at the centre of the EU’s twin digital and green agendas. Members also highlighted the need to increase availability of diverse European audiovisual content, particularly from smaller EU countries, and for which targeted measures for co-production, translation, subtitling, co-distribution and promotion should play a part. Parliament also urged the Commission to create a permanent, well-funded European NEWS media fund.

**Existing proposals/acts on the issue**

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2018), the scope of which has been extended to include online platforms for the first time, is at present the cornerstone of media regulation in the EU. This essential piece of legislation brings about a balance between competitiveness and consumer protection. It also introduces future-proof and more flexible rules, guarantees the promotion of European films, protects minors and tackles hate speech more efficiently.

The 2021-2027 Creative Europe programme, plans actions focused on the (news) media and information literacy for the first time. Similarly, the media and audio-visual action plan, aims to boost European media and help maintain European cultural and technological autonomy, including through a 'NEWS initiative', bundling existing and new actions and supporting the news media sector. In addition, the European Commission supports the production of EU radio news through Euranet Plus, a network of 13 leading public and private broadcasters, which, with content in 12 official EU languages, reach more than 15 million listeners every day. Similarly, the Commission has a contract with Euronews relating to the production and broadcasting of programmes on EU affairs and EU institutions’ activities and policies in 12 languages. The EU also funds some data-driven networks, such as the European Data News Hub, the European Data Journalism Network and Sonar Europe, to increase reporting on European topics by making it easier for media to produce attractive content and, in turn, encourage citizens to become better informed.

**EPRS/POLDEP publications for further information**


Pasikowska-Schnass M., Creative Europe programme 2021-2027, EPRS, May 2021.
| **European Parliament position** | "We recommend the EU 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 centralised 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." |
| **Existing proposals/acts on the issue** | The European Parliament has reflected on the ways EU citizens could effectively engage in the Union's decision-making process on several occasions. The need to increase efforts to communicate with citizens in all official EU languages was among its concerns in this area. It recognised the potential that new technologies offer for citizens' engagement with EU institutions. Parliament also called to ensure multilingualism on EU-related sites and portals, at least for the 23 official EU languages, and linguistic parity in citizens' relations with institutions at all levels, as well as among citizens themselves. Parliament noted that lesser-used languages in the EU need specific support for translation technologies. |
| **EPRS/POLDEP publication for further information** | Ensuring linguistic diversity by and in the EU is enshrined in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Article 10 TEU refers to citizens' right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. EU institutions have a duty to give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange views in all policy areas of the Union (Article 11). The Treaty also refers to citizens’ rights to initiate a legislative process. While currently only available in English, citizens can propose themes to debate with Europe’s leaders on the Debating Europe platform and contribute to the debate on the European Citizens’ Initiative Forum. Promotion of citizens' engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union, and exchanges between citizens from different EU countries, is one of the objectives of the EU-funded citizens, equality, rights and values programme. The Conference of the Future of Europe itself offers a multilingual online platform for citizens' debate and provides interpretation for participation in in-person meetings. It confirms the technological possibilities and solutions both for establishing platforms for citizens' participation and for providing multilingual solutions. |

Sgueo G., *Digital democracy is the future of civic engagement online?*, EPRS, March 2020.


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<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td>'We recommend the EU institutions and representatives 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.'</td>
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<td>European Parliament position</td>
<td>Members of the European Parliament can always communicate in their national language. Moreover, Parliament has always particularly attentive to communicate the work it is doing to the broader public in an accessible, inclusive and clear way using a variety of media and appropriate channels in all official languages. For that purpose, internal guidelines have been issued that highlight this aspect as essential to a democratic inclusive process. Furthermore, in a resolution of 2010 on creating a European public sphere, Parliament stressed how better communication by governments, political parties, universities, public service broadcasters and the EU institutions is vital for developing a European public sphere. Parliament is also part of the institutional partnership signed in 2008, under which the three institutions (Parliament, European Commission and Council) recognise the importance of addressing the communication challenge on EU issues in partnership with Member States, to ensure effective communication of objective information to the widest possible audience. The overall aim of the EU’s communication policies is to offer citizens access to information about EU policies, seeking to promote better understanding of their impact at European, national and local level.</td>
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<td>Existing proposals/acts on the issue</td>
<td>Parliament provides information and documents on its website in all 24 official languages of the EU. Furthermore, Parliament can be followed through its Multimedia Centre platform and press office, as well as on social media. Parliament’s citizens’ enquiries (or ‘Ask EP’) service replies to questions of the public about Parliament, its positions and activities, organisation and rules, powers and procedures. What Europe Does For Me is an multilingual interactive website developed by the European Parliament, providing detailed information on the EU’s impact on individual citizens’ lives and local communities. The Europe in the palm of your hand application was designed by the European Parliament to help citizens to discover what the EU has done, is doing and what it plans to do. The european-union.europa.eu website offers a one-stop-shop for information on EU policies and institutions. It contains information in clear, easy-to-read language and provides information on EU social media channels. It allows citizens to follow the work of the institutions, for example Council meetings or Parliament sessions, online. It also provides learning material on the EU for children of all ages. The European Commission and Council websites also provide information on these two institutions. Recently modernised, they are now more accessible to the broader public. The Council and Commission websites provide audiovisual services including live coverage, video clips and news on European issues, events and meetings.</td>
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<td>EPRS/POLDEP publications for further information</td>
<td>See websites in the previous section. European Strategy for Multilingualism: Benefits and Costs, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, October 2016</td>
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### 3.13. Citizen participation

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<tr>
<th>34</th>
<th>'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.'</th>
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<td>European Parliament position</td>
<td>In a 2017 resolution on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union, Parliament stressed that 'citizens should be endowed with more instruments of participatory democracy at Union level'. Most recently, Parliament stressed the importance of strengthening participatory mechanisms in 2021. Parliament supports regular participatory processes where citizens can influence annual political and legislative priorities, developing specific proposals and discussing institutional matters. These should be inclusive, open, deliberate, transnational, transparent, non-partisan, accountable effective, visible and engaging. Participation mechanisms could include a wide range of complementary tools, such as citizens’ assemblies, citizens’ initiatives, public consultations, citizens’ dialogues or participative budgeting. Parliament also committed to engage with the EU institutions and stakeholders to expand citizens' dialogues and establish a ‘permanent mechanism’ for citizens’ participation, with a formally binding follow-up process. A working document by the Constitutional Affairs Committee (AFCO) in 2021 mentioned the added value of the process in developing a permanent mechanism for citizens’ participation in EU decision-making.</td>
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<td>Existing proposal and/or acts on the issue</td>
<td>Articles 10 and 11 TEU expressly provide for citizens’ right to participate in the democratic life of the Union and institutions' duty to give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to exchange their views in public on all areas of Union policy. The Citizens' Panels in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe were proposed and designed to give a voice to citizens in the most inclusive way possible. The multilingual platform allowed people to share ideas and comment on them, and these were used as input to the citizens’ panels. In the framework of the EU youth strategy, the EU youth dialogue project builds a dialogue between young people and policy-makers. National working groups in each Member State organise consultations and activities with young people and youth organisations. The Juncker Commission held Citizens’ Dialogue conferences in 2019. These town-hall style debates were held following Commission President Juncker's invitation to members of the College of Commissioners to be politically active in communicating the common EU agenda to the public and listening to their concerns. The 2019 report on citizens’ dialogue and citizens’ consultation was delivered to the EU27 leaders as material for reflection. Prior to that, debates with citizens had also been carried out during José Manuel Barroso's presidency, with 51 citizens' dialogues taking place in every EU country, while a final pan-European debate took place in Brussels.</td>
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We recommend that the EU re-opens 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 prioritise the inclusion of human rights and democracy values. The creation of such a constitution should consider previous efforts that never materialised to a constitution.

In 2017, Parliament proposed a reflection on reform of the Treaties, seeking to come to an agreement on a vision for future EU generations. Within this constituent process, Parliament also envisaged organising a convention that would guarantee inclusiveness by involving the EU institutions, national parliaments and the EU consultative bodies. The convention was to provide a platform for a reflection and engagement with citizens and civil society. This was the only occasion to date when a convention – the 2002 Convention on the Future of Europe – was organised to prepare treaty change, and produced the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. However, the draft treaty was never ratified, following its rejection in popular referendums in France and the Netherlands.

In 2019, Parliament reiterated its position, affirming that treaty revisions should be based on a convention that guarantees inclusiveness. Parliament again stressed the need to involve civil society and to consult citizens. In its resolution of 7 July 2021 on citizens’ dialogues and citizens’ participation in EU decision-making, Parliament stressed that any reform of the Union should be strengthened by directly engaging with citizens through participatory mechanisms. In the same resolution, Parliament called for modification of the convention method under Article 48 TEU to facilitate citizens’ participation in the process of EU reform.

Article 48(1-6) TEU establishes the two types of treaty revision procedures that can modify the EU’s competences, policies and the institutional organisation. Neither the ordinary revision procedure (Article 48(1-5) TEU), nor the simplified revision procedure (Article 48(6) TEU) provide for citizen involvement, relying mainly on institutional actors.

Article 11 TEU mandates the EU institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society on all areas of Union action. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms recognised by the EU. With the 2009 entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, these rights and freedoms became legally binding on the EU and its Member States when implementing EU law. In addition, the EU’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is under way, as provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Tilindyte L.; Chahri S., How EU Treaties are changed, EPRS, September 2019.
### European Parliament position

The [Joint Declaration](#) on the Conference on the Future of Europe expressly recognised the contribution of 'young Europeans playing a central role in shaping the future of the European project'. It also demanded that specific events should be dedicated to young people to ensure the long-lasting impact of the Conference.

In its [resolution](#) on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Parliament proposed the creation of two 'young Agora', to provide young people with their own forum, as they represent the future of Europe. However, this proposal was rejected.

In 2021, Parliament again stressed the importance of young active participation in shaping the future of the European project.

Every two years, Parliament organises the [European Youth Event](#) (EYE) in Strasbourg, to encourage youth participation in European democratic life. Young people between 16 and 30 years can take this opportunity to interact and exchange their views, including with decision-makers.

Moreover, Parliament awards the [European Charlemagne Youth Prize](#) to projects that promote European and international understanding run by young EU citizens aged between 16 and 30 years.

### Existing proposals/acts on the issue

Article [165 TFEU](#) encourages young people to participate in democratic life in Europe.

The Conference on the Future of Europe [Citizens’ Panels](#) were designed to give a voice to citizens in the most inclusive way possible. In particular, according to the Conference [Rules of Procedure](#), a third of citizen representatives on the panels should be younger than 25 years. The Conference's [multilingual platform](#) allows people to share ideas and comment on them, providing input for the citizens' panels.

In the framework of the [EU youth strategy](#), the [EU youth dialogue](#) project builds a dialogue between young people and policy-makers. National working groups in each Member State organise consultations and activities with young people and youth organisations. The strategy recognises that young people ‘contribute to positive change in society and enrich the Union's ambitions'.

To engage with young citizens and hear their voice – especially after the difficulties they faced during the pandemic, in terms of their education, employment, social life, health and wellbeing – 2022 was made the [European Year of Youth](#). The year should provide an occasion to encourage young people eager to participate in defining the future of the European project.

### EPRS/POLDEP publications for further information


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.

In a resolution of 2021, Parliament strongly advocated greater citizen involvement in EU decision-making, calling on the European Commission and Member States to develop accessible, innovative and inclusive tools for citizens’ participation and dialogues. Parliament called for better use of digital technologies to allow citizens to take an active part in EU decisions, and highlighted that the EU institutions must commit themselves to follow up on the outcome of any participatory process in the light of their competences and legislative procedures. Parliament also pointed out that citizens in these participatory mechanisms should be provided with a clear understanding of the issues. Any new participatory instrument should therefore be accompanied by a significant communication campaign with high-level political engagement. Parliament also envisages an institutionalisation of participatory mechanisms in key debates to influence the annual Commission work programme and the State of the Union address. Participative events could be run on an annual basis with priorities to be discussed in a transnational European citizens’ agora, which could be concluded on Europe Day (9 May). Parliament believes that the citizens’ agoras organised during the Conference on the Future of Europe could provide a pilot for permanent citizen participation in key debates.

The citizens’ dialogues are public debates that take place in European cities between European Commissioners and other EU decision-makers, such as Members of the European Parliament, national, regional and local politicians. The Debating Europe website that allows citizens to discuss EU issues online. The Have your say platform empowers citizens and businesses to share their views on new EU policies and existing laws. The EU youth dialogue under the EU youth strategy allows debate between young people and decision-makers. Parliament’s platform (originally ‘This time I am voting’) together.eu establishes a pan-European community that encourages everybody to participate in democracy. EU citizens can get involved in the political process or promote the importance of voting. Parliament has also set up a petitions web portal to make it easier to submit petitions. The European Commission usually consults stakeholders on new legislative proposals or evaluations of existing policies and laws, so they can express their views on the scope, priorities and added value of EU action. The European Citizens Initiative (ECI) enables European citizens to formally invite the Commission to table a proposal for a legal act, once the initiative reaches one million signatures. Its main purpose is to encourage citizen participation in the political life of the Union. The ECI adds a new dimension to EU democracy, complements the set of rights relating to Union citizenship, broadens the public debate around EU policies and increases the involvement of citizens and organised civil society in the shaping of these policies, thus helping to build a genuine EU public space. As of January 2020, new rules came into force to regulate the ECI.

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<td>A Parliament resolution of July 2021 highlighted the need to include active EU citizenship in educational curricula across the Union. It called on the European Commission to help develop a common civic education curriculum, which would enhance the knowledge and understanding of EU institutions, their history and functioning. Parliament’s November 2021 resolution suggested the Commission and Member States should take action and to work on a common scope of knowledge on the EU at all levels and areas of education. Such a framework should cover the European integration process, institutions and policy areas, as well as rights related to EU citizenship and ways of actively participating in democratic processes. Parliament also called for a European strategy for citizenship education, including on European values of democracy, human dignity, the rule of law, human rights and equality. Common pedagogical material, approaches and exchange of experience in this area of education should be encouraged. While other competences were addressed, Parliament pointed that the Commission had not done enough on the key ‘active citizenship’ competence. Parliament’s Culture and Education Committee (CULT) is analysing the implementation of citizenship education actions, in particular regarding funding programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, Europe for citizens and its continuation via the citizens, equality, rights and values programme 2021-2027, and the European Solidarity Corps. The European Parliament Ambassador School and Euroscola programmes raise awareness about parliamentary democracy among secondary school students.</td>
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<td>The Paris Declaration of March 2015 highlighted the need for EU-level cooperation on children and young people’s social, civic and intercultural education. Democratic values, fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship, were designated as the core focus. Citizenship is approached from the lifelong perspective: from early childhood through adult life, and in all contexts of formal, vocational and extracurricular education, and work experience. In addition to this core knowledge, the declaration includes improving understanding of the multicultural dimension of European societies. Support for teachers enabling them to convey common values and active citizenship, via peer learning, initial, and continued education, features among the recommendations on promoting the European dimension in teaching. The rights and values programme includes funding for curricula promoting young people's civic, political and democratic engagement via civil society organisations. It is part of the European democracy action plan, which aims to empower citizens and strengthen the democratic resilience of our societies. A competence centre on participatory and deliberative democracy was established in October 2021 to promote knowledge, resources and tools, and to provide virtual and physical spaces to share ideas.</td>
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<td>Europe for Citizens: Towards the Next Programme Generation, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, May 2017’</td>
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<td>European Parliament position</td>
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In the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe, four European citizens’ panels have discussed the development of European integration in broad subject areas. For each of the 39 recommendations put forward by European Citizens’ Panel 2: European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security, the present paper sets out a selection of the most recent and relevant European Parliament resolutions on the matter and looks at existing EU legislation and other EU funding programmes, supporting and coordinating actions. However, this paper is not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of all European Parliament resolutions and EU-level action in the area, but rather aims at feeding debate and discussion during the Conference plenary.

This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament.