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REPORT

on Parliamentarism, European citizenship and democracy
(2023/2017(INI))

Committee on Constitutional Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Parliamentarism, European citizenship and democracy (2023/2017(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 9, 10, 11, 15 and 17(2) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and Articles 15, 20 and 24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making¹ (Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making),
- having regard to its position of 14 February 2023 on the proposal for a Council directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals²,
- having regard to its position of 14 February 2023 on the proposal for a Council directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections by Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals³,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2022 on Parliament's right of initiative⁴,
- having regard to its position of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that Decision⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 February 2019 on the implementation of the Treaty provisions related to EU citizenship⁶, and to its resolution of 9 March 2022 with proposals to the Commission on citizenship and residence by investment schemes⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2017 on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union⁸,

¹ [OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.](#)

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0037.

³ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0038.

⁴ [OJ C 493, 27.12.2022, p. 112.](#)

⁵ OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 171.

⁶ [OJ C 449, 23.12.2020, p. 6.](#)

⁷ [OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 97.](#)

⁸ [OJ C 449, 23.12.2020, p. 6.](#)

- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2017 on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 May 2022 on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe¹⁰ (CoFE),
- having regard to its resolution of 6 April 2022 on the implementation of citizenship education actions¹¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 April 2016 on Learning EU at school¹²,
- having regard to its position of 16 April 2014 on a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament on the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry and repealing Decision 95/167/EC, Euratom, ECSC of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission¹³,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Presidency following the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments held in Prague on 24-25 April 2023¹⁴,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Plenary Meeting of the LXIX Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs held in Stockholm on 14-16 May 2023¹⁵,
- having regard to the Declaration of Léon on parliamentarism adopted at the Conference to Commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism: Strengthening Parliaments to Enhance Democracy, held in Léon on 30 June - 1 July 2023¹⁶,
- having regard to the report of the final outcome of the CoFE¹⁷,
- having regard to the Proposal of a Manifesto for a Federal Europe: Sovereign, Social and Ecological, adopted by the Spinelli Group on 29 August 2022¹⁸,
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A9-0249/2023),

⁹ [OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 215.](#)

¹⁰ [OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 109.](#)

¹¹ OJ C 434, 15.11.2022, p. 31.

¹² OJ C 58, 15.2.2018, p. 57.

¹³ OJ C 443, 22.12.2017, p. 39.

¹⁴ <https://parleu2022.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EUSC-Prague-Presidency-Conclusions-final-EN-1.pdf>.

¹⁵ <https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/download/file/8a8629a88827df1e018828991e660000/Contribution%20adopted%20by%20the%20LXIX%20COSAC.pdf>.

¹⁶ https://www.congreso.es/backoffice_doc/prensa/notas_prensa/99181_1688138271277.pdf.

¹⁷ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf>.

¹⁸ https://thespinelligroup.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/20220912_Proposal-Manifesto-for-a-Federal-Europe-political-social-and-ecological.pdf.

- A. whereas the EU and its Parliaments are confronted with common, unprecedented and complex challenges brought about on the one hand by external factors such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate and energy crises, disinformation, foreign interference and digitalisation, and on the other hand by internal factors such as the rise of extremes and political actors who put polarisation, populism, nationalism, blaming and confrontation before the search for common solutions; whereas in this context, citizens' trust in politics and political decision-makers is being undermined;
- B. whereas a common definition and understanding of liberal parliamentary democracy and the political will to make it more resilient are urgently needed in order to ensure the functioning of the separation of powers and with a view to encouraging citizens to make use of their right to vote in all elections;
- C. whereas European democracy can generate further legitimacy through change and adaptation to current developments; whereas Europe urgently needs to sustain, strengthen and further develop liberal parliamentary democracy including parliamentarism, European citizenship and participatory elements of European democracy, making use of all instruments within the remit of the Treaties; whereas a reform of the democratic foundations of the Union is needed, where necessary through Treaty change;
- D. whereas there should be no decision-making without democratic legitimacy through parliamentary approval; whereas the European Parliament, despite being the only directly elected EU institution and therefore at the heart of European liberal democracy, does not yet have a general direct right of initiative, which would strengthen its ability to represent the voice of citizens and reflect the concerns raised by civil society and the social partners;
- E. whereas Article 15 TEU specifies that the European Council must not exercise legislative nor executive functions; whereas certain aspects of the Council's rotating presidency system as well as the role of the General Affairs Council hamper their efficient functioning and need to be reformed with a view to improving the legislative process within a bicameral system;
- F. whereas it is necessary to correct institutional imbalances that have arisen over time and to increase the accountability of the executive toward the legislature, in particular to grant Parliament scrutiny powers over the European Council, as well as to improve the political accountability of the Commission to Parliament; whereas, the relationship between Parliament and the Council, often portrayed as a bicameral legislative system, does not always represent the actual practice nor has it been institutionalised;
- G. whereas the persistence of unanimity voting in the Council has become a de facto impediment to the advancement of the European agenda and to further development and reform of European democracy, as it allows one government of a Member State to block EU decision-making, often to the detriment of the European interest;
- H. whereas it is important for the EU institutions to better take into account the role played by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and European Economic and Social Committee

(EESC) in the legislative framework as representatives of local and regional authorities and organised civil society;

- I. whereas the conclusions of the presidency of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (EUSC), held in Prague on 24-25 April 2023, welcomed the initiative of the European Parliament in the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) to ‘jointly advance on the role of Parliaments in a functioning democracy and to reflect on possible ways to strengthen modern parliamentarism, with a view to informing the next EUSC in Madrid about the results on this matter’¹⁹; whereas the LXIX COSAC, held in Stockholm on 14-16 May 2023, took note of these conclusions of the EUSC, in particular the invitation to COSAC to propose an exchange of best practices and to reflect on possible ways to strengthen modern parliamentarism²⁰;
- J. whereas the Global Conference to Commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism, held in León on 30 June and 1 July 2023, adopted the Declaration of León on parliamentarism; whereas this declaration supports the European Parliament’s initiative aimed at drafting a charter on the role of parliamentarism in an effective democracy; whereas the final adoption of this charter is expected to take place at the EUSC in Madrid on 21-23 April 2024²¹;
- K. whereas the conclusions of the CoFE call for the strengthening of European democracy, for improvements to the EU’s decision-making process in order to ensure the EU’s capability to act, and for representative democracy to be complemented and enhanced by increasing citizens’ participation and access to information and youth involvement; whereas the CoFE conclusions also call for European Citizenship to be strengthened, for instance through the elaboration of a European citizenship statute establishing specific rights and freedoms;
- L. whereas the CoFE and other existing successful projects for citizens’ participation have demonstrated citizens’ interest in being included in the democratic life of the Union on a regular basis; whereas the CoFE provided valuable experience in engaging with citizens on a large scale, from which lessons will have to be drawn;
- M. whereas EU citizenship and its related rights, introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht and further enhanced by the Treaty of Lisbon, has been only partially implemented; whereas many European citizens are often not fully aware of their rights deriving from citizenship of the Union;
- N. whereas EU citizenship is currently granted together with the citizenship of a Member State, with limited oversight from the EU itself;
- O. whereas several Member States are still offering so-called golden visa programmes and investor schemes as means of obtaining their nationality and, consequently, EU citizenship;
- P. whereas despite the arrangements under Council Directive 93/109/EC²² and Council Directive 94/80/EC²³ respectively regarding the participation of non-national Union

¹⁹ <https://parleu2022.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EUSC-Prague-Presidency-Conclusions-final-EN-1.pdf>.

²⁰ <https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/conferences/cosac>.

²¹ https://www.congreso.es/backoffice_doc/prensa/notas_prensa/99181_1688138271277.pdf.

citizens in European Parliament and municipal elections in their country of residence, non-national Union citizens still face many obstacles in exercising their electoral rights in elections to the European Parliament;

- Q. whereas according to Article 10(3) TEU, citizens have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union and decisions must be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizens; whereas participatory democracy is considered to be one way to improve political awareness and dialogue with all citizens of the Union;
- R. whereas there is still a lack of awareness of the existing participatory instruments, such as the European Citizens' Initiative, petitions to the European Parliament, complaints to the European Ombudsman, public consultations and Citizens' Dialogues; whereas participatory democracy in the EU is affected by high fragmentation of participatory instruments and a lack of follow-up, which limits their success and prevents them from adding up to a comprehensive and efficient participatory infrastructure;
- S. whereas any measures to strengthen citizens' participation and democracy must address the digital divide in the EU and the difficulties it creates for such participation to be effective;
- T. whereas the new citizens' panels proposed by the Commission as a follow-up to the CoFE are limited in scope and do not meet citizens' expectations as expressed in the CoFE;
- U. whereas the referendum as a direct democracy instrument is currently not available at EU level; whereas the European Parliament has repeatedly called for evaluations of the use of EU wide referendums on fundamental matters that would bring paradigm changes in the EU's actions and policies, such as Treaty reform;
- V. whereas a revolution is occurring in media consumption habits, especially among young people, which can negatively affect access to fact-based, well-researched information while increasing the availability of low quality and polarised content, and may lead to the fragmentation of societies and the undermining of democracies; whereas access to independent, pluralistic, quality media services is a cornerstone of a well-functioning democracy;

Parliamentarism

1. Recognises that in the current times of common and unprecedented challenges, liberal parliamentary democracy is under pressure and must urgently be sustained, strengthened and further developed; emphasises the key role of the Parliaments at the heart of European democracy as the directly elected chambers of the citizens, legislators and scrutinisers of the executive; acknowledges that liberal democracy can only successfully prove itself if parliamentarism strives and functions; underlines the need

²² Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (OJ L 329, 30.12.1993, p. 34).

²³ Council Directive 94/80/EC of 19 December 1994 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (OJ L 368, 31.12.1994, p. 38).

for a common understanding, fundamental principles and definition of liberal parliamentary democracy; welcomes, in this context, the initiative of the European Parliament to develop together with the parliaments of the EU a common ‘Charter on the role of Parliaments in a functioning liberal democracy’;

2. Considers that the current trend within the EU of moving from a ‘parliamentary’ towards a ‘governmental’ democracy weakens all parliaments in the decision-making process; notes with regret an increasing power imbalance shifting towards the Council and the European Council, which erodes the institutional architecture of the EU as established by the Treaties; believes that, in this context, the balance should be restored in favour of democratic legitimacy through equivalent rights for Parliament; considers that the European Council’s practice of ‘tasking the Council and the Commission’ goes beyond the role of strategic guidance assigned to it by the Treaties, and is therefore contrary to both the word and spirit of the Treaties; considers it necessary to respect the division of competences and the principle of subsidiarity as defined in the Treaties;
3. Strongly believes that in a democracy, Parliaments must be part of every decision-making process; stresses that the European Parliament, as the only directly elected EU institution, should be granted the general direct right of legislative initiative, the right of inquiry and full authority over the budget, and that as the chamber of the EU citizens it should be the driving force behind the strategic priorities of the European legislative agenda; calls in this regard for an amendment of Articles 225 and 226 TFEU;
4. Reiterates its proposal that the Council be transformed into a true legislative chamber by reducing the number of Council configurations by means of a European Council decision, thus creating a genuinely bicameral legislative system involving the European Parliament and Council, with the Commission acting as the executive; believes that the rotating presidency system of the Council of the EU should be reformed with a view to increasing the efficiency of the legislative process within a bicameral system; suggests that the General Affairs Council should become the legislative Council meeting in public, similar to the European Parliament in plenary, while all other Council configurations should become transparent preparatory structures, with regular meetings to be held in public, functioning in a similar way to the committees of the European Parliament;
5. Reiterates its long-standing calls for the Council to switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting wherever this is possible under the Treaties in the short term, for example by activating the various *passerelle* clauses in the Treaties, and permanently by means of Treaty changes, in order to overcome legislative blockages, to enhance the EU’s ability to act and to make EU decision-making more efficient, effective and democratic;
6. Considers it necessary for Parliament to strengthen its functions of political scrutiny over the Commission, including introducing the possibility of triggering motions of censure against individual commissioners;
7. Highlights that special legislative procedures where the right of legislative initiative is conferred on Parliament by the Treaties should include mutual exchanges on the establishment of a legislative calendar for the initiatives concerned in order to ensure

respect of the principle of sincere cooperation among all three institutions; expects, in this light, that new impetus will be given to the interinstitutional talks between Parliament and the Council on the much-needed reform of the European Electoral Law as well as on the right of inquiry of the European Parliament;

8. Calls for the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission to continue to improve cooperation modalities with the CoR and the EESC, including at the pre-legislative stage, in order to ensure that their opinions and assessments can be taken into account throughout the legislative process; suggests in particular the strengthening of informal exchanges both at committee level and at political group level between the relevant actors of the three institutions, and that the rapporteurs of the CoR and EESC be invited to participate in considering draft reports in the parliamentary committee and committee debriefing meetings on interinstitutional negotiations, where applicable;
9. Emphasises the key role of parliaments at the heart of democracy and the need to respect the clear division of competences between the different levels of European liberal democracy, i.e. the local, regional, national and European levels, in line with the principle of subsidiarity as laid down in Article 5 TEU, to ensure democratic legitimacy and an efficient decision-making process and to enhance trust and cooperation between Parliaments on different levels; points out, in this regard, that national parliaments are best placed to mandate and scrutinise the actions of their respective governments in European affairs, while the European executive is held democratically accountable by the European Parliament, which also ensures its legitimacy; underlines the need for regular political dialogue and exchange between parliaments in order to create awareness and understanding of parliamentary work and decisions, such as in the frameworks of the EUSC and COSAC;
10. Recalls the need to improve the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in the work of the EU institutions, in particular by cooperating with national parliaments in line with the prerogatives already included in the current Treaties and to ensure a more prominent role for national and local level representatives in the process in order to achieve ‘active subsidiarity’, with the aim of promoting greater ownership of EU policies; further suggests that ‘active subsidiarity’ be strengthened through a process for giving national parliaments the right to submit proposals to the European Parliament; supports, in this context, the Building Europe with Local Councillors programme, which creates a European network of locally elected politicians aimed at communicating the European Union;
11. Underlines that a parliament in presence entails a vibrant parliamentary democracy; highlights that digitalisation and the pandemic have contributed to the digital transformation of parliaments and have allowed Members that would have otherwise been excluded to participate in parliamentary life; underlines that digitalised processes should not replace voting, debates and negotiations in presence, except for in cases under specific circumstances; stresses that the enhanced use of digital possibilities has the potential to contribute to a better political understanding between parliaments at the national, regional and European levels, to increase communication, the sharing of information and awareness, to reduce transport and travel emissions and to strengthen contact with citizens;

12. Is highly concerned about the rapid and large-scale evolution of targeted disinformation campaigns, and the misuse of generative artificial intelligence with the intention to prevent citizens from making informed choices and ultimately undermine democratic processes within the Union; calls for the national parliaments of the Member States to establish regular exchanges on the protection of their democracies against foreign interference and information manipulation with the European Parliament as a part of COSAC inter-parliamentary cooperation; calls for a coordinated EU strategy to address threats to media independence and the establishment of a substantial and permanent EU editorial and news media support fund;
13. Highlights the need to strengthen the electorate's confidence in electoral processes by ensuring that all elections are free and fair; calls in this regard for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to organise election observation missions during the elections to the European Parliament in June 2024; encourages the Member States again to make use of this possibility;

European citizenship

14. Calls for the creation of an EU Statute of Citizenship to clarify and consolidate citizenship-specific rights and freedoms that connect the citizens in the Union; calls on the Council and Commission to take concrete steps towards the expansion of citizenship-specific rights and freedoms following the procedure under Article 25 TFEU; underlines that the Statute will make the principles and values of the Union more tangible while also providing citizens with new means to safeguard and uphold them;
15. Highlights that effective citizens' dialogues and active citizens' participation are strongly linked to the European dimension of citizenship education; stresses therefore the need to enhance the European dimension of citizenship education in curricular and extracurricular activities, in order to ensure citizens are active and informed so they are able to fully participate in civic and social life at both the European and Member State level as well as in the democratic life of the Union; calls on the Commission to develop a comprehensive European strategy to enhance citizenship competences in the EU and develop supportive measures aimed at providing equal access to citizenship education; underlines the important role that civil society, universities and other research organisations should play in such a strategy;
16. Strongly believes that third-country nationals who have resided legally and continuously in the European Union for a long time and have contributed to our society, deserve, under certain circumstances, to have access to citizenship of the Union and proposes that the Council and Parliament, in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, should be able to lay down common provisions;
17. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to better inform non-national Union citizens (i.e. Union citizens who reside in a Member State of which they are not nationals) about their right to vote in or run for office in municipal and European elections; stresses that an extension to such 'mobile' EU citizens' right to vote and stand in regional and national elections in Member States should be considered; points out that the Council and the Commission can introduce these rights through the procedure outlined in Article 25 TFEU, while in the long-term it should be anchored in

Article 22 TFEU through Treaty change; highlights the need for awareness-raising campaigns concerning these rights with the participation of civil society; stresses that all administrative barriers and discrimination that still exist must be removed to ensure equal possibilities for all mobile Union citizens, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups;

18. Reiterates its call for the introduction of a harmonised age for the right to vote and stand as a candidate across Member States in order to avoid discrimination; recommends the introduction of a minimum voting age of 16, without prejudice to existing constitutional orders, to reflect current rights and duties that Europe's young people already have in some Member States;
19. Recalls that the European Parliament has consistently expressed its concern that any national scheme that involves the direct or indirect sale of EU citizenship undermines the very concept of European citizenship; calls on the Member States concerned to put an end to such practices;
20. Is highly concerned by the practice of certain Member States of depriving their citizens of the right to vote in national parliamentary elections when they live abroad; urges these Member States to end this form of disenfranchisement;

Complementing representative democracy through improving citizens' participation

21. Reiterates that, in line with the founding text of the CoFE, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission have committed to following up effectively on the conclusions of the Conference, each within the remit of their competences and in accordance with the Treaties; calls for a swift and consistent implementation of the results of the CoFE, encompassing 49 proposals and 326 concrete measures delivered by the CoFE's European Citizens Panels; reiterates its call for a Convention for the revision of the Treaties;
22. Believes that one of the ways in which European citizens' expectations for more regular and meaningful involvement in the democratic life of the Union²⁴ can be addressed by improving and developing participatory mechanisms within the EU;
23. Stresses the need to improve and develop a comprehensive participation infrastructure in the EU, with better connection and integration of existing participatory instruments and better avenues for permanent participation; underlines the need to address the fragmentation of the EU participation infrastructure by creating a one-stop-shop for all European participatory instruments with an institutional framework set up to administer the central hub and its relations to citizens;
24. Underlines that direct or participatory democracy mechanisms and instruments can complement but not replace representative liberal parliamentary democracy in an increasingly complex world, where the search for viable and democratic compromises is needed; notes that mechanisms of direct or participatory democracy can be useful instruments if certain requirements are met; suggests in particular that the efficiency of

²⁴ BertelsmannStiftung, '[Next level citizen participation in the EU. Institutionalising European Citizens' Assemblies](#)', 2022.

the existing European participatory instruments be enhanced by providing mandatory meaningful follow-up;

25. Recalls that improved and increased participation will only be possible by addressing the problem of discrimination, in particular resulting from the digital divide and the difficulties it creates for effective participation in the democratic life of the Union; reiterates that digital applications to promote citizens' participation should be simple and intuitive;
26. Proposes the institutionalisation of representative deliberative participation processes based on the model of the CoFE's European Citizens Panels; believes that 'mini-publics' with randomly selected participants representing subsets of the socio-economic structure of the Union and thereby the whole spectrum of society need to be organised in a way that helps prevent unequal access to participation in the democratic life of the Union by offering citizens that otherwise might not have this opportunity a way of expressing their vision;
27. Believes that it is important to strengthen active citizenship and effective citizens' participation at EU level through the acquisition of specific knowledge about the EU and the European dimension of the topics under discussion; underlines the need to address the lack of familiarity with EU policies and decision-making among the general public through better education about the EU in schools; calls, in particular, for dedicated training and a sustained deliberative process in which the citizens on citizens panels are given the necessary information complemented through the support of experts if necessary, so as to be able to engage in open debates that can result in recommendations and conclusions;
28. Proposes, in particular, the creation of a structured participation mechanism, in line with the EU acquis, called the European Agora, which should work on yearly basis, deliberating on the EU's priorities for the year ahead with the results of the deliberations to be presented on 9 May 2023 as an input to the consultation process on the Commission Annual Work Programme (CAWP); notes that those results should also include a proposal for the specific theme for the European Year in the following annual cycle; proposes that European Parliament's representatives should be regularly informed on the developments of those deliberations in order to take them into account in its parliamentary work;
29. Stresses that throughout the year, the citizens in the European Agora will discuss the content related to the specific theme of the European Year, and their proposals and conclusions should be presented at the end of the year; considers that different options for follow-up by Parliament should be laid down taking into account the sizes of the majorities supporting these conclusions in the panel, and that this follow-up could include debates, hearings, parliamentary questions or reports;
30. Suggests that a Youth component of the Agora should form a European Youth Assembly, which may monitor the application of a 'youth check' throughout the EU's legislative process as requested by the CoFE; proposes that the European Parliament liaises with the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee to establish a mechanism with representatives such as young local elected politicians,

representatives of youth civil society and of social partners, which should cooperate closely with the Youth Assembly to implement the youth check; underlines in this regard the need to engage with young people in particular in a political debate on the future of Europe, as today's decisions will determine their future;

31. Reiterates its long-standing call to evaluate the possibility of amending the EU Treaties to allow EU-wide referendums on fundamental matters that initiate paradigm changes in the European Union's actions and policies such as a reform of the EU Treaties; underlines, in this context, that the result of the referendum should only be adopted if there is a double majority in favour, representing a majority of Member States and a majority of voters who turn out to vote; proposes that such an EU-wide referendum could be organised in the course of European parliamentary elections by providing an additional ballot addressing the fundamental constitutional matter in question; points out that any European referendum should ideally be organised on the same day throughout the Union;
32. Proposes the introduction of pan-European online citizens' consultations, organised by the European Parliament; believes that giving all citizens the opportunity to express their views on current European affairs will increase their trust in and understanding of the European decision-making process; considers that this new participatory mechanism strengthens the EP's role vis-à-vis the other institutions;
33. Notes the potential for the exercise of European citizenship through online tools such as online consultations and online collection of signatures for European Citizens' Initiatives; notes that electronic ID may facilitate the use of such tools at European level as well as provide a variety of options for access to public services; calls on the Member States to introduce e-democracy tools at local and national level, and properly integrate them in the political process;
34. Calls for the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) and others aimed at promoting digital transformation in the EU to include simplifying access to administrations through the various services or the use of citizen participation applications among their objectives; it calls for research and investment lines aimed at facilitating such access in order to minimise the digital divide and maximise social and democratic quality;
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35. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the Commission, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the Council of Europe.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

European democracy is an ever-evolving idea that has the potential to generate further legitimacy through change and adaptation to current developments. There is a strong need to improve the modalities of European democracy, especially in the areas of citizenship, parliamentarism and participation. First of all, European parliamentarism, as a fundament of democracy in Europe, should be strengthened. We should rethink European citizenship and address its challenges including the improvement of citizens' rights and possibilities to participate in the political life of the Union. That is why existing structures should be complemented by a comprehensive and permanent participatory democracy mechanism. This report offers reflections on the ways to address the above-mentioned summons, building on the lessons learnt and the citizens' demands from the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE).

Parliamentarism

The European Parliament (EP) as the only directly elected institution in the EU should be at the core of European democracy. So firstly, we need to reverse a trend in which the European Council is perceived in the public eye and within the EU legislative process as an “instructions-giver”. In a parliamentary democracy, the EP should be laying down the long lines of the legislative agenda. For this, the EP needs a full right of initiative as well as full control over its own resources and budget. It is critical that the European Council, which has recently evolved into a quasi-legislative institution by giving increasingly detailed instructions to the Commission, is thus overstepping its clear mandate provided for in Art. 15(1) TEU. There is also a power imbalance between the EP and the Council, which still has considerably more influence over the legislative process. In order to further correct these imbalances and to clarify the role of the EP in the institutional framework, a bicameral system composed of the EP, as the lower chamber representing the citizens, and the Council as the upper chamber representing the Member States, should be established.

The institutional structure of the EU could also be further enhanced through improved coordination between the Commission, Council and the EP, in outlining legislative priorities and in implementing them. Nevertheless, parliamentary scrutiny can also only become proper reality when the EP is empowered with more tools such as a proper right of inquiry.

Lastly, and most importantly, within parliamentarism in Europe, there are many possibilities to further enhance legitimacy. We need to reflect on the role of the EP in a system of multilevel governance. We can achieve to bring the EP to the centre of public debate and engagement by making its procedure attractive and inclusive. For this, we need to enhance transparency in decision-making of the EP, also through ways of inclusive, attractive and open debates. Parliament should be the melting pot, which brings together all institutions and citizens to further debates of European relevancy. Representatives from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and from the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) should be invited to relevant parliamentary exchanges, including committee meetings and relevant inter-institutional negotiations, such as trilogues, on issues they are dealing with. The same applies to representatives of citizens' panels and the proposed youth assembly, the ideas of which are developed in the third part of this report. The inclusion and visibility of

these actors in the legislative process should be enhanced. A more inclusive legislative process should also be achieved through enhanced transparency in general, and increased enabling of public scrutiny over interinstitutional negotiations in particular.

European Citizenship

The rights and values underpinning the Union and enshrined in Articles 2 and 6 TEU put the European citizenship formally at the centre of the European project. In practice the EU is far more centred around the interests of the Member States than those of a common European citizenship.

Furthermore, the rights deriving from European citizenship are not properly known nor understood. For example, voter turnout among mobile citizens in European and municipal elections remains low compared to nationals of the host Member States. Moreover, space for expressing European citizenship is limited, as there is no European public sphere even in case of European elections, which are centred around national issues.

European citizens should be provided with clarity on their citizens' rights, which could be done through an EU Citizenship Statute. At the same time, citizenship education in Europe should be strengthened including through the inclusion of content about EU politics, EU citizenship and participatory democracy in education programs and curricula across the EU.

At the same time, we should improve the access to the rights granted under EU citizenship. The Council and the EP, in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedures, shall be able to lay down common provisions on the acquisition and loss of citizenship of the Union by third country nationals.

European citizenship should be boosted by making use of digital tools such as an e-ID, which provides different possibilities for access to public services and online engagement at EU level, including online consultations, electronic voting and the use of a cross-border European Digital Identity Wallet.

However, it should be clear that granting nationality of a Member State or citizenship of the Union in exchange for material gain shall be prohibited. This means: no golden visas and no golden passports.

Foremost, it, however, needs to be clear and possible for European citizens to make use of their rights, the right to vote and stand in particular. The EU offers the freedom to move and live anywhere in the Union, but often people moving are stopped from exercising their right to participate in elections. We need to make it easier for 11 million mobile EU citizens to vote and stand as a candidate in European and municipal elections. At the same time, discriminatory practices by Member States as regards national elections need to be stopped. This includes an end to the practice of certain Member States to deprive their nationals of the right to vote in national parliamentary elections on the basis of their residence abroad.

Improving representative democracy through citizens' participation

In light of Article 10(3) TEU, which lays down 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, participatory democracy has been seen as a way to

improve political awareness and dialogue with all citizens of the Union. According to recent polls, more than 70% of Europeans expect a more regular and meaningful involvement in the decision-making process¹. To make sure that more citizens are able to be more regularly and meaningfully involved in European democracy, and ultimately European debates on European issues, there is a clear need for more participatory processes and involvement, going further than asking to partake in elections every five years.

Not long ago, the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE) was a unique example to further extend the participatory process with randomly selected citizens, a bottom-up approach, to create a new space to debate Europe's challenges and priorities and develop an overview of what citizens expect of the EU. However, the CoFE has also shown that there is a distinct lack of follow-up on the citizen's proposals. Engagement and proper follow-up with citizens and institutions should become a norm to prevent a lack of political accountability of the participatory process.

Firstly, there is a need for an overview of all the participatory instruments the EU already has. Existing possibilities do not add up to a comprehensive and accessible participation infrastructure. Therefore, a one-stop-shop for all European democracy participatory instruments should be created, which will reduce fragmentation of the participation infrastructure and increase their accessibility. This one-stop-shop should have an institutional framework to administer it and its relations to the citizens.

Secondly, CoFE showed the need to introduce new permanent mechanisms for citizens' participation in the EU and positively tested the concept of a representative deliberative process or mini-publics as a solution to tackle some of the structural problems of the participation toolbox. Furthermore, it established the need to involve young people in the participation process as much as possible, including through a youth check on legislation that affects them directly. As a follow up to the CoFE the Commission has proposed to make citizens panels permanent. However, the scope of the citizens panels proposed is limited to narrow subjects, chosen by the Commission itself, and does not fully integrate a comprehensive vision of participatory democracy, being just another narrow instrument added to the participation patchwork.

There is therefore the need for an annual European citizens agora that is able to influence the guidelines of European policymaking for the coming year. Such an Agora could therefore deliberate on the Commission Annual Work Programme (CAWP) and the specific issue of the European Year. A European Agora of randomly selected citizens, which are representative for the socio-economic structure of the Union, will be convened every year and would deliberate in the first 4 months of the year on the priorities of the EU for the next year. The results of the deliberations could be presented on the 9th of May and will feed the consultation process for the CAWP. Those results should also include a proposal for the specific issue for the European Year of the following annual cycle.

During the entire year, the citizens should deliberate on proposals on the specific issue of the European Year. At the end of the year, the Agora should then present its conclusions. Depending on the majorities of support for these conclusions within the panel, different minimum requirements for follow-ups should be laid down. A proposal supported by a simple

¹ https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/Future-of-Europe/Next_Level_Citizens_Participation_in_the_EU.pdf

majority should be debated in a specific hearing of the relevant committee in the EP. A proposal with two-third support should at least be followed up with an own-initiative report or a legislative own-initiative report in the EP.

The European Agora will also have a youth component, which shall constitute a Youth Assembly. Additionally to contributing to the EU priorities and European Year, the Youth Assembly will also monitor the application of the youth check throughout EU legislation, in line with the conclusions of the CoFE and in cooperation with a new structure at the level of the EESC that will convene representatives of the youth civil society with the purpose to implement the Youth Check alongside the Youth Agora.

Lastly, citizens' representatives should be able to attend relevant parliamentary debates and inter-institutional negotiations, in order to follow up and voice their positions on latest developments regarding the subjects they are dealing with within the Agora.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	18.7.2023
Result of final vote	+ : 18 - : 5 0 : 1
Members present for the final vote	Gabriele Bischoff, Damian Boeselager, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Salvatore De Meo, Sandro Gozi, Brice Hortefeux, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Jaak Madison, Max Orville, Giuliano Pisapia, Paulo Rangel, Helmut Scholz, Pedro Silva Pereira, Sven Simon, László Trócsányi, Guy Verhofstadt
Substitutes present for the final vote	Gunnar Beck, Vladimír Bilčík, Othmar Karas, Alin Mituța, Niklas Nienass
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Gheorghe Falcă, Nacho Sánchez Amor

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

18	+
PPE	Vladimír Bilčík, Salvatore De Meo, Gheorghe Falcă, Othmar Karas, Sven Simon
Renew	Sandro Gozi, Alin Mituța, Max Orville, Guy Verhofstadt
S&D	Gabriele Bischoff, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Giuliano Pisapia, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Pedro Silva Pereira
The Left	Helmut Scholz
Verts/ALE	Damian Boeselager, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Niklas Nienass

5	-
ECR	Zdzisław Krasnodębski
ID	Gunnar Beck, Jaak Madison
NI	László Trócsányi
PPE	Brice Hortefeux

1	0
PPE	Paulo Rangel

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention