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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P9\_TA(2021)0345**

#### **Citizens' dialogues and Citizens' participation in the EU decision-making**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2021 on Citizens' dialogues and Citizens' participation in the EU decision-making (2020/2201(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 10(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
  - having regard to Article 11 TEU,
  - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the position in the form of amendments of the Committee on Petitions,
  - having regard to the opinions of the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A9-0213/2021),
- A. whereas the results of the 2019 European elections sent a positive signal that European citizens are taking an increasing interest in developments at EU level and that they believe that EU legislation has an impact on their daily lives; whereas overall turnout in 2019 was 50,6 %, the highest since 1994 and a notable increase from 2014, when turnout was 42,6 %; whereas, although turnout in 2019 was higher among all groups of the population, the increase was led by the younger generation, with large increases among people aged under 25 and those aged between 25 and 39; whereas despite the overall increase in turnout, large differences remain between individual Member States;

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0010.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0153.

- B. whereas according to the Civic Engagement Eurobarometer of June 2020<sup>1</sup>, voting in European elections was regarded by 55 % of respondents as the most effective way of ensuring that voices are heard by decision-makers at EU level; whereas, although it is the aim to continuously improve the way in which democracy works in the EU, several Eurobarometer surveys show that citizens are not satisfied with the way democracy works; whereas this perception is not only measured at EU level, but also at national level; whereas a considerable proportion of EU citizens do not feel heard and consider the EU to be a distant entity;
- C. whereas Articles 10 and 11 TEU and Articles 20, 21, 24, 227 and 228 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) form the basis for citizens to participate in the making of EU policies and legislation;
- D. whereas Article 10(3) TEU 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;
- E. whereas Article 11(1) and (2) TEU requires the institutions to give, by appropriate means, citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action, and to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society;
- F. whereas the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making<sup>2</sup>, in its paragraph 19, underlines that public and stakeholder consultation is integral to well-informed decision-making and to improving the quality of law-making;
- G. whereas Article 165(2) TFEU mandates the EU to encourage the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe;
- H. whereas EU citizens may only under certain conditions institute proceedings directly before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), in order to enforce their rights under the Treaties, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights; whereas democratic elections to the European Parliament constitute the main bottom-up instrument for citizens in the EU, while other means, namely the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), complaints to the European Ombudsman and petitions to Parliament, which are important supplements to Parliamentarism, must be strengthened;
- I. whereas there have been six successful ECIs to date, most recently the 'Minority Safepack' initiative and the 'End the Cage Age' initiative; whereas Regulation (EU) 2019/788<sup>3</sup> on the ECI, which came into effect in January 2020, intends to make it easier for citizens to call on the Commission to propose legislative acts in its areas of competence in which the Union has the power to act; whereas the 'Minority Safepack' initiative was the first ECI to be debated in Parliament on the basis of the revised ECI regulation, and was overwhelmingly supported by Parliament in December 2020 with

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<sup>1</sup> [Flash Eurobarometer FL4023](#)

<sup>2</sup> Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-Making (OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative (OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 55).

76 % of the votes cast; whereas, nevertheless, the impact of ECIs is low, owing in part to the Commission's lack of follow-up;

- J. whereas the European Ombudsman's recommendations are not legally binding but the rate of compliance with findings is consistently high;
- K. whereas citizens of the EU and any natural or legal person residing in or with a registered office in a Member State have the right to submit petitions to the European Parliament under Articles 24 and 227 TFEU whenever the matter affects them directly and falls within the EU's fields of activity;
- L. whereas online public consultations carried out by the Commission are mostly aimed at a particular target group, are not widely disseminated and are sometimes too brief, meaning that they do not reach a significant proportion of the population; whereas the European Court of Auditors, in a comprehensive review of the Commission's consultation policy in 2019, recommended that the Commission should improve the way it reaches out to citizens in order to promote greater participation;
- M. whereas Citizens' Dialogues conducted by the Commission are a way to provide information to citizens rather than to engage with them in a debate about their vision and what they would like to see change in the EU and do not provide a feedback mechanism to inform citizens about the outcomes of their participation;
- N. whereas the current functioning of existing participatory instruments, such as the ECI, public consultations and Citizens' Dialogues, does not provide sufficient means for citizens to influence EU decision-making; whereas this is largely due to the lack of effective follow-up in the decision-making process at institutional level;
- O. whereas most forms of participation are rarely used by individual citizens; whereas individual citizens are largely unaware of the existing participatory instruments and therefore underrepresented in views and data collected through the existing instruments; whereas citizens' participation does not replace organised civil society;
- P. whereas the current participatory instruments do not maximise the potential of citizens' participation and therefore insufficiently contribute to strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the EU and increasing citizens' sense of ownership towards an EU that reflects their needs and visions;
- Q. whereas reforming the existing participatory instruments, while paying particular attention to the most underrepresented groups of society, notably young people, and further developing a European public sphere can contribute to reinforcing the democratic legitimacy of the EU;
- R. whereas 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; whereas a lack of transparency prevents public debate on any piece of legislation; whereas not all stakeholders have equal access to the EU institutions or information about their work; whereas the Commission should carry out open, transparent and regular dialogues with citizens and civil society organisations; whereas the EU should ensure that civil society

can participate actively in the public debate and has the capacity to influence policy and decision-making processes;

- S. whereas there is a need to enhance the European dimension of citizenship education, by improving citizens' understanding of the EU, in order to enable their participation;
  - T. whereas there is a growing need for European citizenship education classes across Member States; whereas in this context, the work of civil society organisations in civic education and learning should be recognised, and a holistic approach to citizenship education, including both formal and non-formal education and learning, should be encouraged;
  - U. whereas existing successful projects on citizens' participation, such as European HomeParliaments and EU Youth Dialogue, have demonstrated that citizens would like to be included in EU decision-making processes on a regular basis;
  - V. whereas the Council remains a closed-door institution as confirmed by the European Ombudsman's inquiry OI/2/2017/TE into the Council's lack of transparency regarding public access to its legislative documents and its decision-making process;
  - W. whereas the OECD defines open government as 'a culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable public policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth';
  - X. whereas the European Citizens' Consultations of 2018 conducted by Member States about the Future of Europe have proven to be an effective tool to engage with citizens on EU matters; whereas the lack of concrete follow-up and continuity in the process led to mixed results from this participatory effort;
  - Y. whereas the Conference on the Future of Europe should involve as much public participation as possible and could potentially be a valuable experience of engaging with citizens in order to understand what they truly expect from the EU and the work of the institutions;
1. Stresses the need to reflect on how the Union can become more effective in engaging with citizens under the Union's core principles of representative democracy; believes that citizens should have a greater voice in EU decision-making to make the Union more reflective of citizens' views and more resilient, democratic and effective; believes in this regard that Treaty change should not be precluded, although it should not be a goal in itself, and that the Conference on the Future of Europe should provide an opportunity to forge a constructive dialogue with citizens on these key topics;
  2. Believes that any reform of the Union, in order to make it more social, equitable, cohesive, united, focused, capable, sovereign and accountable, is strengthened by directly engaging with citizens through participatory mechanisms;
  3. Underlines that there is an underlying tension between the vision of an EU centred around Member States and an EU centred around EU institutions which can be surpassed by developing an approach and instruments for a European Union of citizens;

4. Points out that the existing participatory instruments have various shortcomings and should therefore be improved and new ones developed to make citizens' participation more accessible, inclusive, meaningful and effective; opines that, to facilitate public participation in wider political debates and equip citizens with the opportunity to influence political outcomes, with synergies in existing mechanisms, it is imperative that citizen engagement is structured in a way that responds to citizens' expectations; believes that this bottom-up participatory agenda should complement representative democracy in the EU;
5. Highlights the importance of the ECI as the only participatory tool at EU level which has the capacity to potentially trigger legislation; calls for the response that is given to it to be strengthened through the adoption of a parliamentary resolution for each successful ECI; notes that the Commission must fully comply with its legal obligation to state sufficient reasons for why it did or did not take action on an ECI, and believes that this needs to be more comprehensive to ensure that citizens are provided with an accurate picture of what should be expected from engagement with or the launching of an ECI; regrets the lack of follow-up of successful ECIs by the Commission through legislative measures; believes that, in accordance with Article 15 of Regulation (EU) 2019/788, in case the Commission, within the given deadlines, has failed to publish its intentions, or has set out in a communication that it intends not to take action on an ECI which has met the procedural requirements and is in line with the Treaties, in particular the core values of the Union, enshrined in Article 2 TEU, Parliament could, in line with Rule 222 of its Rules of Procedures, decide to follow up on the ECI with a legislative own-initiative report (INL); urges the Commission to commit itself to submitting a legislative proposal following Parliament's adoption of such an INL; proposes in that regard to modify the current framework agreement between Parliament and the Commission; asks that the ECI regulation be amended to incentivise the Commission to table a legislative proposal where the ECI submitted meets the relevant requirements;
6. Points out that, following the report of the European Court of Auditors<sup>1</sup>, which recognised the effectiveness of the Commission's public consultations, and given the satisfactory perception of citizens, the Commission should improve its public consultation process in order to promote greater citizens' participation and to better monitor and assess their contributions;
7. Points out that the current concept and practice of Citizens' Dialogues should be reinforced and updated;
8. Underlines the benefits of engaging with citizens and civil society in the development of a European public sphere and in complementing the democratic legitimacy of the EU provided by its representative institutions and democratic procedures;
9. Underlines that not all stakeholders, notably citizens and civil society groups, are equally active politically, vocal or influential; therefore, believes that EU participatory democracy requires supporting unorganised citizens and promoting their access to electoral and participatory opportunities within and outside EU channels;
10. Considers that citizens' trust in the EU institutions is fundamental for democracy, good governance and effective policymaking; believes that the EU institutions must strive for

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<sup>1</sup> Special report 14/2019 'Have your say!', European Court of Auditors, September 2019.

the highest possible standards of transparency, accountability and integrity; stresses that citizens' access to documents of the European institutions is fundamental for participatory democracy; calls in particular on the Council to increase transparency as regards its decision-making process and access to documents;

11. Underlines the potential of new technologies which can provide new avenues to engage with citizens, to ensure an effective bottom-up approach and improve the capacity of citizens to hold institutions accountable;
12. Stresses that open government, which combines increased transparency and accountability measures and participatory tools, is a good response to the democratic deficit that results from a perceived lack of agency in EU decision-making by EU citizens;
13. Welcomes the envisaged establishment of an ethics body as an independent authority to foster transparency in the EU institutions;
14. Draws attention to the new Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, which is expected to give more visibility and impact to activities that contribute to citizens' dialogues and engagement in participative democracies; stresses the importance of ensuring continuity and increased resources for the 'citizens' strand of this programme, including town twinning and remembrance activities; welcomes the introduction of activities aimed at fostering further European values under this programme, such as raising awareness of a common European history; calls for the swift establishment of the 'Civil Dialogue Group' under the new programme;
15. Believes that it is important to promote exchanges between citizens of different countries at European, national, regional and local level, in particular through networks of towns and regions, and by facilitating an inter-regional dialogue; calls on the Commission to ensure sufficient funding for that purpose through the 'Citizens' engagement and participation' strand of the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values programme;
16. Emphasises that improved information regarding citizens' concerns will assist the EU institutions in their efforts to be attentive and responsive to these concerns by ensuring adequate channels to reach citizens and gather input and by providing appropriate follow-up in the ensuing decision-making process; calls for participatory mechanisms to be improved to enable citizens' participation to have a meaningful impact on EU decision-making;
17. Underlines the need to engage with young people in particular in a political debate on the future of Europe and involve them consistently in participatory mechanisms and regularly held citizens' dialogues, as today's decisions will determine their future; emphasises the need to identify new means of communication and interaction adapted to the interests of young people;
18. Commends child-specific consultations conducted by the Commission and supports the setting up of an EU children's participation platform in the future; welcomes the inclusion of young people in the Digital Platform and Citizens' Panels of the Conference on the Future of Europe; urges the EU institutions to create ways to ensure similar engagement with children and young people in the future on a structural basis and with adequate feedback mechanisms;

19. Calls for genuine involvement of young people and youth organisations in the planning, implementation and evaluation of events and programmes; commends the efforts made by the EU Youth Dialogue to include young people and youth organisations in creating policy and decision-making; calls on the EU institutions to commit to taking tangible action based on the outcomes of the EU Youth Dialogue;
20. Highlights the necessity of engaging with educational institutions and civic education organisations to ensure that active European citizenship becomes part of the curriculum across the EU; calls on the Commission to provide support in order to complement educational programmes in all Member States, notably by supporting the development of a common curriculum on European and global civic education, fostering a better understanding of the existing EU institutions and of the history and cultures of Member States, and encouraging objective and critical thinking of the benefits of the European Union; suggests the inclusion of modules on EU functioning and history in educational curricula and calls on the Commission to propose guidelines for such modules;
21. Recalls the Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education adopted by the EU education ministers on 17 March 2015, in which they called for strengthened actions in the field of education at European, national, regional and local level in order to safeguard our pluralistic society;
22. Calls on the Commission to launch an annual European Union Olympiad competition on EU functioning and history for young people in high schools, vocational training and other educational structures, in order to boost interest, participation and debate on EU affairs; emphasises that the Erasmus+ programme should also be utilised to enhance European citizenship education, especially among students and young people; reiterates the need for the Commission to better support EU affairs and study programmes that exist across Europe and beyond, building on the successful Erasmus+ programme;
23. Believes that ensuring youth participation will be an essential part of the long-lasting impact of citizens' dialogue initiatives; stresses the importance, therefore, of focusing on young people in any EU learning activities and suggests that youth engagement tools be promoted, with a special focus on social media, mobile apps, mobile games, quizzes and other youth-friendly formats; welcomes peer-to-peer educational programmes such as the European Youth Parliament and the EU Youth Dialogue as examples of good practices;
24. Underlines the importance of academia, researchers and universities in the improvement of the level of know-how of citizens about participatory mechanisms in the EU in order to increase their participation in the EU decision-making process;
25. 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 order to enable citizens' participation and ability to act as informed citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life at both, the European and Member State level, based on understanding of political, legal, social and economic concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability; 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 to all people residing in the EU in order to enable them to exercise their political rights;

26. Proposes to establish a European network for citizenship education to provide a platform for the exchange of best practices and knowledge regarding methods of enhancing the European dimension of citizenship education; stresses the need for new models and instruments of citizenship education;
27. Highlights the role played by the media in shaping citizens' opinions on EU policy and the EU itself; stresses the need to uphold an independent and diverse media landscape across Europe, but believes greater effort should be made to tackle disinformation and misreporting in the media on EU issues, notably through increased support for fact-based, pan-European media projects;
28. Underlines the right of citizens to have access to reliable, independent and factual information on the European Union, its policies and its decision-making processes; recognises the need to establish diversified access to a neutral, independent and informative common European news centre, accessible in all the official EU languages, and to develop proactive communication with EU citizens; recalls, too, the value of existing media outlets; considers it necessary to concretely tackle the spread of misinformation and disinformation, especially in times of crises when valid, reliable and timely information is needed most; stresses that the independence of the media is crucial to these processes; calls for the introduction into the functioning of online platforms of downstream feedback, fact-checking and moderation in relation to misinformation and disinformation that are respectful of civil rights and freedom of expression; considers it essential, therefore, to reinforce the training of journalists in order to foster independent and critical thinking;
29. Welcomes the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) objective of improving citizens' participation in democratic systems through informed decision-making; emphasises the need to ensure youth participation and the civic engagement of people from disadvantaged backgrounds under Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps; welcomes the measures announced under the EDAP to strengthen media freedom, freedom of expression and quality journalism; looks forward to the Commission's proposals for practical and efficient tools to better secure the safety of journalists, who are all too often subjected to threats and undue intimidation, thereby limiting citizens' right to information; notes with concern the lack of specific proposals to ensure artistic freedom and grant protection to censored and prosecuted artists and invites the Commission to further develop this area under the EDAP;
30. Recognises the right of all EU citizens to request and receive information from the EU institutions in one of the official EU languages; points out that genuine dialogue and the active and informed participation of EU citizens in EU decision-making is only possible if there is no language barrier, and therefore calls on the Commission to make much greater efforts to communicate with citizens in all the official EU languages; notes that in order to strengthen inclusiveness, awareness and visibility, there is a need to improve the accessibility of online content; suggests that all EU websites should be user-friendly and available in all official EU languages;
31. Recalls that European policies and legislation are most times implemented by local and regional administrations and that they have the capacity to reach out more easily and play a central role in educating citizens about the EU, as they are the level of government closest to the citizens; stresses that a first step could be to increase the resources allocated

to the liaison offices of the European institutions and to develop their territorial network throughout Europe;

32. Welcomes the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 14 October 2020 entitled ‘Local and regional authorities in the permanent dialogue with citizens’<sup>1</sup>; requests, in addition to EU-wide tools for citizens’ participation, the establishment of a network of multi-level governments that should serve as a transmission chain between European institutions and citizens;
33. Reiterates the need to fully engage citizens in EU decision-making in order to enhance the legitimacy of the EU and increase public trust in the work of the institutions; stresses, therefore, the importance of permanent participatory mechanisms to further facilitate and encourage citizens’ participation in EU decision-making beyond the act of voting and other existing channels and instruments; supports awareness-raising activities of these mechanisms to maximise their impact and effectiveness; underlines the need for such mechanisms at European, national, regional and local level and for adequate horizontal and vertical coordination among institutions at different levels;
34. Highlights the fact that regular participatory processes with citizens could serve different purposes, such as influencing annual political or legislative priorities, developing specific proposals in relation to specific questions, discussing institutional matters or deciding on the spending of certain public resources; underlines, however, that while citizens’ participation will prove to be beneficial in some areas, it is important that citizens have a clear understanding of engagement outcomes, including inherent limitations, with appropriate and transparent follow-up procedures;
35. Notes that citizens’ participation mechanisms include a wide range of tools that are complementary, such as citizens’ assemblies, citizens’ initiatives, public consultations, citizens’ dialogues, participative budgeting, referendums, etc.;
36. Recalls that participatory mechanisms for citizens should provide a means for individuals to express their ideas and concerns; underlines the fact that they have to be participatory, inclusive, open, deliberate, transnational, transparent, non-partisan, accountable, effective, visible and engaging;
37. Emphasises that, in order to reach out to as many people as possible, an inclusive approach must be taken; underlines the fact that the selection of participants should ensure a well-balanced representation of the population by the use of adequate communication mechanisms to reach a diverse public, so that the societal and territorial diversity is fully reflected; stresses that all citizens should have equal access to participatory mechanisms, including those living in disadvantaged areas or those who have a lower exposure to EU information; calls for participatory mechanisms to be extended to all, including non-EU citizens residing in the EU as well as EU citizens residing in another Member State or in a non-EU country, who should be offered alternative mechanisms adapted to their needs;
38. Stresses the need for citizens to have access to participation mechanisms in all official Union languages; recalls that language barriers make the European institutions distant from citizens and prevent the development of a truly inclusive European democracy;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 440, 18.12.2020, p. 49.

39. Underlines the importance of giving full access to persons with disabilities to all the different instruments that the EU provides to citizens, particularly through systematic interpretation and translation into sign language and easy-to-read language;
40. Highlights that civil society organisations, social partners and other stakeholders should play a major role in all participatory instruments; considers that proper methodologies supporting their participation are crucial; underlines the fact that, in order for such instruments to be successful, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) must be involved;
41. Stresses that the purpose, rules and timeframes of any participatory process must be communicated from the very beginning in order for them to be effective; underlines that communication on citizen engagement needs to highlight the practical role of any mechanism, otherwise failing to meet expectations will reduce participation, and in turn legitimacy;
42. Emphasises the need to have a good balance between a common format and diverse national practices for the regularly held citizens' dialogues in order to provide citizens with a European framework that accommodates various traditions of deliberation at national level;
43. Stresses that digital technologies should be a complement to face-to-face participation instruments and should especially be used to encourage participation among populations that have difficulties participating in traditional participatory instruments;
44. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop accessible, innovative and inclusive tools for citizens' participation and dialogues, making better use of digital technologies to allow all citizens (such as younger and older people, people with disabilities, mobile EU citizens, people living in rural or less populated areas) to play an effective part in EU decision-making, building on the lessons from the way the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as an accelerator for the use of digital tools; points out the added value of a non-bureaucratic and comprehensive website providing citizens with information about all European participatory initiatives; underlines the crucial role of social media, especially for children; stresses that the purpose of such innovative tools should be to support representative democracy and that transparency at all levels should be ensured;
45. Calls for fact checking and moderation with regard to disinformation in the functioning of online platforms that are used to engage with citizens;
46. Recalls that, prior to the launching of any participatory process, the EU institutions must commit themselves to following up on their outcome in the light of their competences and legislative procedures, since citizens' disappointment often stems from a lack of follow-up; stresses that citizens should have a clear understanding of citizen engagement and dialogue structures so that expectation meets reality, otherwise there is a risk of disenfranchising citizens; highlights that any new participatory instrument should be accompanied by a significant communication campaign, with high-level political engagement at EU and national level, similar to the successful electoral campaign for the 2019 European Parliament elections;

47. Stresses that the EU institutions must actively provide guidance to participants throughout the participatory process; underlines that at the end of this process, its outcome must be clearly defined, so that it can be subject to an obligatory response; proposes that participants should be provided with written feedback on each proposal or recommendation in clear language at the end of such exercises, in which the EU institutions clarify their intention to implement that proposal or recommendation or justify their decision not to do so; recognises that there are difficulties and challenges to overcome if participative mechanisms are to contribute more significantly to democratic quality, and in turn to a sense of ownership and European identity;
48. Highlights the need to establish a framework for the follow-up to citizens' dialogues in order to take citizens' input effectively into account; proposes that part of the follow-up could be to translate the outcome into initiative reports and public hearings and to involve citizens, including the most underrepresented groups of society, notably young people, throughout these steps;
49. Believes that citizens' participatory processes must adhere to the highest possible level of transparency; notes that transparency and open data reinforces trust in public institutions and therefore their legitimacy; highlights that promoting the democratic legitimacy of the EU institutions through public engagement requires a greater understanding of EU decision-making; calls for the creation of a standard for open government at EU level that could serve as a basis for other levels of government;
50. Proposes that the Commission's 'Have your say' website becomes a one-stop resource granting access to all participatory instruments at EU level; notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged the use of digital media and online conference systems, and therefore sees further opportunities that digitalisation offers for citizens' participation; points out that this has helped citizens to participate more quickly, widely and inclusively in decision-making; believes that the EU should promote new and innovative ways for citizens' participation, enabling the use of digital technology tools that facilitate multilingual dialogue with citizens; calls on the Commission to embrace further digital possibilities for citizens' participation, in all official EU languages, including tutorials, past examples and information on relevant legislation; believes that provisions should be made for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled;
51. Encourages the setting up of an independent civil society, academic and social partners forum in order to monitor the process and its follow-up by the EU institutions;
52. Encourages the facilitation of the establishment of an independent civil society organisations network, based on voluntary participation, to bring together different democracy initiatives, including across different regions, in order to facilitate information sharing and knowledge transfer as well as to ensure that best practice methods are used; believes that this will increase citizens' awareness of EU decision-making procedures, as well as ensure more opportunities for citizens to influence policy-making;
53. Welcomes the proposal from the Presidents of the EESC and the CoR to set up an interinstitutional working group on citizens' participation in EU decision-making processes;
54. Commits to engaging with the other EU institutions and stakeholders to strengthen additional channels of citizen input, including the expansion of citizens' dialogues and the

establishment of a permanent mechanism for citizens' participation with a formally binding follow-up process;

55. Calls on the Commission to present a proposal for an interinstitutional agreement on civil dialogue on the basis of Article 11(2) TEU, stating that institutions must maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society;
56. Underlines the importance of fostering civic engagement and active participation in a coordinated and coherent way at local, regional, national and EU level; believes, in this context, that the role, activities and independence of European Commission Representations and European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLOs) in the Member States should be strengthened, in order to facilitate civic engagement and direct dialogue with citizens, provide access to and the dissemination of information and raise awareness about the European Union and its policies through broad and well-coordinated use of communication tools for the digital and physical participation of citizens;
57. Points out the New European Bauhaus initiative as a recent innovation to encourage and facilitate citizens' participation; highlights that the initiative brings citizens, experts, businesses, and institutions together and facilitates conversations about making tomorrow's living spaces more affordable and accessible;
58. Proposes the introduction of citizens' participation mechanisms for pilot projects, including 'participatory budgeting' to allow the shaping of the expenditure side of the Union's budget and crowdsourcing to enable citizens to be involved in the co-creation of policies with EU decision-makers;
59. Stresses the need to facilitate citizens' participation, with sufficient engagement from EU institutions, in the structural reforms of the EU by reforming the Convention method as provided for in Article 48 TEU; proposes that this be discussed in the Conference on the Future of Europe;
60. Welcomes the Conference on the Future of Europe and believes that it is a great opportunity to engage directly with citizens in a meaningful dialogue on the future of Europe and to provide responses to their demands;
61. Underlines the importance of balanced participation of civil society organisations alongside institutional representatives in the Conference on the Future of Europe; stresses the need for a solid follow-up on the outcome of the Conference, keeping citizens informed of the different steps in the resulting decision-making process, ensuring that the dialogue with citizens is meaningful and that it continues after the formal end of the Conference on the Future of Europe;
62. Stresses that citizens' agoras organised in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe should serve as a pilot for their future institutionalisation as a permanent mechanism of citizen participation in key debates;
63. Expects that the Conference on the Future of Europe will bring an important contribution in the further development of citizens' participation in the EU policy-making process and pave the way for the establishment of new permanent mechanisms for citizens' participation;

64. Considers that the Conference on the Future of Europe provides an opportunity to discuss possible mechanisms for the active participation of citizens in the consultation process in order to influence the annual Work Programme of the Commission and the State of the Union address; notes that such a mechanism could work on an annual basis, starting in the first months of each year with national and regional citizens agoras that should prepare the priorities to be discussed in a transnational European citizens agora, which could be concluded on Europe Day; points out that the priorities resulting from the European citizens agora should be presented to the EU institutions in order to feed into the consultation mechanism that leads to the establishment of the annual Work Programme of the Commission;
65. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.