

EIPA hosting discussions on migration and EU in the world at Conference on the Future of Europe

Last weekend (11-13 February), the city of Maastricht, EIPA and Studio Europa Maastricht co-hosted around 160 EU citizens in-person and another 28 online during citizen's panel debate on migration and the EU's role in the world. It was the fourth European citizens' public panel after the meetings in Strasbourg, Florence and Warsaw.

Pan-European Citizens' Consultation

After almost two years of online meetings, the physical event and opportunity to deliberate with fellow Europeans in person was a European success in itself for many of those who attended. As part of the conference's methodological approach, participants who were randomly selected according to country, region, city, age, gender and occupation were invited to debate in mixed groups on highly complex topics such as migration, borders, stability, international partnerships and world peace.

During this one-of-a-kind European experiment, the participants produced 46 practical recommendations for policymakers and put these to vote on the last day of the conference. Under the supervision of experienced facilitators, observers, experts and fact checkers, the discussions took place in five main streams:

- Stream 1: Self-reliance and stability

- Stream 2: The EU as an international partner
- Stream 3: A strong EU in a peaceful world
- Stream 4: Migration from a human point of view
- Stream 5: Responsibility and solidarity across the EU

Following two days of intensive debates, 46 recommendations were presented to the plenary and voted on individually by all participants in the citizens' panel. Only the recommendations that passed the 70% threshold were included in the final document. By the end of voting, the plenary had accepted 40 out of 46 recommendations.

Citizens' recommendations

The citizens were in favour of reducing the EU's dependence on oil and gas imports, introducing a strategy to become more autonomous in terms of energy supplies, as well as more effectively promoting and financially supporting European products. They recommended that a system be created for labour migration into the EU that is based on real needs and a unified recognition of qualifications. Special attention was also dedicated to the EU's welcoming policy, mentioning that the facilities at each border should respect human rights and guarantee the safety and health of all migrants.

As part of its international responsibility, the EU was recommended to enforce restrictions on the import of products from countries that allow child labour. The final list also included recommendations on establishing partnerships with developing countries, supporting their infrastructure and sharing competences in exchange for mutually favourable trade deals.

At the same time, a set of recommendations promoting European values and stronger citizen

participation in EU politics was adopted after receiving the highest scores.

The full list is available here.

EIPA's Insight into the conference

As one of the co-hosts of the conference, EIPA was present on-site to share its expertise of EU decision-making, EU governance and EU external relations. EIPA's experts **Edward Best**, **Wolfgang Koeth** and **Constance Bobotsi** participated in various ways, providing valuable input for citizens to better understand the current situation and the available policy options.

'We see that citizens are very keen to develop recommendations and influence how the European Union works to change things,' mentioned Constance Bobotsi in one of the interviews.

Wolfgang Koeth, who was involved as an expert in previous meetings of the citizens' panel, outlined the importance of the process that gives citizens an opportunity to practically influence policymaking.

'I don't think the most important thing is to have some operational conclusions that can be directly translated into policies, but the process itself – having ordinary citizens come together and jointly debate on issues that directly concern them,' concluded Wolfgang.

View all the comments from EIPA's experts and participants here or see our social media channels for extensive coverage of the event. If you would like to find out more about the topics discussed, please follow us on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn under **#TheFutureIsYours**.

About the conference

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a joint initiative of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. It gives European citizens the opportunity to express their views on the future of Europe through a series of debates and discussions. Learn more here.