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DEFINING
YOUR EUROPE:
WHAT EUROPE
SHOULD BE DEALING
WITH AFTER 2019?

CLICKING WITH
VOTERS

Parlament_Europejski

CITIZENS DIALOGUES

MAIN
RECOMMENDATIONS



Liczba polubień: 2019

Parlament_Europejski Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego 26 maja 2019 r.

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in Daugavpils, Latvia, September, 2019.



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CLICKING WITH VOTERS MISSION

The project's overall objective is to empower European citizenship and to encourage citizens involvement, especially of the young, in the democratic life of Europe, in particular by motivating them to participate in the 2019 EP Elections.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- to encourage EU citizens to make their voice count by voting in the 2019 European elections
- to build the capacity of young people to participate actively in the democratic life of Europe and counter the challenges of Euroscepticism
- to give voice to citizens by involving them in debate on forward-looking initiatives for the future of Europe, on what they perceive to be the urgent issues relevant to the development of Europe post 2019
- to encourage first voters, passive citizens, excluded groups, and low-income families to vote
- to develop integrated voter engagement campaigns and promote opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering by social media influencers and volunteers lobby groups
- to provide the relevant European institutions with a document expressing the considered view of citizens on a range of issues which they feel are important to them
- to build the capacity of civil society organizations to foster European citizenship, though establishment of a flexible international network of of active citizens and constant dialogue with the institutions of the EU



Citizens' Discussion Panel "Election Day 2019: Voting in the Upcoming European Elections" and the Citizens' Discussion Panel "Define Your Europe: What Europe should be dealing with after 2019" were both held as part of the Clicking the Voters project. Participants of both Citizens Discussion Panels (CDP) take this opportunity to reflect about the priorities of the new EC, to reflect on (young) citizens' future tasks with regard to improving the civic participation skills and the European competencies of (young) people in our communities.

The 2019 European Elections have taken place. Despite the unquestionable importance of these elections, turnout was a little increased compared to 2014.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF TWO CITIZENS DIALOGUES

VELIKO TURNOVO,
BULGARIA
OCTOBER 2018

DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA
SEPTEMBER 2019



Some observers were quick to conclude that this development still showed citizens' waning trust in the European Union. According to opinion polls, trust in European institutions in some EU countries is indeed declining, but this is happening in the broader context of declining trust in political institutions in general – at both the national and European level. In fact, opinion polls also show that public trust in the key European institutions is still higher than trust in national institutions (in those countries where national-level reforms have stalled or have not been effective).

Hard hit by the rising unemployment, young people seem to be at the forefront of the protest vote, especially in the Southern EU member states. Then, some are not satisfied with the level of European solidarity; they call for more solidarity between EU countries.

Even the increasing vote for the anti-EU right-wing populists in parts of EU countries actually has its roots in problems that have little to do with EU policies. Stagnating wages and unemployment have been wrongly blamed on immigration and welfare tourism, and then the latter are wrongly blamed on EU policies.

Public trust in the EU is thus undermined by demands for more European solidarity in the some countries and opposite demands for less solidarity and less immigration in the other countries. But it is not the European project that is losing trust – the surge of euroscepticism and the increasing anti-EU vote are rooted in economic hardships and flawed national political systems.

Quality reforms at national level can increase public trust in supranational European politics. European citizens want a united Europe in which joint decisions are implemented, not that every country works beyond all other EU member states. We should defend one of Europe - from East to West, from North to South. Many years ago, millions of people fought for their freedom and unity and brought down the Iron Curtain, which had divided Europe for decades. There is no place for divisions that work against our collective interest. European issues have become an important voting issue, now that European voters have seen how EU policy-making can affect their everyday lives.

Europeans now know more about European politics than they did in 2014. This is a good start for further efforts to increase public participation in the democratic life of the EU. We, the partners and participants in the Clicking with Voters project, thus believe that most of the conclusions that we arrived at with the help our young participants still hold. We therefore call on all civil society organizations concerned with European and youth issues to work in the following key directions in the future:

KEY DIRECTIONS:

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Strengthening civil participation and political activity among young people – politicians should be in touch with their voters, and combating the crisis of representative democracy;

COOPERATION

Strengthening the link between European and national politics, and not just during election campaigns.

All-important EU issues need to be introduced in public debate, whenever or not they are directly relevant for domestic politics and whether or not they resonate well with the national electorate;

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Clarifying the real causes of domestic economic and political problems in view of discouraging the troubling tendency to unjustifiably and simplistically link them to European policies.

A protest vote against local policies need not translate into a protest vote against the EU. In a similar vein, European Parliament elections should not be perceived as a vote of confidence or non-confidence in national governments and dominant national parties.

In light of a statement made by the new President of the European Commission that further enlargement will take place over the next years, civil society groups focused on international and European issues need to contribute to strengthened civil society cooperation with the current EU candidates countries, including the Europe for Citizens framework and ERASMUS programs. Such cooperation can help the process of going through various levels of process of Europeanization.

The Clicking with Voters partners would like to once again draw your attention to the results and products of the Clicking with Voters project, which communicate the initiative's main ideas and lessons we have learned during our work. We believe some of these products could serve as useful resources in your own work.

We collected the participants' opinion on what is consider to be key challenges for pos 2019. future of EU. Citizens were provided with a forum for expressing their ideas, concerns and expectations with regard to the governing of EU in accordance of priorities of new elected EC:



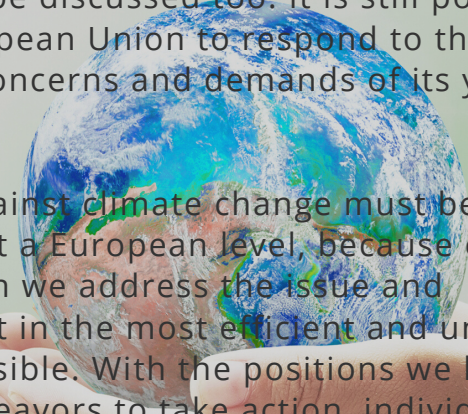


TOPIC 1. A EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. We, the youth, are striving that Europe to be the first climate-neutral continent.

Climate change is not just an issue that affects the youth. It concerns each and every single one of us. Despite the environmental and climate regulations implemented by the European Union over the last few decades, the Youth of today's Europe demand more. The issue of climate change is especially momentous this year when the European elections were holden, a year the European budget will be discussed too. It is still possible for the European Union to respond to the legitimate concerns and demands of its young people.

The fight against climate change must be addressed at a European level, because only at this level can we address the issue and respond to it in the most efficient and unified manner possible. With the positions we hold, if each us endeavors to take action, individually or collectively, we will be well positioned to influence environmental policies. The green transition ought to be controlled by the social majority, so it serves all our needs — not just the businesses who hold sway in Brussels.



TOPIC 2.

ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE



The last crisis (2008) has demonstrated the major flaws which have to be dealt with in order to prevent a repetition. Simply continuing with the current system without addressing fundamental issues is not an option. The fundamental questions of poverty (and working poor), ownership, ecology, energy, ageing and resources cannot be ignored due to the simple fact that if these issues are not dealt with, they will become the cause for a deeper crisis.

It is time for a more inclusive approach in which the dignity of the human being, our common wellbeing and wise stewardship of resources is seen as equally important as competitiveness and efficiency. This approach can guide the EU as well as national governments in their economic policies.

TOPIC 3.

EUROPE FIT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

The new Commission has clearly identified creating a “Europe fit for the digital age” as one of two major priorities—the other being climate change. Just as the EU sought to address concerns about online privacy through the adoption of the GDPR, we hope that the EU is now likely to develop new legislation on artificial intelligence, e-commerce, platform liability, digital taxation, competition, and other issues.

We, youth, call EC to develop the opportunities of the digital age within safe and ethical boundaries. EC with its citizens have to find our European way, balancing the flow and wide use of data while preserving high privacy, security, safety, and ethical standards.

We are accepting both a significant investment in new technologies and innovation, but also with focus on regulatory initiatives that aim to protect European citizens and build European leadership in the digital economy.

TOPIC 4.

PROMOTING INSTEAD PROTECTING OUR EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE



The EU has been presenting itself as an open and inclusive society, but how can this be explained if we say that we need someone to protect our European way of life? Protect from whom? From immigrants? It seems like a populist rhetoric that use nationalist politicians, like some in European countries, to distance themselves (as “Europeans”) from “the other”, meaning migrants. Does in reality a unique European way of life exist? Before calling for the necessity to protect it, we should reflect on its definition. Do we finally understood what being European really means, what makes “us” different from the rest of the world?

If we are talking about values, it should be conversation about respecting individuals. In many EU documents stating: “Our way of life is holding up our values and the beauty and the dignity of every single human being is one of the most precious values”(…) “Our way of life is holding up our values and the beauty and the dignity of every single human being is one of the most precious values.” (...) “We always think that Europe was/is “diverse, open and inclusive”.

We are calling EC to doesn’t use Protection, as the title of priority – it should be transformed from the “Protection” to the “Promotion of the European Way of Life”. And, we should to put another question at the heart of the discussion: is there a real European Way of Life? What is a real European Way of Life? The answers to these questions need not be political in nature; it should be given by experts - sociologists, philosophies, empathetic people who are able to create an emotional and enough universal picture of Europe.

TOPIC 5. A STRONGER AND FAIR EUROPE IN THE WORLD

We do not think that any Member State can solve the international challenge. We must therefore strengthen our European community and our unity, which is our greatest strength.

In order to confirm the EU's global strength in this polarized world, we agree it should be represented with one voice, as often and as loudly as possible. This requires further development of our capabilities in the aforementioned joint action. That way, when we approach global topics, we can support our ambition as a global player and builder of an influential Europe. To engage and promote a Europe that is taking on leadership both globally and in terms of its neighborhood, strengthening multilateralism, promoting European values, and meeting the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. European leadership should mean working shoulder-to-shoulder with neighboring countries and partners, introducing a comprehensive strategy on Africa and reaffirming the European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans. This not only opens markets with our trade partners but also strengthens the EU's global influence on issues like human rights, working conditions and environmental protection.



TOPIC 6.

A NEW PUSH FOR EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY





BUILD A COMPELLING DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE AGAINST THE RISE IN ILLIBERAL VALUES

The EU needs a positive narrative with more pathos and emotion. This narrative could present the EU as a project that helps Europeans tackle shared challenges and drive the policy agenda in innovative new ways.

A stronger sense of democracy frees up societies' collective intelligence to confront the big challenges facing Europe; this endeavor is not a formalistic, institutional agenda separate from these substantive Challenges

FOSTER A MORE TRANSNATIONAL FORM OF EUROPEAN PARTY POLITICS.

Voters are realizing that their own interests and choices depend on political developments in other member states. Yet political parties remain steadfastly national; they need much more help to run on genuinely transnational political platforms and serve as the transmission belts between Brussels and European citizens that are sorely needed.

SELECTING EU LEADERS MORE DEMOCRATICALLY

Establish a more democratic way to elect European leaders the EU urgently needs a more democratic process for choosing its leaders. This must be a core part of a new European prodemocracy agenda. What is needed is a system that reflects the wills of citizens and of governments, as the EU is a union of citizens and states. The process does not need to be reinvented from scratch, but it does need to be more predictable and transparent.



IMPROVE DIRECT CITIZEN CONSULTATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

The initiatives of EC and EP and EU new leadership team need to build on what has already occurred and lend some continuity to efforts to get European citizens more involved. They have to actively use many forms of consultations with citizens – debates, panels, dialogues, discussions...

During 2018 and 2019 were held so many so-called European Citizens' Consultations (ECCs) which provided a wealth of useful information on European citizens' priorities, proposals, and demands. The reports from the ECCs reveal that European citizens are concerned about climate change, migration, and the lack of unity in the EU. They also care about European values, the rule of law, and more solidarity and cooperation among member states. These headline findings may be unsurprising, but they provide useful context for the EU's existing policy agenda. Politicians should feel encouraged to acknowledge the results of the consultations as a way to draw people's attention to the overlap between popular and elite policy preoccupations and to derive legitimacy for their work in Brussels. European leaders must respond to these kinds of demands. To the extent that citizens went into these consultations expecting their contributions to be taken up by leaders, only to then learn that their ideas were being roundly ignored, their long-standing perceptions of politicians as unresponsive and unrepresentative and of the EU as distant and evolving beyond their control are likely to be reinforced. Such perceptions could also diminish public support for European integration.

To answer people's demands, future rounds of ECCs should be held, but for these gatherings to gain legitimacy, governments and the European Commission must correct the weaknesses that emerged during the first round. A prodemocracy EU agenda needs to incorporate the insights from the ECCs and launch a new, better-organized round of such consultations.

EMBRACE A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH TO DIGITAL DEMOCRACY THAT NOT ONLY MANAGES THE RISKS OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES BUT ALSO HARNESSES THEIR POTENTIAL. STRENGTHENING DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

The positive potential of digital technology can only be fully realized if the EU invests effort and resources in solving the weaknesses of existing participatory tools and in encouraging more e-participation mechanisms. Such innovations can help nurture participation and active citizenship, engage young people in policymaking, generate novel policy ideas, and strengthen political trust and legitimacy.



STRENGTHEN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION THROUGH A REVAMPED EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE (ECI)

Launching an extensive citizens' dialogue to hear views, proposals and concerns directly from those at the grassroots throughout the EU. This process will be accompanied by a political consultation involving European and national associations of regional and local authorities across all Member States with a view to developing innovative and practical solutions to the challenges ahead. This could also feed into a convention process on the EU's future; sharing the results of this process with the other EU institutions, and a wide range of European stakeholders.

One final way the EU can work more democratically is to improve the workings of a relatively new participatory mechanism. The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the world's first-ever instrument for transnational, participatory, and digitally facilitated democracy. If an ECI proposal attracts at least 1 million signatures from EU citizens, the European Commission has to decide whether to enact legislation to address the issue. The quality of collective participatory engagement is an essential component of democratic recovery. While there are many other areas of necessary reform, focusing attention on this notion of collective citizenship will hopefully pay dividends as the EU's push for democracy moves forward. Ultimately, it would be best for the EU institutions and national governments to work upward and outward from prosaic but tangible political changes that give citizens a real sense that they are participating in, engaging in, and influencing decisionmaking in Brussels. There is no one big, eye-catching change that will suffice as a push to save European democracy, much less to defeat nativist populism or restore supposedly European values. The EU should avoid defining the democracy agenda in these questionable, unrealistic terms. Even in the best of cases, it will be a long and iterative process, mostly undramatic, prone to cyclical regression, and requiring quiet perseverance. The EU can help draw together the diverse range of democratic initiatives under way at different levels. Democratic innovation is at a tipping point of experimentation and growth akin to the early days after the internet went mainstream. There is demand for public participation. Citizen assemblies on climate change, for instance, have mushroomed across Europe. New forms of participation are becoming commonplace with respect to local and national governments. It is now difficult to imagine a significant policymaking process that would not include citizen participation of some sort.

**YOURS SINCERELY,
THE TEAM OF CLICKING WITH VOTERS PROJECT**