Citizens’ dialogues and Citizens’ participation in the EU decision-making

2020/2201(INI) - 07/07/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 537 votes to 125, with 33 abstentions, a resolution on citizens' dialogues and citizens' participation in EU decision-making.

The results of the 2019 European elections sent a positive signal that European citizens are increasingly interested in developments at EU level and that they see EU legislation as having an impact on their daily lives. The overall turnout in 2019 was 50.6%, the highest since the 1994 elections. According to the June 2020 Civic Engagement Eurobarometer, 55% of respondents consider voting in European elections to be the most effective way to ensure that voices are heard by decision-makers at EU level.

Engaging with citizens

Parliament stressed the need to reflect on how to make the EU more effective in engaging with citizens in the light of the Union's fundamental principles of representative democracy, arguing that **citizens should have a greater say in the Union's decision-making process**. In this respect, it felt that treaty change should not be precluded and that the conference on the future of Europe should be an opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with citizens on these fundamental issues.

Thus, any reform of the Union to make it more social, fair, united, focused, competent, sovereign and accountable could benefit from some form of direct dialogue with citizens through participatory mechanisms.

Parliament recommended, *inter alia*, to:

- creating opportunities for citizens to discuss and deliberate among themselves, but also with policy makers, civil society organisations, social partners and other stakeholders as well as academic researchers, in an atmosphere open to diversity and balance of opinions and participants;

- foster exchanges between citizens from different countries at European, national, regional and local levels, in particular through networking of cities and regions;

- communicating with young people, including children, and involving them systematically in participation mechanisms and in regular citizens' dialogues;

- facilitate citizens' access to documents of the European institutions and increase efforts to communicate with citizens in all official EU languages;

- work with educational institutions and civic education bodies to ensure that active European citizenship is part of the curriculum throughout the EU;

- combat disinformation and provide diverse access to a common European news centre that is neutral, independent, informative and available in all official EU languages;

- develop accessible, inclusive and innovative tools using digital technologies to empower all citizens (e.g. young people, older people, people with disabilities, mobile EU citizens, people living in rural or less populated areas) to participate effectively in EU decision-making.

Strengthening and updating existing participatory instruments

Parliament believes that existing participatory instruments have a number of shortcomings and that they should therefore be improved and new ones developed to make citizens' participation easier, more inclusive and more effective.

Members stressed the importance of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) as the only participatory tool at European level with the capacity to lead to the adoption of legislation. They suggested **strengthening the follow-up given to ECIs** through the adoption of a parliamentary resolution for each successful ECI. Parliament could for example follow up the ECI with a legislative initiative report. The Commission should then commit to presenting a legislative proposal following the adoption of such a report by the Parliament.

Establishing permanent participatory mechanisms

Members stressed the importance of permanent participatory mechanisms to further facilitate and encourage citizens' involvement in EU decision-making processes.

Parliament committed itself to engaging with the other EU institutions and stakeholders in order to strengthen the means available to citizens, notably by expanding citizens' dialogues and establishing a permanent citizens' participation mechanism with a formally binding monitoring process.

It also suggested the creation of citizen participation mechanisms on pilot projects, with a ‘participatory budget’ to shape the expenditure side of the EU budget, and to involve citizens in co-creating policies alongside EU decision-makers.

The Commission is invited to present a proposal for an inter-institutional agreement on civil dialogue on the basis of Article 11(2) of the Treaty on European Union, according to which the institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.