



EU Citizens' Dialogue in The Hague, 17 May 2019

Results of table discussions, Sli.do polls and discussion with Ann Mettler

Results of table discussions

The following topics were discussed at the tables:

Social Europe

- Housing: high rents, homelessness, insufficient social housing, varying costs of accommodation across Europe
- Education: Better coordination between workplace requirements and academic curricula, greater mobility between countries
- Poverty: Reasons for rising poverty (costs for housing, higher taxes, atypical employment contracts), inequality of opportunities, social security systems
- Other topics: Discrimination, unemployment, inequality of living standards, refugees, ideals, pension system

Digital Europe

- Internet access: Must be made accessible to young and old alike, equality in all EU countries, Europe-wide internet coverage, fundamental right to internet access
- Data security: Creation of guidelines and regulations, monitoring of free online trade, data privacy
- Other topics: Influence of the internet, uncertainty about EU jurisdiction, cross-border exchange of knowledge, platform for Europe-wide job advertisements, expansion of 5G, fundamental data protection directive, border security during tracking, free digital market, fake news, new opportunities for businesses, new jobs, digital literacy training (the elderly, young people, refugees), connected databases, strengthening of local shops

Global Europe

- Migration/refugees: Support for poor countries, humanitarian aid, better control of influx, support with return to home country, harmonized strategy for the reception of refugees, housing for refugees, combating the reasons for flight
- Defence: interaction with Russia, European army, common EU foreign policy
- Food: seasonal/regional products, alternatives to meat, prevention of over-production, more organic products, more regulation, less meat consumption
- Plastic: Ocean conservation, more research into alternatives, create more rules/pressure/incentives, ban microplastics
- Trade: Protection of technology and personal privacy, harmonisation of competition rules for trade with China and the USA, conclusion of agreements with the USA and China
- Globalisation: Job losses, emigration, fewer subsidies for farmers, more investment in research and development
- Other topics: Fighting religious extremists, Autonomous Citizens' Council, more dialogue between citizens and politicians, the economy, science, isolated EU elite, taking a firmer joint stand towards the USA and China, duty on Chinese products, prevention of border checks, harmonisation of weights and measures, prevention of tax havens, overpopulation, climate protection

Results of Sli.do poll

16 May 2019

1. Do you feel more like a European, a citizen of your home country, or a citizen of your region?/Fühlen sie sich eher als Europäer, Bürger ihres Landes oder Bürger ihrer Region?/Vous sentez-vous plutôt Européen, citoyen de votre pays ou de votre région?

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a) More like a European/Eher als Europäer/Plutôt Européen

 37 %

b) More like a citizen of my home country/Eher als Bürger meines Landes/Plutôt citoyen de mon pays

 49 %

c) More like a citizen of my region/community/Eher als Bürger meiner Region/Kommune/Plutôt citoyen de ma région/commune

 13 %

17 May 2019

2. Wie schätzen sie ihre digitale Kompetenz ein?/How would you assess your digital competence?/Comment évaluez-vous vos compétences dans le numérique ?/Hoe schat u uw digitale vaardigheden in?

0 6 6

- a) Sehr gut/Very good/Très bonnes/Zeer goed
 41 %
- b) Gut/Good/Bonnes/Goed
 48 %
- c) Eher schlecht/Not very good/Plutôt mauvaises/Matig
 9 %
- d) Schlecht/Poor/Mauvaises/Slecht
 2 %

3. Fühlen sie, dass ihre persönlichen Daten gut geschützt sind?/Do you feel that your personal data is safe?/Pensez-vous que vos données personnelles sont bien protégées ?/Heeft u het gevoel dat uw persoonlijke gegevens goed worden beschermd?

0 6 7

- a) Ja/Yes/Oui/Ja
 7 %
- b)Nein/No/Non/Nee
 93 %

4. Was glauben sie, welchen Einfluss wird die Digitalisierung der Gesellschaft auf ihr Leben haben? / What influence will the digitalization of society have on your life?/Pensez-vous que la numérisation de la société aura une influence sur votre vie ?

0 6 6

- a) Eher positiv/More positive/Plutôt positive/Vrij positief
 86 %
- b) Eher negativ/More negative/Plutôt négative/Vrij negatief
 14 %

Contents of the discussion with Ann Mettler

Social Europe

How can the EU help workers to achieve an appropriate quality of life and decent standard of living? Do you believe that the competitive advantage that China possibly has over us in terms of digitalisation could swing back in our favour?

- The transformation of the job market and safeguarding the pension system are major concerns.
- The main responsibility for social affairs lies with the individual Member States, but an effort should be made at European level to agree on a minimum standard.
- The EU offers support by funding measures to enable life-long learning and ensuring that everyone receives equal pay for equal work.
- Europe tends to be cautious with regard to innovations, which is one of the reasons why all major IT companies are Asian or American.

How does the EU safeguard income in relation to the high cost of living accommodation?

- Although housing is one of the areas over which the EU has no authority, it is aware that the issue is important for many citizens.
- The EU therefore focuses on income issues. Although the unemployment rate is at its lowest since records began, high taxes in the individual Member States actually result in a lower disposable income for the middle classes of society.
- Low wages are a particular problem for young people.

How can the EU prevent companies from relocating to “cheaper” EU countries and counteract the loss of jobs through low-wage workers from poorer EU countries?

- The Single Market means that companies can go wherever they like, but the EU is trying to create more coherence in social matters and inform employees about their rights in other EU states.
- The EU has brought increased prosperity to eastern and central Europe.

How can the EU combat poverty and the resulting discrimination against poorer citizens? What would be your advice for countries that want to prevent certain groups (e.g. homeless people) from being excluded from society?

- In the fight against poverty, the EU focuses on homelessness, youth poverty and the resulting discrimination.
- The effort to reduce youth unemployment has already been successful.
- The EU is exploring possible intervention measures to prevent homelessness.
- The EU must develop awareness for the problem and provide financial aid, but the main responsibility for alleviating homelessness lies with the local municipal authorities.

Digital Europe

How can we promote digitalisation in Europe, raise citizens' awareness of what it means, and dispel misgivings about data security? Can the EU provide training for all citizens to guarantee fair, safe internet access for all?

- The General Data Protection Regulation is a clear statement of the EU's strong commitment to protecting the privacy of citizens' data.
- Up until now, data security has always meant privatisation because most solutions have been provided by industry itself. Several data misuse scandals have resulted in a more critical attitude.
- Forces inside and outside Europe are trying to create division within Europe via fake social media accounts. Information is used as a weapon, so one should always be critical of anything one reads on the internet.

How can the EU raise citizens' awareness that they must be careful when using the internet?

- Social media must be regulated in one way or another.
- The EU must implement measures to deal with the darknet, as it is used to organise many transnational criminal activities.
- The EU must work with partners around the world to create global standards that put people first and are ethically justified.

Was there a particular point when you realised that digitalisation had to be included in the EU's agenda?

- Yes, when we looked closely at the topic of terrorism and realised that online radicalisation is the driving force. Terrorism in its present form could not exist without the internet.
- The European Internet Forum was formed to bring companies together and make them accountable.

Can the EU guarantee citizens the right to a secure internet? The EU should be globally more competitive in the fields of business, knowledge and information.

- Although the EU has set data security standards, companies do not always comply with them.
- One proposal is for all internet pages to display how trustworthy they are.

How does the EU inform internet users? Well-informed users are less likely to become victims of data security breaches.

- Internet users should be given comprehensive information about their rights.
- In addition, the media literacy skills of users must be enhanced, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and fake news.

Do you plan to integrate the teaching of media literacy into school curricula, further education and international programmes?

- Yes, definitely. We are currently investing in the education department. We also employ fact checkers, but the most important thing is that internet users remain critical.

Wouldn't it be a good idea if the EU put pressure on the telecommunications lobby so that we pay less for internet access in future?

- Europe is one of the world's most competitive telecommunications markets, so we already pay comparatively little anyway. The EU has also abolished roaming charges.

Global Europe

When is the EU going to speak with one voice on the refugee crisis and start to work on a solution?

- The EU is already making progress: refugee numbers have fallen by 90 % and a European Border and Coastguard Agency with 10,000 officers has been formed.
- Many member States are willing to assume responsibility for refugees and ensure controlled, regulated and safe migration.
- The Schengen Area is under threat without secure borders.
- The system is not perfect because there is no consensus between Member States.

What is being done to combat the root causes of flight in the refugees' home countries? What is the Commission doing to ensure the fair distribution of refugees between the Member States?

- The EU is investing a lot of money in ensuring that refugees are accommodated as close as possible to their home country, which will also allow them to return as quickly as possible.
- The EU has an agreement with Turkey. Under the terms of the agreement, Turkey receives financial aid from the EU for accommodating refugees.
- The EU needs to develop a good Africa strategy to determine how to combat the reasons for flight.
- Refugees have not been distributed fairly up until now because some countries refuse to receive refugees and the EU cannot force them to.

Do we not need stricter rules to make the sale of cheap goods that endanger the environment unattractive, as an incentive to buy environment-friendly products?

- The EU has the highest product standards in the world.
- There is a risk that EU legislation will drive companies with high coal consumption to relocate to other countries, where they will produce less sustainably and import their products back to the EU.
- The EU needs to convince other countries that they must invest in climate protection, which it can only do if it carries global weight.

Top-down change is not possible in the EU – we have to begin at grass-roots level in our political regions. How can we continue the Citizens' Dialogue in future?

- It is relatively difficult to implement anything in the EU because of the large number of parties involved: the European Parliament, the European Council and stakeholders.
- The EU could be faster in some areas, but democracies are always slower and more deliberative than authoritarian regimes, for example.
- Citizens' Dialogues are the President of the Commission's priority, because we must work together to promote "Project Europe" – you are Europe – we cannot do it alone in Brussels.

We have spoken about Europe being very slow. Could the future of the EU be more federal?

- It is unfortunate that EU foreign policy, in particular, does not work properly because the agreement of all Member States is required for all decisions.
- There is currently a discussion about future decisions only requiring a qualified majority. This would mean that the agreement of all Member States would not be required and the EU would have more power to act.