



Results from the citizens' engagement event on Horizon Europe

Executive Summary



Research and
Innovation

Results from the citizens' engagement event on Horizon Europe

European Commission
Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
Directorate G — COMMON POLICY CENTRE
Unit G.3 — COMMON STRATEGIC PLANNING & PROGRAMMING SERVICE
Contact Massimiliano ESPOSITO
Email RTD-G3-ASSIST@ec.europa.eu
RTD-PUBLICATIONS@ec.europa.eu

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

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**Results from the citizens'
engagement event on
Horizon Europe**
Strategic Plan 2025-2027

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the outcomes of a citizens' engagement event on the European Commission's Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027. A selection of 70 citizens¹ from across the European Union (EU) were invited to contribute to the development of the next version of the Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe. The citizens were invited to help the Commission understand what citizens would prioritise when it comes to future research and innovation activities, as they have unique insights into identifying concerns about research and innovation or pointing to possible barriers with reference to their own experience.

The event built on the foundation for engagement with citizens developed by the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)². The starting point of the event was a selection of the 49 plenary proposals and measures that were developed during CoFoE³. In total, 25 of the 49 proposals were selected for deliberation. This event was structured around three topics: 'Digital and technological transition', 'Green transition' and 'Resilience', and the citizens deliberated in three working groups on one of the topics throughout the day.

Following deliberation of the 25 CoFoE plenary proposals, the citizens prioritised 9 of the 25 proposals. They were:

Proposals selected in the session on 'Digital and technological transition':

- 27: Media, Fake news, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Cybersecurity
- 31: Access to digital infrastructure
- 35: Digital innovation to strengthen the social and sustainable economy

Proposals selected in the session on the 'Green transition':

- 1: Agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution
- 6: Information, awareness, dialogue, and lifestyle
- 11: Sustainable Growth and innovation

Proposals selected in the session on 'Resilience':

- 10: Equal access to health for all
- 18: Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in energy
- 25: Rule of Law, Democratic values, and European identity

After the selection of the 9 proposals, the citizens discussed what new knowledge or new solutions they would like to see, and what parts of each proposal could form a starting point towards desired new knowledge and innovation. They also discussed what barriers there could be for making use of new insights or innovation to promote the desired impacts of the proposals. Table 1 presents an overview of the prioritised proposals and key discussion points

¹ 65 citizens of the 70 invited participated in the event.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/conference-future-europe_en

³ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/conference-future-europe_en#final-reports-and-proposals

OVERVIEW OF THE PRIORITISED PLENARY PROPOSALS FROM THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

Table 1 - Overview of the prioritised plenary proposals from the CoFoE.

Proposals	Desired knowledge or innovation	Barriers or opportunities to implementation
<p>Session on Digital and technological transition:</p> <p>27: Media, Fake news, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Cybersecurity</p> <p>31: Access to digital infrastructure</p> <p>35: Digital innovation to strengthen the social and sustainable economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More literacy, knowledge and innovation so that citizens can better navigate the media landscape, access in-depth news coverage, and clearly see who sponsors what news stories • Information on better protecting children and vulnerable groups • Find a balance between the right to free speech and protection from hate speech or misinformation • Need to develop digital solutions with user needs at the centre (include all groups in society) • Explore innovation ecosystems (e.g. digital innovation incubators) that can harmonise infrastructures for digitalisation across the EU, so knowledge is shared, opportunities are the same across the EU and we achieve more equal digitalisation across the EU • Maintain a balance between digital and non-digital solutions, so that being digital remains a choice • Request for further discussion on whether rural areas need to be digitalised and what criteria can be used to define the development of rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucracy • Missing insight into the efficiency of research projects that have already been funded by the EU • Digital solutions are not user friendly, nor developed with user needs in mind • Citizens have different needs: some would like to choose between different digital solutions, others do not want to have to choose, and some would like to have a choice between using digital tools or not • Education on using digital tools is missing • Dominance of big tech companies • Inequalities between EU countries in terms of infrastructures for digitalisation and other inequalities • Safety concerns, concerns on protection of vulnerable groups • Mental health concerns

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens are frustrated with slow process of digitalisation regarding digital identities • Need to ensure citizen rights and security • Disease prevention an area of priority for digital development • Psychological and emotional effects of social media • Education of public administration officials and private actors 	
<p>Session on the Green transition:</p> <p>1: Agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution</p> <p>6: Information, awareness, dialogue, and lifestyle</p> <p>11: Sustainable Growth and innovation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or effective tools to measure carbon emissions • Explore smart solutions towards eating more plant-based food, with minimum levels of laboratory produced food and with readjusted subsidies towards more sustainable farming practices • Consumer education is important in the whole ecosystem, not least in the schools • Explore new technologies for improving holistic and sustainable farming. Knowledge is missing on the potential of infra-red technologies and the use of sensor technologies • Need for an EU-level discussion on how we prioritise our land use • Explore how social and technological innovation would develop in harmony • Need for education and awareness programmes on lifestyle changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen willingness to engage in innovation and to adapt to new green lifestyles • Need for better collaboration between many actors and sectors • Local authorities should be much more involved in engaging with citizens on sustainable change • Need for more and better communication and dissemination of research and insight that already exist

<p>Session on Resilience:</p> <p>10: Equal access to health for all</p> <p>18: Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in energy</p> <p>25: Rule of Law, Democratic values, and European identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge on the opportunity, advantages, and limitations of having a common database of health data that would allow for much useful research but presents some limitations in terms of privacy • A need for the EU to ensure fair and equal access to health services • Better tools to assess the possibility and usefulness of waste recycling for energy use • Focus on sustainable transportation solutions to achieve the goal of reducing dependency and understand what motivates behavioural change • Develop stronger connections between identity and democracy to strengthen democracy • Substantial contribution of culture and cultural heritage to keeping the EU connected/united and reinforce solidarity, by helping build a common and strong EU identity • A need to make EU values and the rule of law respected across the Union. • Need to raise awareness among the public of ongoing European research projects and on the results of finalised ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to health should be equal across the EU and equally affordable • Barriers for a shift towards a more sustainable energy system are poorly understood. We need to understand those barriers better, hence there is a need to focus on behavioural research • Need to carefully and confidently navigate researching European identity, and foster and strengthen it against populist voices; in parallel, promote intercultural understanding, without this being perceived as propagandist • Demography (support for families) and migration (access to health, integration, war in Ukraine) pose serious challenges for the resilience of our societies • EU needs to increase its digital capacities to be resilient and autonomous in the digitised world • EU needs to increase its preparedness for future crises (war, health, etc.)
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Looking at the input from the citizen participants, possible areas of research could include:

- **Digital and technological transition**
 - Researching user needs for digital solutions.
 - Engaging with populations in rural areas to understand their needs, discuss the value and desired developmental directions for rural areas.
 - Researching dynamics of media landscapes, how to create more transparency and provide access to all groups in society
 - Better understand how to protect of children, vulnerable groups, and citizen rights.
 - Looking into how we can digitalise but keep digitalisation as a choice.
 - Understanding how to increase equality among Member States and on what parameters.
 - Experimenting with research infrastructures, evaluating efficiency of research projects and communication of such information.
 - Better understanding of what groups have difficulties using digital tools and why, and what/if education is needed.
 - Diversifying the media landscape and countering influence of big tech companies.

- **Green transition**
 - Supporting transition towards plant-based foods.
 - Researching effects of subsidies in food production industries, what measures should be adjusted, how, why, and when.
 - Exploring what new technological tools have potential, and for what and how (e.g. carbon measure, infra-red, sensors).
 - Examining what is needed to improve holistic and sustainable farming.
 - Better understand the interaction between social and technological change in the context of the green transition, how does the one influence the other, and how can the two develop together and reinforce each other.
 - Better understand education needs on behaviour and lifestyle changes, and the effect of different types of education.
 - Strengthen the efforts to formulate and communicate research and knowledge on research insights that could make a difference towards a more sustainable society.

- **Resilience**
 - More knowledge on the opportunities, advantages, and limitations of having a common database of health data.
 - Research to define equal access and standards of health outcomes (making sure that patients with the same/similar diseases have the same health outcomes) at the EU-level, combination of health systems and welfare systems.
 - Understanding motivations for more sustainable behaviours.
 - Understanding mechanisms of identity creation in relation to democratic activities and societal coherence.

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Studies and reports