



Does Europe's democracy need more citizen participation?

Dear participants,

welcome to the European HomeParliaments. We are delighted that you are joining us.

2023 is a special year, as we celebrate the 175th anniversary of the first all-German parliament at the founding site of Pulse of Europe e.V. in Frankfurt am Main. From 1848 to 1849, the members of the Frankfurt National Assembly discussed the formation of a German nation state and the adoption of a liberal constitution to establish a national democracy. 175 years later, we would like to invite you to reflect and deliberate on the future of European democracy in an open and engaged manner.

Europe's democracy is under massive pressure: while authoritarian forces such as Russia and China are testing Europe's liberal and democratic societies from the outside, the EU is struggling internally with growing polarisation, scepticism about democracy, national egoisms and a sense of alienation between citizens and politicians. In addition, there are global challenges such as climate change, migration and artificial intelligence, as well as manipulation through fake news. With this 8th round of the European HomeParliaments, we are therefore focusing on the topic of "European citizen participation" and offering you the opportunity to reflect on the question: Does Europe's democracy need more citizen participation?

We would like to invite you to debate 3 important questions about the future of European democracy. As in a parliament, you will first discuss the individual questions with each other and then be able to vote on them individually. The results of this, together with the results of the numerous other European HomeParliaments taking place at the same time in various European countries, will create a sense of the current European public opinion and then discussed with EU politicians.

Have fun thinking, discussing and voting. We are looking forward to your contribution to the future of European democracy!



This is how your European HomeParliament works:

- 1) Meet in a group of 3-8 people.
- 2) Appoint a moderator to lead your debate, ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak, and record the results on this discussion sheet.
- 3) Discuss your questions one by one, document the results, upload them to Open Petition or send us an image/pdf document of this result sheet to ehp@pulseofeurope.eu until **30/06/2023**.

Let's go:

- 4) First read the overarching question together and share your basic thoughts about it with each other (max. 10-15 minutes time).

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- 5) Now discuss the three concrete reform proposals. Recommended time: 15-30 minutes each.

The moderator in your debate round reads out the background information on the respective reform proposal and the associated pro and con arguments. Discuss the reform proposal with each other: What do you think? Are you for or against it? Important: Enter the voting results in the form of a rating on a scale of 1-10 and add interesting arguments or additional perspectives that were raised during the debate! Please also mark the pro and con arguments that were particularly convincing in the group.

Question 1:

Should a European referendum be introduced in which all EU citizens can participate and thus have their say on issues concerning the future of Europe?

Background: A constantly low voter turnout in European elections¹ and the desire of many EU citizens for more co-determination raises the question of complementing the democratic procedures in the EU. In order to revitalise European democracy, the introduction of an EU-wide referendum is being discussed, in which EU citizens could vote on important European issues of the future. Conceivable are votes on issues where the EU institutions can exert influence, such as in the field of climate, trade, transport or social policy. It is still unclear whether the result of such a referendum would be binding for the members of the European Parliament or would only have an advisory function. A European referendum could be initiated by EU citizens or by the European Parliament. A European referendum was one of the demands of EU citizens in the context of the "Conference on the Future of Europe".²

Pro-Arguments	Contra-Arguments
A European referendum sends an important signal against disenchantment with politics and democracy, especially with regard to the EU.	Complex issues and decisions are difficult to reduce to just one voting question.
Such a participation process brings European issues to the grassroots level and invites EU citizens to think from a European perspective beyond the national framework on the important issues of the future.	As with other participation procedures, it is to be expected that only those EU citizens will vote who also participate in European elections anyway and are politically interested.
A European Referendum creates a participatory complement to the representative elements of EU democracy.	If the results of such an EU referendum are not taken into account by politicians, this could lead to greater disenchantment with politics.

There is space here for additional arguments or ideas that have arisen during the discussion:

PLEASE enter the voting results of the group members here (on a scale from 0 = not at all to 10 = yes, absolutely).

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of votes											

¹ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/elections>

² <https://futureu.europa.eu/en/pages/reporting?format=html&locale=en>

Question 2:

Should EU citizens also be able to vote for candidates from other EU Member States in European elections via transnational lists?

Background: Transnational lists in European elections are being discussed as a possibility for a stronger democratisation of the European Union. At present, candidates in the European elections are nominated via national lists. This means that voters only have the possibility to vote for national parties, so that the composition of the European Parliament is de facto determined by 27 national partial elections. In order to promote a "Europeanisation of European elections", a decision of the European Parliament in 2022 provides for the addition of a further vote to the European election ballot.³ The bill still has to be taken up by the EU Member States in the Council of the European Union. With the first vote, EU citizens would continue to vote for a national list; with the new second vote, they would have the opportunity to vote for an additional transnational list. Initially, only 28 out of a maximum of 751 MEPs in a pan-European constituency would be elected via transnational lists, with a mandatory geographical balance. The long-term goal is the formation of effective European parties in European elections.

Pro-Arguments	Contra-Arguments
Transnational lists contribute to common political decision-making at the European level.	Elections to the European Parliament will become more complicated and in need of explanation for EU citizens.
A pan-European election instead of 27 national partial elections moves the parties towards more European content and counteracts nationalism.	Foreign candidates are not known locally and the closeness of MPs to the people may be hampered by language differences.
Currently, the votes of EU citizens from smaller EU Member States carry more weight in the European elections than the votes from the most populous EU Member States. In the long run, changing the electoral system may allow the introduction of equal votes for all EU citizens.	Transnational lists weaken the federal principle within the EU. Parties of regional minorities would have a particularly hard time getting into the European Parliament this way.

There is space here for additional arguments or ideas that have arisen during the discussion:

³ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220324IPR26135/eu-elections-meps-want-transnational-lists-and-all-countries-to-vote-on-9-may>

PLEASE enter the voting results of the group members here (on a scale from 0 = not at all to 10 = yes, absolutely).

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of votes											

Question 3:

Should EU citizens decide at the local level how many refugees they want to accept in their region and thus facilitate a Europe-wide distribution?

Background: European migration policy has been a highly controversial policy area for many years. There are sometimes major differences between the governments of the EU Member States and the regions regarding the willingness to accept refugees. In some places, local authorities and EU citizens are campaigning for refugees to be accepted over and above the national distribution key. In other regions, the acceptance of refugees according to the national distribution key is already met with protest.⁴ Studies suggest that migration movements to Europe will continue to increase due to climate change, political instability and wealth disparities.⁵ The question therefore arises whether EU citizens should be empowered by being able to vote regionally in their municipalities on how many refugees they want to receive locally. The voting results could be taken into account in the European distribution of refugees. This would also open up the possibility of EU aid money being paid directly to municipalities willing to take in refugees.

Pro-Arguments	Contra-Arguments
More co-determination at the local level makes abstract European migration policy concrete and accessible to EU citizens.	A strong rejection to the reception of refugees in individual regions may further exacerbate the imbalance in the distribution of refugees in the EU.
Increased involvement of EU citizens in the distribution of refugees within the EU can lead to more understanding in the heated immigration debate and facilitate integration on the ground.	There is a risk of a misinterpretation of public opinion by a loud, dissenting minority facing an approving but silent majority.
Different conditions and opinions in the regions can be taken into account so that problems can be avoided and special opportunities can be used (win-win situation).	The possibility of co-determination on the distribution of refugees could be used as a gateway to question the fundamental right to asylum as such.

There is space here for additional arguments or ideas that have arisen during the discussion:

⁴ <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/refugees-welcome-cross-european-public-opinion-on-asylum-seekers-following-the-2015-crisis/>

⁵ https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/generated/document/en/Ideas%20Paper%20Future%20Migration%20Integration_V04.pdf



PLEASE enter the voting results of the group members here (on a scale from 0 = not at all to 10 = yes, absolutely).

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of votes											

And now back to the overarching question:

Does Europe's democracy need more citizen participation?

Please vote now as the entire European HomeParliament by showing of hands. The moderator will record the result.

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	Yes	Neutral	No
Number of votes			

Additional feedback to Pulse of Europe:

5a. How did you like the participation process through the European HomeParliaments?

Please tick (on a scale from 0 = not at all to 10 = yes, absolutely).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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5b. Have you changed your opinion on one or more proposals as a result of the debate?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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5c. Do you understand the arguments of the other participants better after the debate?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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5d. In your eyes, is there another measure that should be added to enhance European civic participation?

Group selfie/screenshot - data protection

(Please obtain the consent of the participants and then tick the box below.)

The group selfie/screenshot puts a face to your European HomeParliament and allows us to see that it really happened. Of course, we also want you to have a nice souvenir of your European HomeParliament!

All participants who are in the photo should agree to the picture being taken and sent. Those who do not agree can, for example, turn their back to the camera when the photo is taken. All our privacy notices can be viewed [here](#). These relate to the use and storage of the group photo.

- All participants of this European HomeParliament agree that the group picture will be published. There is always the possibility to ask us to delete the picture and/or to no longer publish it.**