

First European Citizens' Panel took steps to enable citizens to contribute to the creation of the future of Europe

On 5-6 May, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted the first [European Citizens' Panel](#), which was convened to prepare a public consultation on the Future of Europe. A group of 80 European citizens from 27 Member States came to the EESC premises in Brussels to work together and draft a 12-question online consultation. The Citizens' Consultation, initiated by the French president Emmanuel Macron, is organized for the first time in the history of the EU.

Europe must act now before it is too late

The EESC president **Luca Jahier**, who opened the Citizens' Panel, acknowledged that the EU is currently facing hardships. "I can assure you that I am not blind to these challenges," said Mr Jahier, naming issues such as widening inequalities between EU countries, worryingly low levels of trust in democratic institutions, a migration crisis, and environmental challenges.

Mr Jahier stressed that today too many people feel that their opinions are not taken on board. "If this feeling persists, our democratic system will risk collapsing, and so will our project of peace, in which I believe from the very bottom of my heart."

The president drew attention to the efforts of previous generations who restored peace in Europe after the war and emphasized that everything that has been done cannot be swept away. "We get to work now, before it is too late," Mr Jahier said.

12 questions for the future of Europe

Following the series of workshops, where participants discussed the most vital issues concerning the future of the EU, 12 tangible questions for online consultation were presented in the last panel. On 9 May, the Commission will launch in all EU languages the online public consultation co-created by the Citizens' Panel. The Commission will inform the Member States on the results from the first six months of the consultation at the December European Council and will present a final report at the first EU 27 Summit in Sibiu, Romania, on 9 May 2019.

Crucial time to hear the voice of the EU citizens

Addressing the concerns, **Timo Pesonen**, EC Director General for Communication, emphasized in his final remarks that apart from being published online, the questionnaire will be presented in all activities of the Commission. "It is

essential to outreach the whole Europe with these questions in order to have an open debate and listen for citizens' concerns on the future of Europe ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019."

The EESC member **Thierry Libaert** noted that the first Citizens' Panel was a historic event and it produced solid and groundbreaking results. "We will ensure that this whole process that begun today will be carried forward," stressed Mr Libaert.

Background: Last March, while attending the EESC plenary session, Nathalie Loiseau, The French Minister for European Affairs, presented the European consultation process put forward by president Emmanuel Macron. In light of this, Georges Dassis (the former EESC president) and Luca Jahier (the new EESC president) proposed that the Committee be actively and closely involved. In 2017, the Committee successfully organized consultations on the Future of Europe in the Member States, in the framework of the White Paper by Jean Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission.