

More local perspective, solidarity and direct dialogue: Report highlights citizens' expectations toward the EU

The European Committee of the Regions has shared the preliminary results of its "[Reflecting on Europe](#)" campaign, in the presence of Valérie Gomez-Bassac, member of the French National Assembly and supporter of the citizens' consultations initiative launched by the French President. Results from the 150 [citizens dialogues](#) and 15 000 replies to the [online survey](#) collected by the Committee so far have shown that political issues, whether global, European or national, are always seen through a local frame of view. A majority of respondents also call for more solidarity between EU countries, whilst stressing the need for more direct and permanent channels of dialogue with the EU.

Prompted by Brexit and the crisis of confidence in Europe, EU political leaders have engaged in a broad debate on the future of Europe. The EU's initiatives to engage with citizens were recently given a strong boost with President Macron's proposal to launch "citizens' consultations" throughout the EU. The CoR is actively contributing to the process, in particular through a wide-ranging consultation campaign branded "[Reflecting on Europe](#)", mainly in the form of citizens' dialogues organised at local level. Results of this bottom-up exercise will feed into a report by the CoR's President Lambertz and First Vice-President Markkula, following a [request by European Council President](#) to put forward the "the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the EU".

Speaking on 11 April at the meeting of the CoR's **Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs** about the preparation of the CoR report, **President Lambertz** said: "*I want to ensure we report back as faithfully as possible about what citizens and local and regional authorities have said during our dialogues. We need to underline that cities and regions are a key part of the chain to strengthen European democracy. Finally, and something of crucial importance, we should end with some concrete suggestions and recommendations for the future of Europe and how to reconnect it to its citizens*".

Valérie Gomez-Bassac, member of the French National Assembly's Commission for European Affairs, and rapporteur for the Report on the democratic conventions for re-building Europe (*Conventions démocratiques de refondation de l'Europe*) presented the motivation behind the initiative, stressing that too often people have the impression that decisions are taken in Brussels in a distanced away and disconnected from their daily life. She insisted that citizens' consultations will need to "*go beyond the usual suspects*" as citizens often feel that the European debate is "*confiscated by Eurosceptics and Euro-enthusiasts*". She further pointed out that this "*should not be seen as a partisan effort*", but that the aim was to determine "*how to implement the EU that citizens want*". All Member States have accepted to participate in

the initiative which will be carried out between April and October 2018.

The [preliminary report](#) on the “Reflecting on Europe” initiative was presented to [CIVEX](#) members , providing insights into the way citizens want to see the EU developing in the future. Since March 2016, the CoR has organised 150 citizens’ dialogues in almost all Member States, listening to about 30.000 citizens in 81 regions, 114 cities and municipalities. Around 15 000 people have also taken part in the CoR online survey about the future of the EU and its main policies .

The main findings of the consultation include the following:

- There is a certain level of discontent and disconnection towards the EU, a feeling that does not only concern their perception of the EU but politics in general;
- Citizens have in general little knowledge about what the EU is and what it is doing.
- Positive signals however emerge, in particular from the younger generation who appreciate the benefits of the EU, especially free movement, education, mobility opportunities and environment policies;
- People demand higher levels of transparency and more active ways to become involved with the EU;
- Local and regional politicians enjoy higher level of trust than EU or national representatives;
- Solidarity is a recurring theme. About 80% of the respondents say that they expect more solidarity between rich and poor member states and regions. This points to the crucial role inherited in policies with a strong territorial dimension such as cohesion policy;
- In addition to freedom, prosperity and mobility, people ask a more active Europe in education, environment and security.

The CoR draft opinion on the future of Europe is due to be adopted by the CIVEX commission on 10 July, before final adoption in CoR plenary session on 9 October 2018.

More information

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