

## ANNEX 7.1

# CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS' DEMOCRACY

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## Contents

CREATING A CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS' DEMOCRACY .....	3
Centre for European Citizens' Democracy (CECD).....	4
Overall objective:.....	4
Specific objectives: .....	4
Background for the CECD .....	5
<i>The CECD Scope of Work</i> .....	5
<i>The CECD and the Digital future</i> .....	6
<i>The CECD – Policymakers Observatory</i> .....	6
<i>The CECD – Research and Capacity Building</i> .....	6
<i>Europe's People's Forum a continued network</i> .....	7
Organisation.....	7
Economy.....	8

## CREATING A CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS' DEMOCRACY

This proposal for an efficient, practical way of organizing commonly accepted elements is rooted in the implementation of the first year of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and the previous processes of European Citizens' Dialogues and consultations.

1. Whereas Europe's People's Forum (EPF) has closely followed the process at EU level (in the European Parliament, in the European Commission and in the EU Council) as well as in the member states, which have been very loyally assembled and drawn up by the EP in its *'Report on Citizens' dialogues and Citizens' participation in the EU decision-making*.
2. Whereas the European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2021 ***on Citizens' dialogues and Citizens participation in the EU decision-making*** emphasizes the need to fully engage citizens in EU decision-making in order to enhance the legitimacy of the EU and increase public trust in the work of the institutions,
3. Whereas the EP stresses the importance of permanent participatory mechanisms to further facilitate and encourage citizens' participation beyond the act of voting and other existing channels and instruments, the EP underlines the need for such mechanisms at European, national, regional and local level and for adequate horizontal and vertical coordination among institutions at different levels (33),
4. Whereas regular participatory processes with citizens and with youth:
  - a. could serve different purposes, such as influencing annual political or legislative priorities, developing specific proposals in relation to specific questions, discussing institutional matters or deciding on the spending of certain public resources (34);
  - b. include a wide range of tools that are complementary, such as citizens' assemblies, citizens' initiatives, public consultations, citizens' dialogues, participative budgeting, referendums, etc. (35);
  - c. provide a means for individuals to express their ideas and concerns and (36) must be inclusive, open, deliberate, transnational, transparent, non-partisan, accountable, effective, visible and engaging (36);
  - d. offer citizens access in their mother tongue to develop a truly inclusive European democracy (38);
5. Whereas to reach out to as many people as possible, an inclusive approach must be taken; The selection of participants should ensure a well-balanced representation of the population, so that the societal and territorial diversity is fully reflected including non-EU citizens residents. Alternative mechanisms should be offered to reach EU citizens residing in other member states or in a non-EU country (37),
6. Whereas the current concept and practice of Citizens' Dialogues should be reinforced and updated (7); The European Citizens' Initiatives (ECI), complaints to the European Ombudsman and petitions to Parliament, are important bottom-up supplements to Parliamentarism, and must be strengthened (H),

7. Whereas civil society organisations, social partners and other stakeholders should play a major role in all participatory instruments through proper methodologies supporting their participation (40),
8. Whereas digital technologies should be a complement to encourage participation among populations that have difficulties participating in traditional participatory instruments (43); Innovative and inclusive tools for citizens' participation and dialogues should be developed to allow all citizens (including younger and older people, people with disabilities, mobile EU citizens, people living in rural or less populated areas) to play an effective part in EU decision-making and in turn gain a sense of ownership and European identity (44),
9. Whereas the European Parliament encourages the facilitation of the establishment of an independent civil society organisations network, based on voluntary participation, to bring together different democracy initiatives, including across different regions, in order to facilitate information sharing and knowledge transfer as well as to ensure that best practice methods are used; This will increase citizens' awareness of EU decision-making procedures, and ensure more opportunities for citizens to influence policy-making; (52),
10. Whereas the EC's Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy provides the tools, resources, research and methodologies across different levels of governance in the EU and welcomes ideas for potential collaboration and joint initiatives;

The Europe's People's Forum proposes to complement and collaborate with the EC's Competence Centre when establishing the following:

## Centre for European Citizens' Democracy (CECD)

### Overall objective:

- To strengthen democracy and renew trust and the sense of ownership in the European Union by engaging citizens in European policy-making and improve the EU's ability to reflect the needs and visions of European citizens.

### Specific objectives:

- Strengthen democracy and citizens' ownership of future policies at all European levels by initiating participatory processes that engage as many citizens as possible in policy- and decision making.
- Deepen a commitment to participation at local, regional, national and European level on the part of public authorities, citizens, civil society organizations and independent media.
- Improve the quality of policymaking, strategic reviews and other aspects of institutional decision-making by drawing on expertise from citizens.
- Develop and support innovative state-of-the-art methods for citizen- and community led participation as part of the EU's democratic toolkit.

## Background for the CECD

The establishment of the Centre for European Citizens' Democracy is proposed in response to the European Parliament's proposal for a permanent mechanism for participatory involvement of citizens in policy making.

It also responds to European Commission President's ambition to develop a new approach to engage citizens in EU decision and policy making.

In addition, the Centre for European Citizens' Democracy represents the citizens' visions and recommendations from the Panel 2 of the Conference on the Future of Europe as well as civil society organisations' ambition to enhance citizens' participation.

Thus, Centre for European Citizens' Democracy will institutionalise the activities of the Europe's People's Forum (EPF) - a network of professional and civil society organisations - as an independent non-profit organisation closely connected with the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union as well as with national and local authorities.

## *The CECD Scope of Work*

The Centre for European Citizens' Democracy builds on EPF's Europewide network of app. 35 professional practitioner and research institutions in participatory democratic processes and network of 50 thematic civil society organisations. The Centre will be:

1. Responsible for the design, methodological coordination and preparation of citizens' participatory processes undertaken on behalf of EU-institutions, national and local initiatives. The methodology department lends its support to strengthening of existing citizen-led initiatives such as the European Citizens Initiative, submission of petitions to the EP and complaints to the Ombudsman and innovative new democracy instruments.
2. Developing advanced and effective methods to involve citizens in future convention processes ahead of treaty changes with the aim both to secure citizens' ownership and to ensure that citizens in the whole process at European level contribute to the possible treaties.
3. Organizes and documents exchanges of experience and best practice between members and new actors. In close collaboration between its professional practitioners, research and its civil society members CECD develops designs, measures, ensures quality control, evaluates and promotes the participatory and deliberative processes that contribute to strengthening citizens' awareness and influence of EU policymaking between and during election periods.
4. Organizes events at local, national and EU levels with politicians and public authorities to inspire to new participatory methods that strengthen democracy and renew trust and ownership in the EU and in local democracies and their policymaking.
5. Serves as the Secretariat for the networks of professional institutions, universities and experts that are experienced in citizens participatory processes and

democracy research as well as for the permanent mechanism's network of civil society organisations and of a network of advocates for citizens participation.

6. Liaises with the EC Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, member states and umbrella civil society organizations.

### *The CECD and the Digital future*

The multilingual platform and the Interactio system for multilingual deliberative dialogues used during the Conference on the Future of Europe yielded new insights with regard to digital participatory processes. It will be a key research and innovation project for CECD to develop a digital solution that can effectively:

- Reach all European citizens who link up to the Internet, social media, mobile phones and other devices,
- Allow for European residents and expats to prioritize between themes, recommendations and proposals so the outcome is a close to representative reflection of the population in socio-economic, demographic and geographic terms,
- Provide easily accessible technology that encourage all citizens, including especially vulnerable citizens with limited literacy capacity to have a voice on EU and national policies, strategies and solutions,
- Ensure that the digital solution may be used for multilingual deliberative dialogues as well as by students and groups of citizens keen to design and detail European solutions to be presented to the EU-institutions,
- Facilitate other activities aiming to increase citizen participation in Europe.

### *The CECD – Policymakers Observatory*

An observatory function to assist European and local levels of political authorities to be aware of and consider possibilities for citizens participation in different aspects of decision making or policy making. And to help develop the best design and methodology for the needs, and assist to lobby for project funding,

- Builds on a flexible network of practitioners, civil society organisations and political actors across all member states
- Interactions at all levels between CECD, local and national authorities, assemblies and governments
- Mutual support of the political independence of all national practitioners and technical organisations

### *The CECD – Research and Capacity Building*

The CECD takes part in research projects concerning democracy and further development of participatory, deliberative and other methods that contribute to a vibrant and modern democratic Europe.

- Active participation in Horizon research, innovation and practice projects that seek to stimulate democracy or citizens involvement in the shape and implementation of various policy areas
- Workshops between researchers and practitioners and their institutions and organisations
- Networking with other think tanks dealing with relevant EU policies and possible events on European research with a citizens' perspective
- Ideally, such events will take place in a geographically remote location to focus the participants' concentration such as is the case for the World Economic Forum in Davos. It is the ambition that this event may attract civil society organisations and scholars whose research on policies and societal development has a citizen perspective.

### *Europe's People's Forum a continued network*

- EPF aims to strengthen democracy and renew trust and ownership in the European Union by engaging citizens in discussions and in influencing the policy making so the EU may better reflect the needs and visions of European citizens. EPF also collaborates with partners that work with citizens, media and authorities to enhance national and European democratic processes between the elections,
- EPF consists of a professional network of interested and qualified national universities, institutions and civil society organisations in all EU member states. They have technical experience in the design, implementation, and facilitation of citizens participation in policy making between European or national elections. Some of them are research institutions with special expertise in citizen participation. The network currently counts around 35 partners.
- EPF also includes a network of civil society organisations and social partners around Europe. The informal network of CSOs is adaptive to thematic and methodological needs. This network currently has around 50 partners.

When the CECD has been established and is up and running the CECD will refrain from being part of the planning and implementation of participatory projects and leave this to the professional partners in the current EPF network. There shall be no direct link between the economic interests of the technical partners and the CECD.

### **Organisation**

The CECD could be organised as a non-profit foundation and the following organisational structures could be considered.

A **Citizen Panel** with randomly chosen citizens from all member states will meet every three months online to discuss the CECD activities and local, national and European needs for new participatory processes.

A **Strategic Council** will meet annually to evaluate the CECD's strategic development and identify the strategic challenges and opportunities for CECD in the coming year. Council members are appointed by the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and the member states as well as the CoR and EESC.

A **General Assembly** is the highest authority within CECD and will convene annually. The General Assembly decides the strategy, budget and accounts for the CECD. It also selects the members of the Board, including the President. Eligible participants in the General Assembly are technical and national members of Europe's People's Forum as well as other categories of civil society organisations. The European Citizen Initiative, the Ombudsman, Petitions or other citizens initiatives will participate in the General Assembly and each be represented on the Board of Directors.

The **Board of Directors** hires and dismisses the Secretary General. It is responsible for the budget, accounts and the draft strategies to be presented to the General Assembly.

## Economy

The CECD aims to secure an initial five-year funding to cover running costs. Sources of funding should be as diverse as possible and could include independent foundations, national public budgets and other sources.

Besides basic running costs the running costs are expected to be related directly to projects implemented with participation of CECD. This could be modelling and design towards political authorities at European, national or local levels. Funding from Horizon Europe Research and Innovation or EU programmes like the Citizen, Equality, Rights and Values programme and several others that will support establishing innovative open democratic practices.

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