

The outcomes from the "Europe 2020 - Civic Visions" conference

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A summary of the viewpoints, expressed and discussed by civic organizations representatives, at the international conference "Europe 2020 - Civic Visions", held in Sofia in January 2010.

Over 120 participants from various countries brainstormed together in order to draft common visions for Europe's future within the next decade. The visions aim at best reflecting the expectations of the citizens and their organizations for the Europe of tomorrow.

This was the concept of the two-day international conference "Europe 2020 - Civic Visions", held in Sofia on January 29 and 30, 2010. This event was implemented by the European Institute Foundation and its partners in the framework of the "Interacting with the European Parliament" project, financially supported through DG "Communication" of the EP.

European Institute Director Lubov Panayotova summarized at a briefing at the end of the conference [the conclusions, made by the participants](#) in the three conference panels - **"European Democracy - Mission Possible?"**; **"European Cultural Space and Identity"** and **"The EU Solidarity - Common responsibility for Development"**.

As a result from the common work in Panels 1, 2 and 3, were made conclusions and concrete recommendations for a long-term development of the EU in the listed areas. As revealed by the video recordings from the conference, published on the website of the project "Interacting with the European Parliament", a lot of issues were raised - issues that reflect the viewpoints of the civic sector. These are neither set to be exhaustive, nor representative; these represent an instructive "momentary picture" of the citizens' opinions, as conference attendees underlined.

The conference team presents here these panels' outcomes, in a systematic form, to the attention of everybody surfing through this website. The readers' **comments, additional contributions, proposals and reactions are more than welcome**, so that the civic vision on Europe's tomorrow could be further enriched. The readers are kindly invited to email us feedback via parliament@europe.bg or to post comments on [Europe Gateway's Facebook-page](#). The **audiofile** (*click above to listen in Bulgarian*) is a quick radio-survey among Bulgarian citizens, whom the reporter asks - how are you seeing Europe in 10 years...? In the spring of 2010 all these messages of the civic sector will be included in a larger publication, that will be transmitted to all the Members of the European Parliament, as well as to key representatives of the other major bodies and institutions of the European Union.

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Conclusions from [Panel 1](#):

- European democracy is a long avenue, an ongoing debate. It will not be achieved any soon, and it is not clear whether by 2020.
At this stage the European identity does not exist and a European demos cannot be formed. It could be created from above and this should be a goal for the coming decade.
- The citizens' initiative is a very positive development and expectations to it are high, perhaps too high. Therefore it will need to prove itself with the necessary precaution to focusing on the proper issues, so that the enthusiasm is not wasted away. Another key aspect will be the Commission's response to this initiative.
- Although the EU is not a polity, it is materially present in the lives of the European citizens. By 2020 the vision is consolidation of what has been achieved. The citizens of Europe have numerous rights but are unaware of a large part of them. The desired output is rights becoming effective and coming to the table, fully fulfilled.
- The EU has accomplished a level of transparency and it is desirable that the member states follow this trend. It is desirable that the citizens' organizations get more involved in the ex-post evaluation of the impact of legislation, not just in its shaping.
- Mainstreaming of the civil rights and fundamental freedoms in all- policies is yet an unfinished

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process. More attention needs to be paid to placing policies at the different levels. Although not a polity, the EU is a powerful political system. The democratic crisis does not derive from lack of interest of the citizens to the EU and it is not a rejection, but uncertainty whether it could be sufficiently protective of their interests and rights.

- The uniqueness of the Union is in that it is composed of democratic states, voluntarily associated. The EU itself is not a democratic state and it will probably not become one, because that would need a political culture shared by all people. The tools of democracy are made available, now it is up to the citizens to decide to what extent they want to use them.
- Democratization of the EU requires strengthening of the European polity. On the side of the institutions they should realize that the citizens cannot be administrated, they must be involved. The right to be consulted is a new area which has a good chance to bring citizens closer to the EU. On the side of the citizens it means education from an early age to prepare for participation, active exchange and communication, both personal and organizational.
- The challenge in the vision to national politicians to assume their responsibility for better connecting with their constituencies and translate the European affairs to them in a way that builds the common identity.
- Some of the existing mechanisms are still discouraging the citizens from participation because they do not trust the authenticity of the results and need further regulation and improvement, such as lobbying.

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Conclusions from [Panel 2](#):

The European Citizens have only rights, they must also have duties;

- Need to encourage the mobility of European citizens, more particularly to increase the financing for the European exchange programmes; we need follow-up of the programmes and more visibility of the programmes for the whole society; need to include young people who don't have the possibility to participate in exchange programmes; more mobility creates feeling of common identity;
- The EU programmes should provide social inclusion; they should consider the local needs; some projects are more successful if organized at a local level (the question is how to restructure the projects to make them reach the people at local level);
- To have a common identity, we need to have common values or to unify them which means a common political project (i.e. European Constitution); EU relies on homogeneity so that we could speak about common values, collective conscience;
- Education is essential; there is a need for more active policies directed to young people; the first step to construct the European identity is the cultural and intellectual attitude of every member state; the importance of European history should be highlighted in the education process;
- The EU should be solution of the problems of the globalization and not be accepted as a loss of identity; EU is not a symbol of the globalization, it doesn't deprive citizens of their national identity;
- The generation after 1989, despite its relative indifference, will contribute to the creation of a common identity through its common values;
- 2011 – the European year of voluntary service – the voluntary service encourages the active citizenship and promotes the European identity and it should be supported; it shouldn't replace the state duties;
- The active policy for children is essential;
- More funds are needed for programmes for inclusion of the Roma minority, but within them there should rather be included various cultures, not only Roma people.

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Conclusions from [Panel 3](#):

The results from discussions in Panel 3 reflect some of the main recommendations on the part of the civic organizations’ representatives as for EU’s long-term development, particularly in the following aspects:

1. There is a need for reform of the European employment policy, including the institutions which implement it, for achieving the social Europe, which should follow its economic and political dimension;
2. One of the useful steps in this path is the grant of more competences and duties for the Economic and Social Committee, beyond its present consultative functions;
3. There is a need to present social cohesion as a priority within the new strategy, Europe 2020, to reaffirm the construction of a social Europe;
4. It is useful to discuss the refocus of the solidarity policies towards concentrated investments in fields with growth potential, considering the new EU financial perspective;
5. Until 2020, the role of the local and regional authorities should be increased in the European context, and local and regional partnerships should be encouraged;
6. There should be created flexible security in the employment market and should be practically applied the principle of gender equality, including:
 - Unification of the employment market conditions;
 - Guaranteed freedom of migration within the work mobility;
7. Carrying out of measure for fight against poverty through financial inclusion should be continued and so should be the extension of the scope and extent of these measures, including the formulation of:
 - Minimal standards as a base for the social security;
 - Minimal standards for the quality of life;
8. The European Union in 2020 will be a reaffirmed factor on the global scene as a global player with

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reinforced political dimension, parallel to the economic one, and it will be lead by strict principles in that direction, including:

- The enlargement as the most convincing expression of EU's solidarity;
- Attitude towards Russia consisting in a partnership for development, rather than competition for influence;
- Completing the stages of development of the EU Eastern partnership and reaffirming the European perspective for the Eastern neighbours of the EU.