



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CITIZENS' EUROPE e-PAPER



*in the context of the “eUnited: Citizens’ Forums for United Europe” project
implemented within the framework of the Europe for Citizens programme
615548-CITIZ-1-2019-1-BG-CITIZ-CIV*

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Background

The European Union (EU) throughout its history has faced many crises and, in order to manage them, it has developed mechanisms of cross-border cooperation and solidarity to strengthen its resilience. The ever-evolving trend of societies is emerging with many advantages, challenges and opportunities in various fields such as digital transformation, environment, migration and security and globalization. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, crises are becoming increasingly complex, and Member States will need to cooperate and the protection mechanism to evolve in order to be able to deal with multifaceted or hybrid threats. Citizens play a key role in turning proposals into European reforms. An important role in strengthening the resilience of the EU is also played by the European programs, through which the exchange of know-how, experience and good practices is achieved. The project entitled "Citizens' Forum for United Europe" is implemented within the framework of the Europe for Citizens program by 6 European countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Germany, Spain, Italy). Through international events and forums of the most crucial challenges by young people aged 18-30, the recognition of the opportunities and weaknesses of each country was sought and through the exchange of good practices and policies, the aim is to develop a Citizens' Europe e-Paper for a better EU future. The overall assessment of all the events held in the 6 countries has indicated that young people have an increased sense of citizenship and awareness of the challenges that Europe is facing, with a strong desire to turn them into opportunities. However, challenges continue to exist and there is a need for coordinated EU action and the creation of security mechanisms and cross-border cooperation between States, which is still at a low level. Furthermore, higher investments in Research and Innovation (R&D), more effective information mechanisms and further encouragement of citizen's participation in voluntary and civil protection initiatives are also suggested.

Specifically, the thematic topics for the participating countries were:

- Bulgaria – 'Climate change and Environment'
- Germany - 'Digitization'
- Greece - 'Immigration and Security'
- Italy - 'European Communication'
- Poland - 'Competitive Europe'
- Spain - 'Democracy and Society'

Main Conclusion

The participation of the citizens in the events held in the 6 countries was active, a fact that proves their awareness of the challenges set by the project. It is also concluded that over the years the EU has implemented security policies to address its main challenges. However, given the ever-evolving trend of societies, the EU's response will also have to evolve. This highlights the necessity of the implementation European programs such as this one, which enables the participants and the beneficiaries at a wider scale to expand their knowledge, broaden their cultural horizons and to recognize the weaknesses and opportunities of each country. Thus, through interaction and cooperation, the aim has been to propose policies for a better and united Europe. An overall conclusion is that this can be achieved both between the cooperation of citizens and the Member States, as well as between Institutions at the local, regional, and international level. For example, in the issue of European Demography and Society, a proposed policy is the compulsoriness of a social protection system at the European level. Also, a key issue in the topic of better communication and digitization between the EU is that to ensure long-term sustainable prosperity and social cohesion, extroversion is needed. This is also necessary in terms of supporting the environmental objectives since, according to the data of the European Parliament (2022), almost half of Europeans (49%) consider climate change as the main global challenge for the future of the EU. At the same time, 21% of European citizens perceive the prioritization of strengthening solidarity between member states as a main issue and 20% consider energy independence (20%) a key factor that should be promoted. In addition to cross-border and cross-functional cooperation, a key policy proposal on the issue of migration and security is the creation of a system for the exploitation of the potential of migrants and the creation of a common asylum policy. All this combined may make Europe more competitive and resilient in a sustainable and democratic way.

Project Consortium



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