



# Citizens' Consultations on Europe: French Citizens' Panel October 25 to 27, 2018, Paris

Review report



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## Review report

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The following document analyses the French Citizens' Panel, held in the context of Citizens' Consultations on Europe. The report first presents the project, by stressing the method used to select the participants, then it takes into account the feedback of the participants as part of the evaluation and finally it gives some guidelines to think about the lessons to be learnt from this first French Citizens' Panel.

### Overview

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# 1. The project:

## French Citizens' Panel

### Presentation of the French Citizens' Panel

<b>INITIATOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The Representation of the European Commission in France and Particip-Action.</li><li>■ With the support of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, labeled by the General Secretariat for the Citizens' Consultations on Europe.</li></ul>
<b>LOCATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The Representation of the European Commission in France, Paris.</li><li>■ Le Consulat, a transitory and itinerant place, Paris.</li></ul>
<b>ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Missions Publiques: coordination, concept and animation</li><li>■ Particip-Action: facilitation</li><li>■ European Commission: coordination, facilitation and communication</li><li>■ General Secretariat for the Citizens' Consultations on Europe: expertise, coordination, facilitation and communication</li><li>■ Teamwork: reception and logistics</li><li>■ Le Consulat: technical and reception team</li><li>■ IRS: recruitment of participants</li><li>■ The Bertelsmann Stiftung: analysis of the French Citizens' Panel (October 25 to 27, 2018)</li></ul>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Identify political briefing guidelines, in the form of collective recommendations.</li><li>■ Determine the opinion of EU citizens thanks to a panel made up of 52 citizens and dealing with the question the European Panel produced on May 5 and 6: "Which decisions should Europe take today, that would make our grandchildren proud?".</li><li>■ Share the opinion of EU citizens with the leaders of France and the European Union, and French and European civil societies.</li></ul>
<b>CONTEXT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ This consultation "French Citizen Jury" supplements other initiatives of the European Commission on the future of Europe. It concludes the process of Citizens' Consultations on Europe and takes as a starting point the Citizens' Panel organized by the European Commission on May 5 and 6, 2018, which laid the foundation of the European Commission questionnaire for all European citizens.</li></ul>
<b>TIMETABLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Thursday, October 25 noon and afternoon:</b> Reception of the group at the Representation of the European Commission in France, lunch, first review (purpose of this citizens' workshop, its framework, purpose of your attendance, impact and further actions) and first exchanges at le Consulat.</li><li>■ <b>Friday, October 26:</b> Exploration of the issue: "Which decisions should Europe take today, that would make our grandchildren proud?". Combination of plenary and small group participatory sessions.</li><li>■ <b>Saturday, October 27 morning:</b> Finalization of citizens' opinion and evaluation of the process by the group.</li></ul>
<b>PROCESS MODULES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Preparatory meetings with parties involved.</li><li>■ Recruitment of 52 citizens randomly selected with a diversity of ages, origins, professions and levels of knowledge on Europe.</li><li>■ Citizens' Panel 3-day meeting in Paris from October 25 to October 27: Exploration of the issue with plenary and small group participatory sessions. Finalization and delivery of the citizens' opinions on Saturday, October 27.</li></ul>
<b>RESULTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ First French Citizens' Panel on Europe with randomly selected participants.</li><li>■ Delivery of citizens' opinions to be made available to French and European leaders. The results of the Citizens' Panel are available under the following link: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/france/sites/france/files/europe-debat-compte-rendu-0711.pdf">https://ec.europa.eu/france/sites/france/files/europe-debat-compte-rendu-0711.pdf</a>.</li></ul>

Assuming that Europe affects everyone, French and European authorities wish to better listen to their citizens<sup>1</sup>. At a time when social cohesion is often called into question, where people with different opinions do not meet enough to talk and understand each other's position, it is increasingly necessary to find alternative ways to keep the democratic discourse alive. Many forms of citizen participation already exist at the local and national level. They gradually develop in the European context in order to give citizen participation greater space in the public decision-making process.

In France, for example, as in all member States, dialogues with citizens are held. Since 2012 the European Commission has organized numerous public debates. These have informed Citizens' Consultations on the future of Europe throughout Europe since April 2018.

Within this framework the European Commission and Particip-Action brought together in Paris, from October 25 to October 27, 2018, 52 citizens and French residents that were selected to represent the diversity of French society in order to be able to discuss future decisions they want Europe to make.

In May 2018, the European Commission organized a first panel in Brussels bringing together 100 citizens from all Member States in order to prepare an online questionnaire intended to collect the opinions of all European citizens on the Europe they want tomorrow<sup>2</sup>.

The question "Which decisions should Europe take today, that would make our grandchildren proud?" resulting from the work of the European panel in May, guided the debates held in Paris during these three days.

Mirroring, on the scale of France, the European panel that marked the beginning of Citizens' Consultations, the French Citizens' Panel was one of the last consultations organized in France. The first results of the consultations in France were presented at the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council in Paris on October 30, 2018.

The French Citizens' Panel favoured meetings between people, through alternating participatory plenary sessions and small groups, following the methods and participative approaches of on-site meetings. The participants worked on the definition of criteria, concrete proposals and finally drew up a joint citizens' opinion. During these three days, they also had the opportunity to speak to French and European leaders like the Adviser to the President of the French Republic on Europe, Clément Beaune; the European Commissioners Pierre Moscovici and Gaël Veysi re; Director of the Cabinet Nathalie Loiseau, Minister in charge of European Affairs.

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*"The competent people here are the citizens."*

Yves Mathieu, co-director of Missions Publiques, designer and facilitator of the French Citizens' Panel.

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The opinion written by the 52 citizens and residents of France, as well as all the contributions collected during the Citizens' Consultations are analyzed and summarized in a report that France and the 26 other participating Member States will bring to the attention of heads of state and the government at the European Council on December 13 and 14, 2018.

1 For better readability, this report uses nouns that are either feminine or masculine. However, except when otherwise indicated, both are meant.

2 Further information, as well as an evaluation of the European Citizens' Panel by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, is available under the following link: <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/democracy-and-participation-in-europe/project-news/european-citizens-panel-on-the-future-of-europe/>

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND EUROPE: OVERVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT INITIATIVES

**Citizens' Consultations:** The Citizens' Consultations, a French initiative supported by the states of the future Union of 27 members, held from April to October 2018, gave citizens from 27 European countries the opportunity to debate and propose their vision of Europe on different topics. The results of these consultations will be presented to the heads of state and governments at the European Summit on December 13 and 14, 2018. <https://www.touteurope.eu/consultations-citoyennes.html>

**Online consultation on the future of Europe:** On May 9, 2018, the European Commission launched an online consultation on the future of Europe as part of the "Europe Day" celebrations. Written by 96 nationals from the 27 member states at a European Citizens' Panel held in Brussels on May 5 and 6, 2018, and designed in view of the summit on the future of Europe in Sibiu (Romania) and of the European elections of May 2019, this questionnaire invites all Union citizens to express themselves on the issues at the heart of the European debate. The results will be taken into account when defining the Union's strategic agenda for the years 2019-2024.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/future-europe/consultation-future-europe\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/future-europe/consultation-future-europe_fr)

**The European Commission's Citizens' Dialogues:** Since 2012, dialogues with citizens and public debates have been organized throughout Europe together with Commissioners and other European decision-makers, such as members of the European Parliament or national, regional and local politicians. These Citizens' dialogues allow citizens to interact with political leaders from the European Union.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/get-involved/citizens-dialogues\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/get-involved/citizens-dialogues_fr)

### Recruitment of the participants of the French Citizens' Panel: The random selection method

Missions Publiques, a consulting agency specialized in the improvement of global governance and the decisions through citizens' participation have developed the concept of the whole exercise and also they coordinate the recruitment of the participants.

To ensure that the composition of the panel reflects the diversity of opinions in French society, diversity criteria were taken into account during the selection process: Parity between women and men, age, location (predominantly rural/suburban/urban space), activity by socio-professional category in 2017, foreigners living in France.

The participants were recruited by the institute IRS.Quality, specialized in citizens' mobilization for qualitative and quantitative research for 30 years and in the recruitment of Citizens'

Panels in cooperation with the Agency Missions Publiques.

IRS.Quality has set up a specific methodology to ensure the representativeness of the panel and therefore the diversity of profiles by selecting citizens from its own database but also by recruiting citizens, who have not been a part of a prior study or consultation arrangement.

Although the vast majority of participants come from the database (around 7 out of 10), the use of additional forms of recruitment (calling telephone numbers taken from a directory, word of mouth, direct contacts, etc.) is essential to ensure the diversity of recruitment and include more atypical profiles of people who have less access to this type of consultation. This is important in order to not only involve citizens who are used to dealing and debating with each other. This is particularly the case for farmers who are not well represented on the panels, and who do not normally have three consecutive free days in their schedule.

The team dedicated to this type of recruitment at IRS.Quality used its network to identify and motivate eligible people. The team had to adopt a more pedagogical approach to explain the expected objectives and the modalities of the consultation to these citizens.

**In practice the recruitment was conducted in several stages:**

- Preselection of eligible profiles for the consultation according to criteria used in the panel. In the case of the French Citizens' Panel: Parity between women and men, age, location (predominantly rural/suburban/urban space), activity by socio-professional category in 2017, foreigners living in France.
- Distribution of e-mail to encourage people to participate, with a first recruitment questionnaire (validation of profiles, voting in european elections, relationship with Europe ...).
- Selection of the profiles, then telephone call with each potential participant to ensure his/her ability to play the consultation game (in the form of an informal discussion).
- Formal validation of citizens' participation in the consultation.
- E-mails and phone calls until the deadline to ensure attendance on the day.

Given that the French Citizens' Panel takes several days, it has proven necessary to recruit more citizens than the 50 ideally expected, given the expected high number of last-minute cancellations. So, for this event 76 participants were recruited for 52 French citizens and residents to actually take part. In the end, the participants from across France (including overseas territories) were between 18 and 74 years old.

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*“It is precisely this diversity of citizens that makes it possible to clearly understand the moment, and to define new perspectives to build the future together.”*

Eva Lami, Director IRS.Quality.

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## EVENT PROGRAM

### Citizens' Panel, October 25-27, 2018

#### THURSDAY OCTOBER 25, 2018

- 12PM- 2PM **Reception and lunch at the Representation of the European Commission in France**  
Citizens' Panel opened by Sixtine Bouygues (Deputy Director-General of Directorate General Communication of the European Commission), Arnaud Magnier (General Secretary General Secretariat for the Citizens' Consultations on Europe) and Jacques Archimbaud (President of the association Particip-Action).
- 2PM-7PM **Exchanges and analysis of the topic at le Consulat**  
Moving debate on the image and position of citizens on Europe, European institutions, the position of France within Europe.  
**The narrative on Europe today**  
Preparation of the meetings with Pierre Moscovici (European Commissioner), Clément Beaune (Europe Adviser to the President of the French Republic) and Gaël Veyssière (Director of Cabinet to Nathalie Loiseau, Minister for European Affairs).  
**Face-to-face meeting with Clément Beaune**  
Round table in "reverse conference" format.  
**Artistic contribution by Albert Magister**  
**Evaluation of the day**

#### FRIDAY OCTOBER 26, 2018

- 9AM-12.30PM **Exchanges and analysis of the topic at le Consulat**  
Debrief and feedback on yesterday: What we remember from our exchanges for the mandate.  
What are the desirable outcomes for Europe in 2050?  
What are our decision criteria, in order for our decisions to impact future generations?
- 12.30PM-1.30PM **Lunch**
- 1.30PM-7PM **Answer to the question asked in the mandate**  
"Which decisions should Europe take today, that would make our grandchildren proud?"  
Arguments about the decisions.  
Selection and prioritisation of decisions.  
Enlightenment by the group.  
**Exchanges and debate with Pierre Moscovici and Gaël Veyssière.**  
**Artistic contribution by Albert Magister**
- 7PM-9PM **Writing Committee of the citizens' opinion**

#### SATURDAY OCTOBER 27, 2018

- 9AM-2PM **Finalisation of the citizens' opinion**  
Individual reading of the opinion.  
Colour-coded vote to validate the opinion in parts: Introduction, key decisions Europe should take today, that would make our grandchildren proud, conclusion, appendices.  
Approval of the opinion.  
**Evaluation of the days**  
**Acknowledgments and closing**  
With Isabelle Jégouzo (Head of the Representation in France of the European Commission) and Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul (Deputy Secretary General General Secretariat for the Citizens' Consultations on Europe).  
**Lunch**



# PANEL CITOYEN

Paris, 25-27 octobre 2018



**L'AVENIR DE L'EUROPE:**  
*Parlons-en!*



**#EUdialogues**

**#QuelleEstVotreEurope**

## 2. Evaluation: French Citizens' Panel

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### THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

- **A high satisfaction rate for the first French Citizens' Panel:** More than 82% of citizens rated the Citizens' Panel as "Very good" or "Good". All "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree" that it is a good thing that the European Commission and the association Particip-Action organized this event.
- **A real interest for this kind of citizens' participation method:** More than 98% of participants indicated that they "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree" that the participative approach of the workshop with the opportunity to get involved in the discussions is interesting. More than 86% would "Very likely" and "Most likely" encourage a friend or close relative to participate in another citizens' workshop like this one.
- **The diversity of participants, representative of French society, seen as an advantage:** The participants particularly appreciated being able to meet and debate with citizens from very different backgrounds. More than 98% of participants indicated that they "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree" that thanks to the diversity of participants discussions were interesting. More than 98% of citizens "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree" that the national or even transnational nature of the event is attractive.
- **An approach that boosts personal learning and increases knowledge in general:** When it came to the statement: "I now have a better understanding of EU democracy", more than 92% of citizens state that they "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree". As for the open questions at the end of the questionnaire, many participants mentioned having a better understanding of Europe and its modes of operation thanks to their participation at the panel.
- **Direct dialogue with politicians is considered important, however questions remain among some participants as to the impact of their messages:** More than 88% of citizens indicate that they "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree" on the positive contribution of the participation of experts and the politicians in the event. While nearly 59% of participants "Strongly agree" or "(Rather) agree" that their messages will be heard by French leaders and other European stakeholders, nearly 35% are more reserved and share their uncertainty.

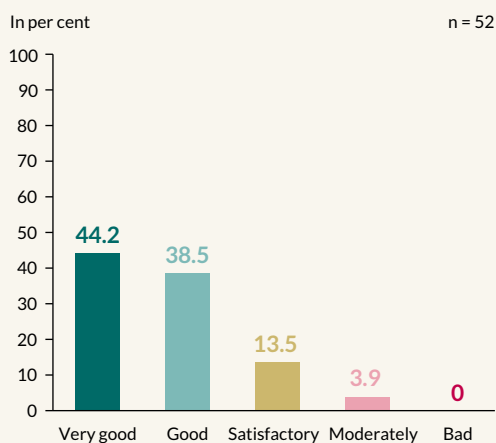
### GENERAL EVALUATION: A high satisfaction rate for the first French Citizens' Panel:

Primarily the objective was to see how the participants in the Citizens' Panel found the event as a whole. The following question was asked: "In general: How would you assess this Citizen Workshop?". The citizens could choose between "Very good", "Good", "Satisfactory", "Moderately", "Bad". More than 82% of citizens rated the Citizens' Panel as "Very good" or "Good", 13.5% felt it was "Satisfactory", 3.9% "Moderately". None of the citizens rated the panel as "Bad". From the point of view of the participants, the French Citizens' Panel was therefore a success.

Concrete elements reflecting this statement can be found in the more detailed evaluation to follow, particularly if the contribution made by the diversity of participants is considered, as well as the learning phenomenon that took place during these three days.

75 % of participants "Strongly agree" and 25% "(Rather) agree" that it is a good thing that the European Commission and the association Particip-Action organized this event. The answers reflect the enthusiasm of the citizens for this event.

#### In general: How would you assess this Citizen Workshop?

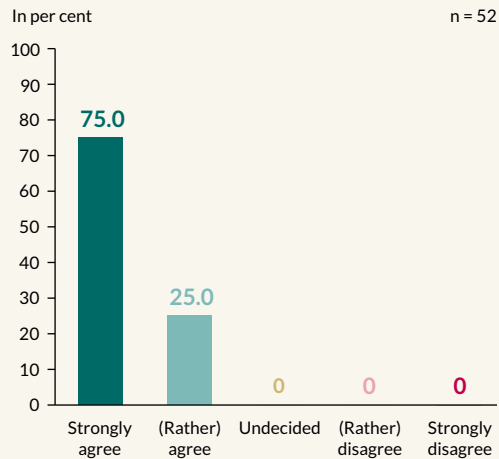


Source: Own survey

| BertelsmannStiftung

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

**I think it is good that the European Commission and the association Particip-Action organized this event.**



Source: Own survey

| BertelsmannStiftung

### THE METHODS USED FOR THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the French Citizens' Panel is based on three elements:

- First, a questionnaire was developed and given to the participants on the last day of the panel. A time period was included in the program for the evaluation in order to give the citizens time to answer the different questions. The questions dealt with the organization, the quality of the method and the dialogue, and the satisfaction of the participants with the results achieved.
- Second, the citizens had the opportunity to share their feedback on three open questions at the end of the questionnaire: "What did you like about this event?", "What did you learn?", and "What could be improved?"
- Third, an on-site observation was conducted during the entire panel.

The 52 participants completed and returned the questionnaire. This exceptional response rate is to be put forward for this kind of method. Subsequently, the evaluation includes the feedback of all the citizens present.

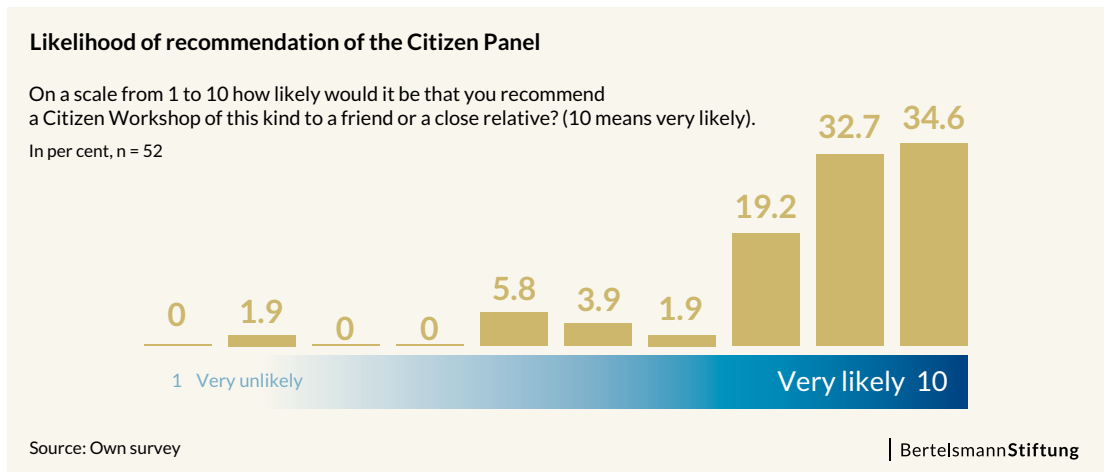
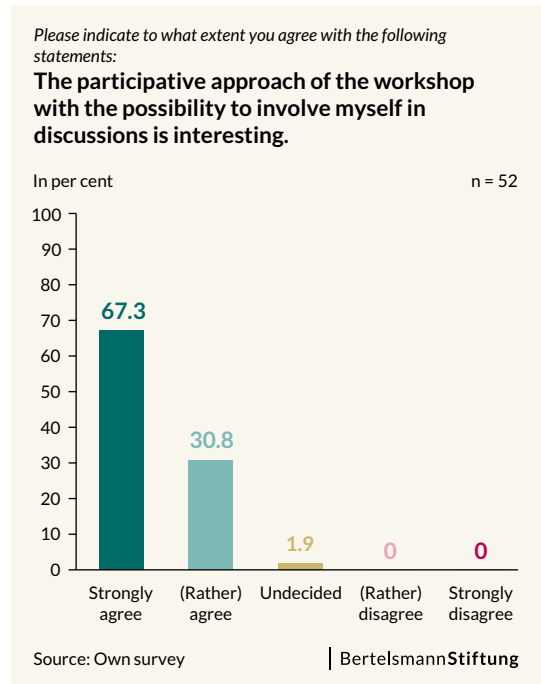
**GENERAL EVALUATION: A real interest for this kind of citizens' participation method:**

The answers to the statement: "The participative approach of the workshop with the possibility to involve myself in discussions is interesting." are almost unanimous: 67.3% of citizens answered that they "Strongly agree", 30.8% "(Rather) agree", only 1.9% are "Undecided". The inclusive and participatory nature of the approach generated a great deal of interest among the majority of participants.

The interest generated by this type of event is also reflected in the answers to the following question "On a scale from 1 to 10, how likely would it be that you recommend a Citizen Workshop of this kind to a friend or a close relative?" (10 means very likely). More than 86% of the answers range between 8 and 10. The answers of the other participants range between 5 and 7.

*"We need more events like this."*

A Citizens' Panel participant.



### FEEDBACK ON THE QUALITY OF THE

**ORGANISATION:** The organisation of the trip was praised and contributed to a good general atmosphere, despite the unusual location.

For the question: “How would you assess this Citizen Workshop with regard to the organization of your trip?”, more than 63% answered “Very good”, 21.2% “Good”. The dedication and kindness of the teams in charge of organising the trip was praised by many participants. They particularly appreciated the regular contact and the quality of the information communicated, both by email and telephone.

Nearly half of the citizens found the general atmosphere of the event good. For the statement: “How would you assess this Citizen Workshop with regard to the general atmosphere?”, 48.1% answered “Very good”, nearly 37% “Good”, 13.5% “Satisfactory”, and only 1.9% “Moderately”.

It was particularly interesting to observe a positive group momentum that took off right away. The participants did not know one another, had very different perspectives, and came from across France and yet from the outset and in complementarity with the getting-to-know-each-other-exercises, a constructive atmosphere developed. This creative atmosphere was also fuelled

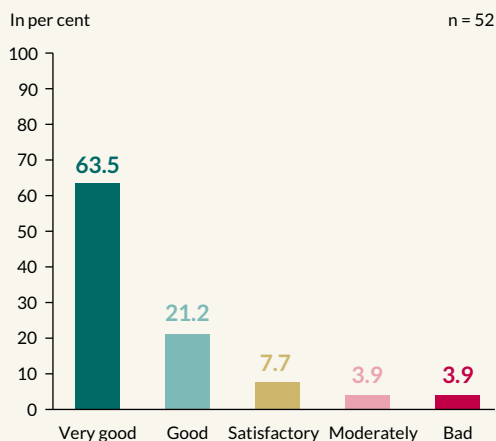
by the musical performances of the guitarist and composer Albert Magister, which prompted a musical reflection of the discussions and debates in progress.

It is also important to mention the unusual location where the majority of the event took place. The originality of le Consulat caught the attention of the participants, who were as curious as they were irritated by it. The open place under construction was a living space and a place for creation. Participants were constantly stimulated by the environment. Visual stimulation, thanks to various exhibitions, workshops and happenings held at the same time as the panel, as well as the permanent sensory stimulation caused by the noise and disturbances of the construction work (noise, dust, smells, air currents).

This oddness was noted by many participants. For the open question: “What can be improved?“, many responses included cold and/or very noisy premises, and the quality of meals taken at le Consulat.

The material working conditions were challenging, however this does not seem to have had major repercussions on the work and ultimately the results achieved after three days.

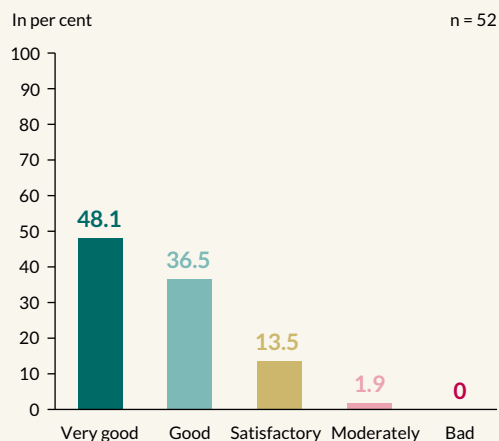
*In detail:*  
How do you rate this Citizen Workshop with regard to ...  
**the organization of your trip?**



Source: Own survey

| BertelsmannStiftung

*In detail:*  
How would you assess this Citizen Workshop with regard to...  
**the general atmosphere?**



Source: Own survey

| BertelsmannStiftung

**FEEDBACK ON THE FORMAT:** Clearly communicated goals, and mutual respect allowing everyone to find their place.

The success of participatory approaches depends very much on the overall format and methods used. The framework and objectives of the exercise must also be communicated clearly from the beginning. This seems to be the case for the Citizens' Panel if the results of the evaluation are to be trusted.

For the question: "The objectives of the workshop were clearly communicated", just over 61% of the participants answered "Strongly agree", more than 34% "(Rather) agree", which represents more than 96% of the citizens present.

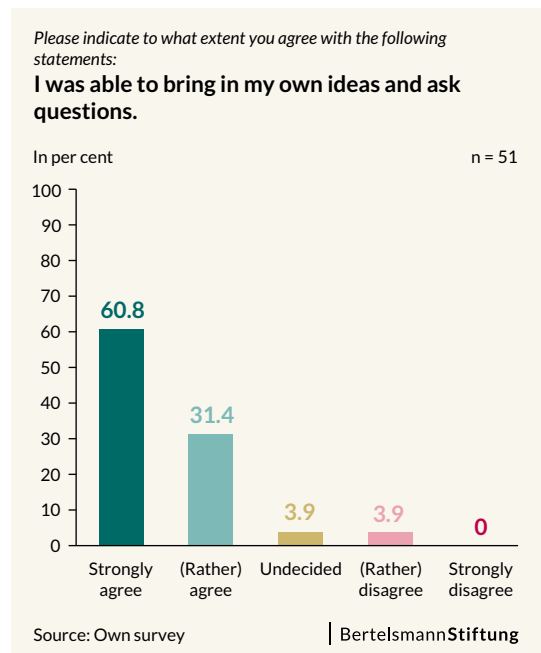
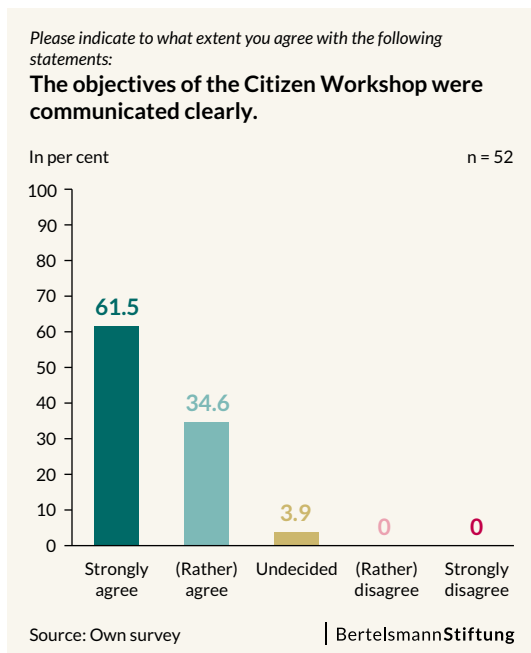
For the open question in the questionnaire "What did you like about this event?" particular emphasis was placed on the presenters and facilitators who accompanied the participants throughout the event. Their skills and availability were mentioned on several occasions.

*"The working methods, the competence and the availability of the facilitators, the attention given to all participants."*

Answer of a participant to the open question "What did you like about this event?".

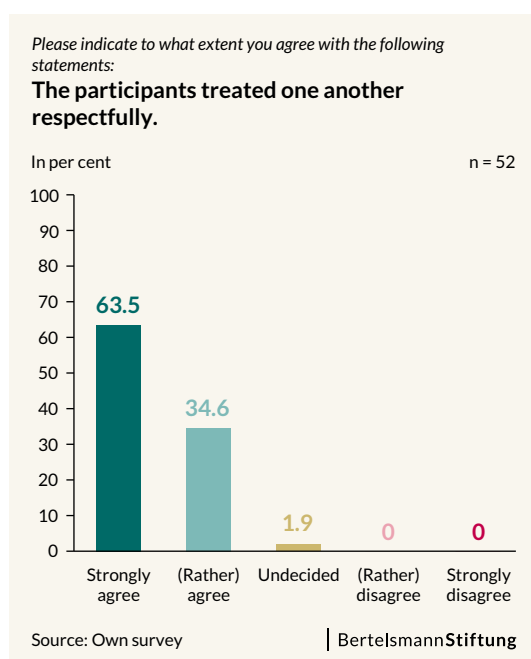
A transparent supervision and attentive presenters allowing efficient and smooth progress are also important elements for the success of this type of approach. The goal is for each participant to share their opinions and ideas, whatever they might be.

For the statement: "I was able to bring in my own ideas and ask questions. More than 60% of citizens "Strongly agree", nearly 31% "(Rather) agree", only 3.9% are "Undecided" and "(Rather) disagree". More than 92% were therefore satisfied with their opportunity to participate actively in the discussions.



The confrontation of different ideas leads to debates. In panels of this type, however, everyone must be able to find their place. In this context, the behaviour of participants towards each other is also critical.

More than 63% of citizens indicate that they “Strongly agree” that “participants treated one another respectfully”, 34.6% “(Rather) agree”, just under 2% are “Undecided”.




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*“I particularly liked the exchange with other citizens and the opportunity to put my own ideas forward properly.”*

*“Being able to exchange, listen, learn, and give one’s opinion without being judged, and to be able to change it again after taking into account the information received.”*

*“A very varied Citizens’ Panel, representing France. An organization that lets everyone speak and allows you to work on specific topics. Attention and discussions, different opinions.”*

Answers of participants to the open question  
“What did you like about this event?”.

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**FEEDBACK ON THE FORMAT:** The diversity of participants, representative of French society, seen as an advantage.

The participants particularly appreciated being able to meet and debate with citizens from very different backgrounds. More than 98% of participants indicated that they “Strongly agree” or “(Rather)agree” that thanks to the diversity of participants discussions were interesting.

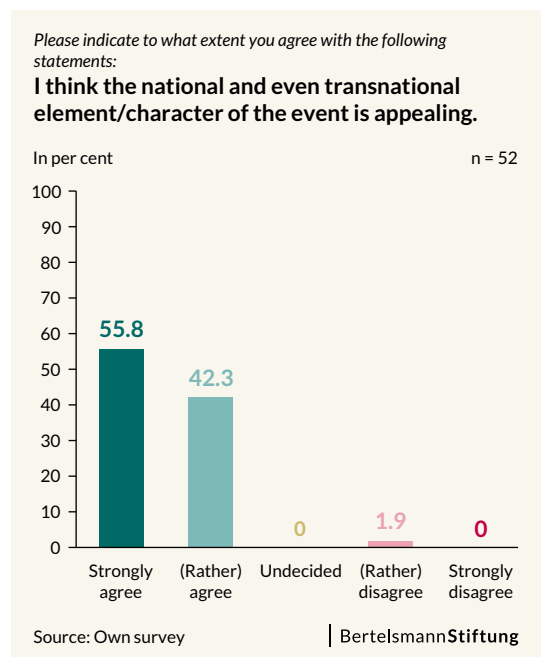
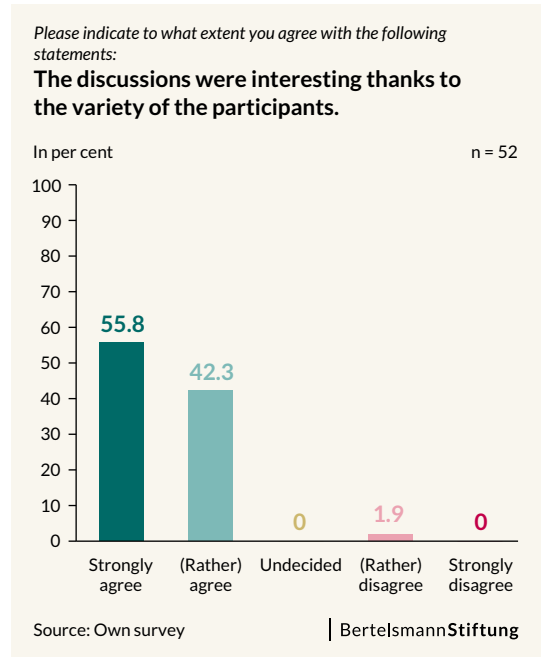
The figures confirm the interest for the event due to its national and transnational character. More than 98% of citizens “Strongly agree” or “(Rather) agree” that the national and transnational nature of the event is attractive.

Participants were chosen carefully before the event. Citizens were selected according to different previously defined criteria in order to best represent the heterogeneity of the French population within a group of 50 people. In addition to the usual socio-demographic characteristics, targeted research was carried out to find people who have a different position on the European Union, be it negative, neutral or pro-European.

During the first *moving debate*, a method used in this kind of exercise that allows the whole group to position itself (literally and figuratively) on questions asked by the moderator and to justify the position chosen, polarising questions about Europe were asked: “What image do you have of Europe today? (“Good”, “Bad”, “Neither good nor bad”); “In general, do you think that the fact that France belongs to the European Union is (“A good thing”, “A bad thing”, “Neither good nor bad”). The participants grouped based on their positions. From the beginning, this diversity of opinion was obvious to everyone. This is precisely the element that can inspire confidence in the process, both for participants and observers. It was obvious that all contrasting opinions were represented and taken seriously.

**“The diversity of opinions and the positive common end result.”**

Answers of participants to the open question “What did you like about this event?”.

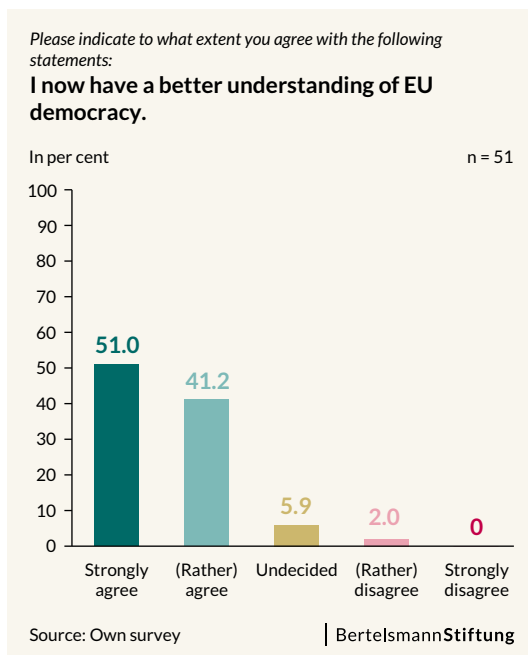




**FEEDBACK ON THE RESULTS OF THE EXERCISE:**

An approach that boosts personal learning and increases knowledge in general.

For the statement: “I now have a better understanding of EU Democracy” more than 92% of citizens indicate that they “Strongly agree” or “(Rather) agree”. Only 5.9% are “Undecided” and 2% “(Rather) disagree”.



*“I learned a lot of things. I have a better understanding of Europe and its modes of operation. Everything suddenly became clear. It was foggy before.”*

*“I realized that the EU is worth more than generally assumed.”*

Answers of participants to the open question “What have you learned?”.

*“In fact, I realize that what we need most is more Europe.”*

A participant in the event.

As for the open questions at the end of the questionnaire: “What did you learn?” many participants mentioned having a better understanding of Europe and its modes of operation thanks to the different discussions they had during the three days. The French Citizens' Panel has shown how much Europe's citizens, whether they are EU-supporters or not, can be passionate about European politics and, more importantly, how they can be involved in the future shaping of EU policy. Beyond the improvement of decisions by collective intelligence, participatory democracy has the advantage of encouraging the “empowerment” of citizens: this kind of approach contributes to the training and information of citizens. It also helps raise awareness of European issues and long-term implications.

**FEEDBACK ON THE RESULTS OF THE EXERCISE:**

Direct dialogue with politicians is considered important, however questions remain among some participants as to the impact of their messages:

More than 88% of citizens indicate that they “Strongly agree” or “(Rather) agree” on the positive contribution of the participation of experts and politicians at the event. 11.5% are “Undecided”.

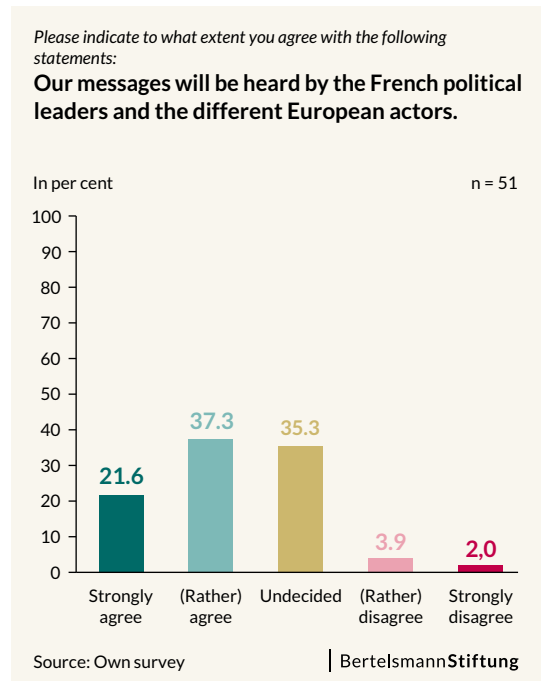
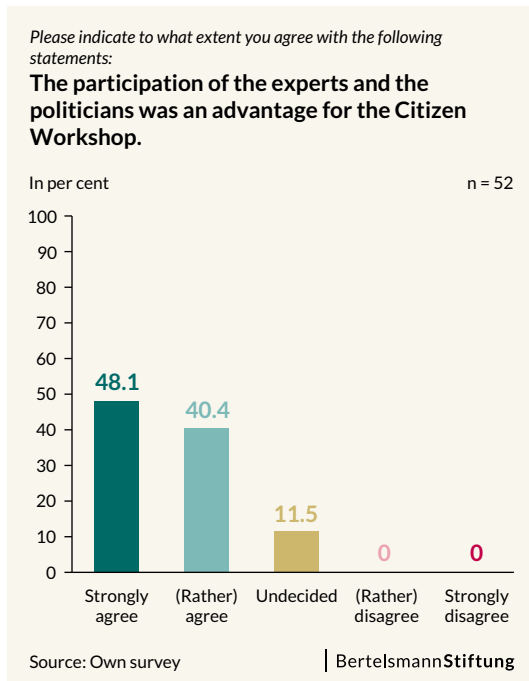
Several testimonies on site confirm this analysis: Thanks to their presence and their availability to communicate directly with the citizens, the politicians made the dialogue particularly interesting. This recognition is essential for this kind of method. Participants were surprised that these exchanges did not happen from the stage, but that politicians were sitting among them at their tables. A real dialogue took place, representatives of the political world took the time to listen and address the concerns of citizens. These were not speeches prepared in advance.

*“I really enjoyed the meetings with Mr. Beaune and Mr. Moscovici. They really helped us understand how Europe works. It is essential that leaders join us in this experience.”*

Answer of a participant to the open question “What did you like about this event?”.

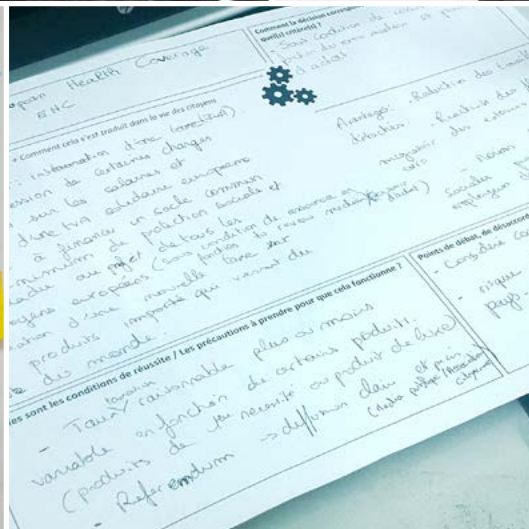
While nearly 59% of participants “Strongly agree” or “(Rather) agree” that their messages will be heard by French leaders and the various European actors, 35.3% are more reserved and share their uncertainty about the impact of their messages.

Regarding the relative scope of their opinion beyond the panel, a participant outlines what other participants felt too: “I do not know, if we will



be heard, but I learned a lot during these three days, about myself, about speaking in public for example, but also about Europe, its modes of operation and its importance ... That's certainly something."

This contribution summarizes one of the challenges of citizen participation in Europe: The need for an even greater recognition of the process by politicians and by citizens.



### 3. OUTCOMES: Seven lessons to be learnt from the French Citizens' Panel, questioned on the future of Europe

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#### Unusual: Citizens as experts

"You, dear citizens and participants in our Citizens' Panel, are the experts". This is the statement, with a few nuances, that we often heard during the French Citizens' Panel in Paris. A new dimension for the citizens themselves and a rather unusual one.

Critics of the new formats and processes of citizens' participation are not the only ones who question the expertise that citizens can have on political issues. But it is often the participants themselves who quickly seek the support of external specialists, believing that their own expertise in these matters is too limited.

The French Citizens' Panel led to a change of perspective. It was possible to consult independent external experts to address specific topics, as is often the case in the process of "deliberative democracy". But the starting point is that politics is everybody's concern. Questions about the fundamental orientation of future European policy must ultimately be debated on the basis of facts but also on a normative basis. Each citizen must then be able to contribute, becoming an expert themselves.

#### Invaluable: The recognition of the political world

The French European Commissioner Pierre Moscovici, as well as several direct advisers to the President of the French Republic and the Minister in charge of European Affairs, listened to the participants, exchanged their ideas and explained European policies. The meetings did not take the shape of a pyramidal organization, nor of a debate from a stage. They were organized on an equal footing. The very layout of the room, with representatives of the political world sitting directly beside the citizens, reflects the profound meaning of these exchanges.

These meetings with prominent politicians and advisors alone are not enough to provide answers to fundamental questions and to the doubts of participants about the exact outcome of their work. However the recognition and esteem of the political world that have been expressed through these substantive exchanges are very valuable. Citizens' round tables that act completely independently of political institutions have difficulties to be understood and taken seriously, even by the participants.

### (Rather) logical: New forms of participation require resources

New processes of citizens' participation, such as the French Citizens' Panel, when questioned on the future of Europe, open up perspectives towards increasing the dynamics of national but also European democracy. At a time when social cohesion is often questioned, when people with different opinions do not meet enough to talk and understand each other's position, it is increasingly necessary to find alternative ways to keep the democratic discourse alive. There is now a greater openness towards these new forms of deliberative democracy, both in politics and among citizens.

However, no one should believe that projects like the Citizens' Panel can be organized "for free". Choosing and inviting the various participants, for example, remains a long-term, almost scientific process. Many other stakeholders need to be involved in the organization of such an event. The preparation and progress of the discussions over three days requires complex coordination processes between the initiators and the people who set up such processes. From a human and financial point of view, processes such as the citizens' panel require sufficient resources to proceed correctly and transparently.

### Important: Citizens' participation and not just communication

The French Citizens' Panel has shown how much Europe's citizens, whether they are EU-supporters or not, can be passionate about European politics and, more importantly, how they can be involved in the shaping of a future EU policy. The evaluation results attest to the added value of this event, both for the participating citizens, for French European policy and for European policy as a whole. This citizens' panel has strengthened citizens' support for the European Union, and a representative sample of the population has given its well-debated and thought-out opinion on European issues.

However, it is necessary for European politics to continue to invent and reinvent itself: because in contrast to the forms of dialogue used in the past which have mainly focused on the possibilities of the European Union to communicate more accurately and more effectively, it is now about finding new forms of concrete participation. The focus is now on citizens' participation beyond the elections. It is therefore a question of dialogue, but not only that. Sustainable participation only succeeds if all participants clearly see the results of these new formats of citizens' participation. This expectation of citizens is also obvious in the results of this evaluation.

### Not surprising: There are sceptical people in every field

"Tout nouveau, tout beau" ("Shiny and new") is after all a common French expression. In reality, processes such as the Citizens' Panel, with its randomly selected citizens based on diversity criteria, always have the charm of novelty in pre-political space. Politicians and the media are initially very interested. However, we can see the following phenomenon: while traditional instruments of political participation – such as voting in elections or getting involved in political parties – are accepted and rarely questioned, new forms of participation are examined more closely. It can be a good thing. Just because deliberative processes such as the national citizens' panel are frequently used by participants and organizers does not mean that they have to be adopted without being criticized.

That being said, the scepticism often expressed in in-depth discussions, notably by the media, as to the degree of real involvement of so-called normal citizens in such processes or the fact that perhaps a little too much is expected of them, should be addressed proactively. To point out widely shared negative aspects, in both quantity and quality, of democratic participation does not automatically imply that one is open to new forms of participation. Significant efforts to raise awareness about the characteristics and procedures of citizens' participation and the principles of deliberation in policy shaping remain necessary.

## Success: The diversity of participants

Citizens for the French Citizens' Panel were selected according to different previously defined criteria in order to best represent the heterogeneity of the French population among a group of 50 people. In addition to the usual socio-demographic characteristics, targeted research was carried out to find people who have a positive, indifferent, neutral or sceptical position on the European Union. It is precisely this diversity of opinion (made public in a first exercise called *moving debate* at the beginning of the event) that inspired confidence in the process, both in participants and observers. Nothing was overlooked, all opinions were heard and taken seriously.

During these few days, the wide range of positions combined with the different personalities of the participants led to enriching and diversified experiences. They learned more about European politics and themselves in a democratic discussion, and they discovered a "discourse free from all forms of domination" (in reference to the theory). All these elements can be found in the results of the evaluation. For politics, whether at a national or European level, Citizens' Panels of this type are not always feasible, nor are they relevant for all topics. However, they complement the array of participation forms in political life. Reflections on how to further integrate these panels into European policy are still in their infancy.

## Innovating: An innovative citizens' participation needs courage and good participants

Each project needs people who help it progress and who are fully committed. Often, some projects are only possible and developed under specific circumstances. This seems to be the case with the French Citizens' Panel. Citizens' Consultations initiated by President Emmanuel Macron have resulted in more than 1000 events in France. The European Citizens' Panel that the European Commission launched for the first time in May 2018 and the online consultation that followed are other opportunities for participation that took place for the first time in this kind of

format. The openness of politics and administration to new processes of citizens' participation, like a Citizens' Panel, is a prerequisite for the successful completion of these projects. In many European countries, as well as at a European Union level, recognizing that new ways of citizens' participation are worth the effort remains a relatively recent fact. Successful projects require courageous actors and the support of political institutions and civil society organizations, to name only a few – no matter whether in Paris, Berlin or Brussels.

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