

CROSSROADS EUROPE PROJECT

POLICY

RECOMENDATIONS

LAB N.º. 4:
DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION

Córdoba, Spain
April 2021



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INTRODUCTION

2

Fundación Xul from **Cordoba, Spain**, organized and energized one of the six online laboratories proposed in the Crossroads Europe project, whose overall goal is to promote European citizenship by encouraging democratic participation, and in which various entities from various European countries have participated.

The Labs are intended to be debate and analysis spaces that foster cross-cutting dialogue among citizens from various countries and sectors of society, engaging them in dialogue on the most pressing policy issues confronting Europe and resulting in policy proposals for dissemination to decision-makers - using a bottom-up approach.

The goal of the Xul Foundation's Laboratory was to enhance knowledge and understanding of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**, which was established to create a more effective, democratic, and sovereign Europe.

This Conference aspires to be **an open, inclusive, transparent, and structured** citizens' forum for discussion of Europe's most pressing issues and concerns. It will contain several physical and virtual locations where individuals from all around Europe may exchange their thoughts and help shape our shared future.



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LAB DEVELOPMENT

3

Imagining the Europe of the Future: Participatory Democracy in the European Union was the title of Fundación Xul's fourth laboratory, which took place in April 2021.

Based on the question, "**In 10 or 20 years, what sort of Europe would you prefer to live in?**" People who were interested were asked to learn more, participate, and make ideas for the future of Europe.

To take part in this process, one had to first register on the website, after which one received an instructive dossier on the issues to be discussed, as well as information and an invitation to attend the following analysis and debate spaces:

- The Conference on the Future of Europe: mechanisms for participation.
Date: 13 April.
- Virtual strategies for citizen participation.
Date: 14 April
- Practical skills for digital citizen participation.
Date: 20 y 21 April

Regional and local governments, universities, NGOs, the media, European associations, the associative movement, political parties, trade union organizations, employers' organizations, consumer and user associations, professional associations, citizen participation experiences, and unorganized citizens were all sent personalized invitations.

A total of 112 people interested in the subject registered:

- All received the information pack and the final questionnaire for input and policy recommendations.
- 62 participated in the dialogues.
- 33 participated in the workshops.
- ** Some of them may be the same people, who attended several events*



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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS COLLECTED

4

Various platforms were built during the process to collect suggestions and contributions from the participants. In the summary below, the main ideas have been organized and grouped:

GENERAL IDEAS

We must progress from a fictitious sense of European unity to a genuine sense of belonging. Instead of the sum of each country's instruments, Europe requires genuine European tools.

The epidemic has brought attention to the need for Europe's legislative, health, and communication systems to be strengthened.

To enhance the number and diversity of citadels across Europe, citizen engagement mechanisms must be made more accessible.

To lessen citizens' dissatisfaction with Europe strengthening 'European identity,' work must be done.

The pandemic has created an opportunity in the expansion of virtuality, which has the potential to bring citizens from various countries closer together and encourage participation in international activities.

Citizen engagement necessitates organizational processes and tools, as well as exceptional logistical support, which must be considered.

Political parties and European institutions must demonstrate a stronger commitment to citizen participation.

Any structural change at the European level must be accompanied by enough technological, human, and financial resources.

The Lisbon Treaty's instruments must be changed and modified in order to build a more united and federalist Europe. Europe may require a new treaty to reflect current demands and needs.

Without having to go via regional and national systems, direct connection between the local and Europe is feasible. Citizens from all throughout the region are demanding for more direct and effective means to communicate with Europe.



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A strategy is required for Europe to open up to digital citizen participation.

To prevent the notion that participation has no practical implications, proposals derived from debates and participatory citizen procedures must be articulated with public policies at the European and national levels.

Participant criticism must be embraced and encouraged.

5

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthening the concept of the unity of Europe, with proposals such as:
 - Develop a European electoral law.
 - Encourage the formation of truly transnational European political parties that go beyond the aggregation of similar ideological currents from various European countries.
 - Maximize existing 'Europeanist' instruments, such as the European Court.
 - Design a financial and fiscal union mechanism.
 - Promote health unity.
 - Promote European mobility models such as Erasmus+.
- Develop citizen-centered communication strategies that promote European identity and a sense of belonging.
- More collaborative, open, participatory, plural, and transparent institutions will strengthen European institutionalism.
- Existing European involvement mechanisms should be strengthened in order to make them more accessible to citizens (which they are not currently) and to reinforce their current fragility:
 - European Parliament Petitions Committee.
 - Citizens' Initiatives.
 - Public consultations.
 - Conference on the Future of Europe.
- To raise awareness and bring these and other participation mechanisms closer to citizens, to increase participation.
- Design realistic participation processes and strategies. Don't just focus on tools.
- Transform citizen suggestions into plans, policies, rules, and budgets, among other things. Describe the outcomes of the participation processes in terms of institutional structure and legislative procedures (for this, the whole process must be connected with the corresponding institution, it cannot be alien to it and then pretend to assume the conclusions).
- Promote participatory processes using random samples of the population (by lottery).





- Encouraging hybrid processes (face-to-face and virtual) facilitates participation.
- Encourage more diverse and pluralistic engagement by encouraging asynchronous participatory procedures (where participants do not have to participate at the same time).
- Increase commitment to linking and influencing decision-making on citizens' proposals.
- Allocate budget and time to develop participatory processes.
- Greater transparency and accountability.
- Legislate on participatory processes, consultations, and referendums.

6

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