



Conference  
on the **Future**  
of **Europe**

# Conference on the Future of Europe

European Citizens' Panel 1: **“Stronger economy,  
social justice and jobs / Education, culture,  
youth and sport / Digital transformation”**

**Recommendations**

## Conference on the Future of Europe

### European Citizens' Panel 1:

### "Stronger economy, social justice and jobs / Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital transformation"

#### RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE PANEL (TO BE TAKEN FORWARD TO THE PLENARY)

#### Stream 1: Working in Europe

##### Substream 1.1 Labour Market

- 1. We recommend the introduction of a minimum wage to ensure similar quality of living across all Member States. We acknowledge the existing efforts in the EU directive COM(2020) 682 to standardise the way of living. The minimum wage needs to secure a minimum net income to achieve an essential objective: everyone in need should have more money to spend. The minimum wage should take into consideration the following aspects:**
  - The EU should ensure the effective implementation because currently not all Member States apply worker protection adequately.
  - Special attention should be put on monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living.
  - The minimum wage must factor in the purchasing power in different countries. A regular review cycle is necessary to adjust for the changing cost of living (e.g. by inflation).

We recommend this because a minimum wage enhances social justice in the labour market and improves the concrete living conditions of employees in all Member States. This is especially important in the context of a fast changing working environment, e.g. by digitalisation.

- 2. There is already an EU regulation (EU's Working Time Directive - 2003/88/EC) in place. However, it is not sufficient to ensure a healthy work life balance. As a first step, we recommend that the existing framework needs a review if it is adequate for the current circumstances. Secondly, the EU should establish a stricter monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation in all Member States. Special attention needs to be paid to different sectors that have different levels of stress and burdens, both psychologically and physically.**

**However, at the same time, other sectors rely on more flexibility from their employees to adjust for specific corporate needs.**

We recommend this because an improved work-life balance is important because it enhances social cohesion and contributes to a level playing field among employees. Also, it positively affects the individual well-being of employees.

### Substream 1.2 Youth and Employment

3. **We recommend the harmonisation of the level of all different education programs in the EU with acceptance of the national content. Accordingly, we recommend that the professional degrees are validated and mutually recognised in all EU Member States.**

We recommend this because we want to facilitate European labour mobility and reduce the administrative burden.

4. **We recommend that high school students (from 12 years old on) should have an insight into their future labour market by giving them the opportunity to have several high quality observatory visits in profit and non-profit organisations. We propose to encourage companies to accept observing students by granting them subsidies. In remote areas where there is less opportunity, local schools, governments, organisations and companies must work closely together to realise that those observatory visits are also effective.**

We recommend this because we want youngsters to gain insight into the different possibilities in the labour market so that they can make a better choice for their studies and their professional future and understand the importance of the right study. It also teaches them what responsibility is and that they should have respect for the labour market. It will help youngsters with the integration in the labour market. It is a win-win situation for both sites.

5. **We recommend that practising soft skills should be integrated in all the courses in the curricula in schools. By soft skills we mean: listening to each other, encouraging dialogue, resilience, understanding, respect and appreciation for others, critical thinking, self-study, remaining curious, result-**

**oriented. Teachers should be trained in the transmission of these skills by collaborating closely with social workers and/or psychologists. Other suggestions for execution: organise exchange programs for students between schools, organise participation in sports and cultural events cross-schools etc.**

We recommend this because soft skills are basic skills needed, which are lost in the digital age and are absolutely necessary in the future life of our youth. Therefore we stress bringing them in the curriculum so it helps them to be resilient and helps them to avoid and overcome mental issues they might experience in their future life. Social skills strengthen inter-human relations and therefore help people find their place in society.

- 6. We recommend that in case of a serious crisis (e.g. health crisis, war, etc.) well prepared plans with detailed scenarios are ready to deploy in a flexible way to minimise the impact on our youngsters in their studies, vocational training, mental wellbeing etc. By impact we mean: higher cost of studying or training, obliged prolongation of studies, internships that could not be carried out, increase of mental health problems. The scripts have to be rolled out to minimise the impact on youngsters and their transition to the labour market.**

We recommend this because the position of the youngsters is very vulnerable in times of crisis.

### Substream 1.3 Digitalization at Work

- 7. We recommend that the EU introduces or reinforces existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' [= working online and remotely, e.g. home office or from another location connected online]. Further, we recommend that the EU legislates to incentivise companies to be socially responsible and to keep high-quality 'smart working' jobs within the EU. The incentives can be financial and/or reputational, and should take into account existing internationally recognised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. For this to happen, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all interested stakeholders to explore and strengthen such legislation.**

We recommend this because we need to promote high quality 'smart working' jobs and avoid their relocation to lower-cost, non-EU countries. The Covid-19

pandemic and the global economic trends increase the urgency to protect jobs in the EU and regulate 'smart working'.

- 8. We recommend that the EU guarantees the right to digital training for all EU citizens. In particular, young people's digital skills could be boosted with the introduction of an EU certification in schools that would prepare them for the future job market. We also recommend specific training at the EU level to re-train and up-skill workers to remain competitive in the job market. Lastly, we recommend the EU raises more awareness about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and to help them find jobs in the EU, e.g. EURES.**

We recommend this because certified digital skills are fundamental for people to enter the job market and for workers to re-skill and stay competitive.

## Stream 2: An Economy for the Future

### Substream 2.1 Innovation and European Competitiveness

- 9. We recommend that the EU creates opportunities for different entities (universities, corporations, research institutes, etc.) to invest in research and innovation aiming to develop:**
- **new materials, intended to serve as more sustainable and biodiverse alternatives to those currently in use,**
  - **innovative uses of existing materials (also based on recycling and state-of-the-art techniques which have the smallest environmental footprint).**
- We recommend this to be an ongoing, long-term commitment from the EU (at least until 2050).**

We recommend this because we live on a planet with finite resources. If we want to have a future, we need to protect the climate and look for planet-friendly alternatives. We also want the EU to become a leader in this field with a strong, competitive advantage in the international arena. The intention of the recommendation is to produce innovative results that can be applied broadly and implemented across various fields and countries. It would also positively impact the economy and the labour market by creating new job opportunities in the field of sustainable innovation. It could contribute to combating social

injustices by replacing current, exploitative production means with new, more ethical ones.

**10. We recommend that the EU makes a long term, ongoing commitment to largely increase its share of sustainably sourced energy, using a diverse range of renewable sources that have the lowest environmental footprint (based on a holistic life-cycle assessment). Furthermore, the EU should invest in improving and maintaining the quality of electrical infrastructure and the electrical grid. We also recommend that access to energy and energy affordability are recognised as a basic right of citizens.**

We recommend this because:

- Diversifying energy sources (including solar, wind, hydrogen, seawater, or any future sustainable methods) would make the EU more energy-independent,
- it would lower electricity costs for EU citizens,
- it would create jobs and restructure the energy market (especially in regions that were thus far dependent on fossil fuels),
- it could encourage scientific development of innovative techniques of energy sourcing,
- the quality of the electric infrastructure and the electrical grid are as important as energy sources, allowing for smooth, efficient, and affordable distribution and transport of energy.

**11. We recommend that the EU actively promotes greener production processes, through subsidising or otherwise rewarding companies that invest in lowering the environmental costs of their production. Furthermore, we require an effort to recultivate post-industrial sites and establish protected green zones around existing sites. Companies should be required to finance these efforts, at least in part, from their own pocket.**

We recommend this because production processes are an important element in the supply chain. Making them more environmentally friendly could greatly reduce our climate impact. We believe companies and industries should be held accountable for how they produce their products (including recultivation and environmental protection measures). Making production processes greener also prepares companies for the future and makes them more resilient (which protects jobs).



## Substream 2.2 Sustainable Economy / Substream 2.3 Taxation

- 12. We recommend that plastic containers are abandoned and to generalise reusable ones. There should be incentives for consumers and companies, so it will not be more expensive to buy goods in bulk ("en vrac" in French or "sfuso" in Italian) for a consumer as opposed to packaged ones. Companies contributing to this transition should have fiscal benefits and those that do not should pay more taxes. For those products that cannot be reused, they should be recyclable and/or biodegradable. A public or oversight institution to monitor everything is required, to set the rules and to share them with everyone. It is recommended to educate, communicate - also through social media - about these actions to both companies and consumers to change their behaviours in the long term. Companies should be encouraged and helped to find the best solutions with their own waste (construction companies for example).**

We recommend this because we all have to be responsible for our actions. So we have to rethink all production processes. Recycling requires a lot of resources (water, energy), so it cannot be the only answer. This is why we propose to commercialise bulk goods. Recycling should only be used for easily recyclable materials. And we know with the Finnish example that it is possible to recycle a very large part.

- 13. We recommend having the same fiscal rules in Europe and harmonising fiscal policy across all the EU. Tax harmonisation should allow leeway for individual Member States to set their own tax rules but still prevent tax evasion. It will end harmful fiscal practices and tax competition. Taxes should concern commercial transactions in the location where they occur. When a company sells in a country they should pay taxes in this particular country. These new rules would aim to prevent delocalisation and ensure that the transactions and production take place between European countries.**

We recommend this to protect and develop jobs, economic activities in Europe and with equity between the Member States. It will bring a common understanding within Europe of the fiscal system. It intends to end the absurd monopoly situation of giant companies who do not pay enough taxes compared to smaller companies. It will also bring the money where commercial activities are carried out.

- 14. We recommend getting rid of the system of planned obsolescence of all electronic devices. Change should happen both on an individual and commercial level, to guarantee that we can own, repair, and upgrade in the long term. We recommend the promotion of refurbished devices. Through regulation, it would be compulsory for companies to guarantee the right to repair, including upgrades and software updates, and to recycle all devices in the long term. It is also recommended that every company should use standardised connectors.**

We recommend this because in the modern world, products tend to last 2 years, we want them to have a much longer lifespan of about 10 years. This proposition will have a positive impact on climate change and ecology. It will also reduce costs for consumers and reduce consumerism.

- 15. We recommend helping everyone to learn about our environment and its connection to everyone's individual health through education. Educational courses will help everyone to define their own personal strategies to integrate these topics into their lives. This education should start at school with specific subjects addressing all ecological issues, and we should continue to be educated throughout our entire lives (at work for instance). It will contribute to reducing waste and protecting the environment and human health. This education will promote local consumption of healthy and non processed products, sourced from local producers. Those who do not act to reduce waste will have to take a free training course on these issues. To enable this lifestyle adaptation, prices need to be fair for the producer and the consumer. Consequently, we propose that small, local and environmentally friendly producers will have tax exemptions.**

We recommend this because we believe that many people do not yet feel concerned by these issues. This is why we need education about this for everyone. Furthermore, local and healthy products tend to be unaffordable for many. We have to ensure that locally made products are more widely available to all.

#### [Substream 2.4 Agriculture / Substream 2.5 Digital Infrastructure](#)

- 16. We recommend the implementation of a common European easy-to-understand labelling system for consumption and nutrition products (the**



information would contain allergens, country of origin, etc), transparency about ongoing approval processes, digitalisation of product information through a standardised European app which would allow for more user friendly access and would provide additional information on products and production chain. We also see the need for a truly independent body that regulates food standards across the EU, that has legislative powers, so as to be able to apply sanctions.

We recommend this because EU citizens should expect the same standard of food. The integrity of food products is a necessity to ensure the safety of citizens. These recommendations have been made to enhance the approval monitoring and transparency of food production in a harmonised way.

- 17. We recommend infrastructure to be a state asset to prevent the rise of telecommunications and internet service monopolies. It should be a right to have access to the internet, it should be a priority to bring internet connection to 'whitezones / dead zones' (areas with no internet access). Children and families are a priority when it comes to accessing the internet and hardware, particularly in terms of education, and especially in times of a pandemic. An initiative is needed to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training.**

We recommend this because we must ensure that the digital transformation is done in an equitable manner. Access to the internet is fundamental to democracy and is a right of all European citizens.

- 18. We recommend local insects to be respected and protected against invasive species. We also propose to incentivise and advocate for new construction developments to have obligatory green spaces. We call for the introduction of biodiversity as a mandatory subject in schools through the use of curricular activities, e.g. through practical activities. It is important to highlight awareness for biodiversity through the use of media campaigns and incentivised 'competitions' across the EU (local community scale competitions). We recommend the establishment of binding national targets across the EU Member States for reforestation of native trees and local flora.**

We recommend this because biodiversity is key for the environment, the quality of life and to combat climate change.

## Stream 3: A Just Society

### Substream 3.1 Social Security

- 19. We recommend promoting social policies and equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory.**

We recommend this because there are big disparities between Member States regarding social policies that need to be reduced to achieve a decent life for all citizens, and to carry out the care and support needed by vulnerable people for various reasons (health, age, sexual orientation, etc.).

- 20. We recommend promoting research in social matters and health in the EU, following priority lines that are considered to be of public interest and agreed on by the Member States, and providing the appropriate funding. We need to reinforce collaboration across fields of expertise, across countries, centres of studies (universities, etc.).**

We recommend this because there are many areas in which we need to advance and deepen our knowledge. The pandemic experience shows us an example in which research is essential to improve life and in which public-private and government-to-government collaboration is essential and financial support is necessary.

- 21. We recommend the EU should have stronger competences in social policies to harmonise and establish minimum rules and pension benefits across the EU based on a thorough diagnosis. Minimum pension needs to be above the poverty line of the country. The retirement age should differ based on categorisation of professions with mentally and physically demanding professions being able to retire earlier. At the same time, there should be a guaranteed right to work for the elderly who wish to continue working on a volunteer basis.**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing. The European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

- 22. We recommend a set of agreed measures to encourage an increase in the birth rate as well as to ensure appropriate childcare. These measures include, among others, affordable and accessible childcare (at the workplace, overnight, reducing the VAT on child equipment), housing, stable work, supporting motherhood, specific support and protection of work for young people and parents and supporting mothers and fathers with access to knowledge at the return to work.**

We recommend this because the low birth rates in the EU stand out which further contributes to the ageing of the European population and on which immediate measures should be taken. The proposed set of measures aims to ensure stability for young families necessary to provide for children.

- 23. We recommend to guarantee social and health care for the elderly at home as well as in nursing homes. In addition, there is a need for improved support for those who take care of elderly (relatives).**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing, the European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

- 24. We recommend the EU should support palliative care and assisted death [euthanasia] following a concrete set of rules and regulations.**

We recommend this because it would reduce the pain of the patients and families and it would ensure a decent end of life.

### Substream 3.2 Equal Rights

- 25. We recommend the EU to support targeted access to decent social housing for citizens, according to their specific needs. Financial effort should be shared among private funders, landlords, housing beneficiaries, Member State governments at central and local levels, and the European Union. The aim should be to facilitate the construction/repairing of the existing social housing stock, including by cooperative association, rental, and purchase. The support**

**should be granted based on clear criteria (e.g., the max. surface/person to be subsidised, incomes of the beneficiaries etc.).**

We recommend this because improved housing access would ensure that EU citizens benefit from tangible equal rights. It would help to ease social tensions. While the EU is mainly called upon to oversee the support mechanism, national and local authorities should more actively solve the housing problems.

**26. We recommend that the EU improves the regulation and uniform implementation of support measures for families with children in all Member States. Such measures include: increasing the length of parental leave, childbirth and childcare allowances.**

We recommend this because we think that the measures would alleviate the demographic problem that the EU is facing. They would also improve gender equality between parents.

**27. We recommend that the EU takes action to guarantee that all families enjoy equal family rights in all Member States. Such rights include the right to marriage and adoption.**

We recommend this because we think all EU citizens should enjoy equal rights, including family rights. The family is the basic form of social organisation. A happy family contributes to a healthy society. The recommendation aims to ensure that all citizens enjoy family rights regardless of their gender, adult age, ethnicity, or physical health condition.

### [Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports](#)

**28. We recommend that the 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy is strongly prioritised and incentivised as an urgent matter that is effectively addressed by Member States. The EU should (a) define indicators (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and (b) put an Ombudsman in place to get feedback directly from citizens.**

We recommend this because we think that gender equality is far from what we would like to see in the EU. There should be harmony in gender equality and civil rights at European level, so that they are achieved in all countries, and not only in the ones with a stronger compromise with the topic. We value the presence and contribution of women in power positions, and in any kind of profession, in order to have a diverse and fulfilling EU. Women are disadvantaged in many situations (even in the case they have good/ higher education or other privileges), so such a strategy is strongly needed.

- 29. We recommend that the EU promotes and raises awareness of sports and physical activity in all Member States due to its health benefits. Sport and physical activity should be included within social, physical and mental health, education and labour policies (i.e. promote sports and/or physical prescription by doctors and, when done, guarantee access to sports facilities; 1 hour of working time/week for physical activity, etc.).**

We recommend this because it is an investment in the long term. Investing in sport and physical activity reduces costs and burdens to health services. For example, sport and physical activity as a health intervention would shorten treatment periods and make the treatment more effective. This is already being implemented successfully in some countries like Germany. Sports are a way to build values like commitment, effort, self-esteem, respect or companionship. Sedentary lifestyles are now more common than previous generations due to more desk jobs, and/or change habits in leisure among others.

- 30. We recommend that the EU should obligate every Member State to have a defined minimum wage related to the cost of living in that state and is considered a fair salary that can allow minimum life conditions, over the poverty line. Each Member State must monitor this.**

We recommend this because it is not fair that you cannot reach the end of the month if you are working. Fair salaries should contribute to life quality at a social level. Unfair wages have a high cost for the states (security, tax avoidance, higher social costs, etc.).

- 31. We recommend tax harmonisation in the Member States within the EU (to avoid tax havens within EU, and to target offshoring within Europe), and a tax incentive to discourage offshoring of jobs outside of Europe.**

We recommend this because we are worried about the impact of offshoring jobs outside of Europe, and this would prevent tax competition between Member States of the EU.

## Stream 4: Learning in Europe

### Substream 4.1 European Identity / Substream 4.2 Digital Education

- 32. We recommend promoting multilingualism from an early age, for example, starting in kindergarten. From elementary school onwards, it should be mandatory that children reach a C1 level in a second active EU language other than their own.**

We recommend this because multilingualism is a tool that connects people and is a bridge to other cultures, as it makes other countries and their cultures more accessible. It strengthens European identity and intercultural exchange. It is important to get to know the other cultures in the context of the European Union. Therefore, being able to converse in two languages at a great level would help create a common European identity and understanding of other European cultures. The EU must ensure that there is close cooperation between itself and educational institutions to develop successful educational outcomes. In addition, there needs to be a dedicated program (e.g digital platforms, expanded Erasmus+ programs, etc.) to exclusively promote multilingualism. The current European Schools can serve as a model in this regard. The EU should establish more such schools and actively promote them.

- 33. We recommend that the EU raises more awareness about the dangers of the internet and digitalisation for young people through the creation of a mandatory subject in elementary school. The EU should create tools and establish common training spaces for young people to learn together.**

We recommend this because the current initiatives or programs in this area are not sufficient. Moreover, many EU citizens are not aware of existing EU initiatives in these areas. Children are not sufficiently aware of the dangers of



the Internet, so we should do much more to promote and raise awareness amongst the younger generation.

- 34. We recommend that the EU put effort into making technology more accessible to the older generation by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. The EU should guarantee the right to use digitalisation for those who wish it and propose alternatives for those who do not.**

We recommend this because the EU should ensure that older people can participate in the digital world and that no one is discriminated against. Simplified tools should be introduced for generations that are not as experienced with the use of certain technologies in order to integrate them into today's world. We recommend that initiatives that already exist be better promoted, so that citizens are aware of those opportunities. The EU should not discriminate against the older generations concerning the use of computer tools. (As a side note, this means that citizens should be able to live their lives without being obligated to go through an internet network). The EU should organise and make free permanent assistance available to older generations to facilitate access to digital tools.

#### Substream 4.3 Cultural Exchange / Substream 4.4 Environmental Education

- 35. We recommend that the EU creates a platform on which teaching material about climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues will be made available for educational purposes. This information should be fact-based, checked by experts, and tailored to every Member State. The platform:**
- **Should include lessons for multiple target groups; for example people who live in an urban or a rural context, for all age groups, and for all levels of prior knowledge,**
  - **Must be available to all Member States and should be easily accessible,**
  - **In its implementation it should include a plan for promotion; this should be done in collaboration with relevant companies,**
  - **Could be made available together with a funding program to support the usage of, and implementation, of the information on the platform. This funding should also provide support for field trips to show relevant real life examples.**

We recommend this because people of all ages need access to fact-based information on how to address climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues. Important concepts, e.g. the ecological footprint, must be understood by everyone, particularly young people, since what we learn as children is used throughout our lives. These topics are complex and misinformation is widespread. We need a source that is trustworthy and the EU has the credibility and resources to provide this. This is also important because knowledge levels and easy access to credible information differs across Member States.

- 36. We recommend that the EU prioritise making exchange programs accessible for all (age groups, Member States, levels of education, and people with different financial capabilities) and allow for exchanges or internships between sectors, countries, educational institutions, cities, and companies. The EU should be responsible for initiating, mediating, and funding cultural and social exchanges across the EU - both physically and digitally. The EU must actively promote these initiatives and target people who are not already aware of cultural and social exchange programs. The Conference on the Future of Europe, in which people were randomly selected, is the perfect example of a European exchange. We want more of this - but also initiatives of a smaller scale, as well as exchanges within sports, music, (social) internships, etc.**

We recommend this because it is important to create a feeling of togetherness and cohesion, and to advance tolerance for all our beautiful differences/different perspectives, as well as for the development of individual skills. In the process this will enable the development of friendships, mutual understanding, and critical thinking. We would like to promote the engagement of all members of our communities, even those that have not been involved in such initiatives to date.

[Substream 4.5 Quality, Finance and Access to Education / Substream 4.6 Harmonisation of Education](#)

- 37. We recommend that all Member States agree and adopt a certified minimum standard of education in core subjects commencing in primary school. This is to ensure that all citizens have equal access to a standard quality of education, ensuring fairness and equality.**

We recommend this because:

- The presence of a minimum standard would give parents, teachers and students greater confidence in their education systems while leaving capacity for initiative and diversity.
- If implemented our recommendation would reinforce and strengthen a common European identity, fostering togetherness, unity and sense of belonging.
- Implementation of this recommendation would generate greater cooperation and exchange between schools across the EU and this would improve relations between teaching staff and pupils and assist greatly with exchange programmes.

**38. We recommend that English is taught, to a certifiable standard, as a core subject in primary schools across all EU Member States in order to facilitate and strengthen the ability of European citizens to communicate effectively.**

We recommend this because:

- This would provide greater unity and equality through increasing citizens' abilities to communicate with each other and support a stronger common European identity.
- This would allow for a broader, flexible and more accessible labour market allowing citizens the confidence to work and communicate in all other Member States providing greater personal and professional opportunities.
- A commonly held European language could be achieved in a very short period of time were this to be implemented.
- The use of a common language expedites information sharing which would benefit cooperation, reacting to crises together, aid humanitarian efforts and bring Europe and Europeans closer.

## Stream 5: An Ethical and Safe Digital Transformation

### Substream 5.1 Democratisation of Digitalisation / Substream 5.2 Cyber Security

**39. We recommend that the EU should have more powers to deal with illegal content and cyber criminality. We recommend the strengthening of capacities in Europol/the European Cybercrime Centre including:**

- **Increased financial resources and manpower**
- **Ensuring punishment in similar ways in each country**
- **Ensuring that enforcement should be quick and effective**

We recommend this to guarantee freedom on the Internet, while ensuring that discrimination, abuse and harassment are punished. We support the idea of having a European public body because we do not want to leave the regulation of online platforms solely to private companies. Online platforms have to take responsibility for the content that is distributed, but we want to make sure that their interests do not come first. The regulation of content and the prosecution of those responsible must be effective and swift, so that it also has a deterrent effect on the criminals.

**40. We recommend that the EU should invest in high-quality and innovative digital infrastructures (such as 5G being developed in Europe) in order to ensure Europe's autonomy and prevent dependence on other countries or private companies. The EU should also pay attention to investment in underdeveloped regions of the EU.**

We recommend this because digital infrastructure plays a vital role in Europe's economy and in facilitating everyday life in Europe. Europe therefore needs high quality digital infrastructure. If Europe is dependent on others it may be vulnerable to negative influences by private companies or foreign countries. Europe should therefore invest in digital infrastructures to improve its autonomy. It is also important to ensure digital inclusion by making sure that less digitally developed regions receive investment.

**41. We recommend that the EU promotes education on fake news, disinformation, and online safety across Europe's schools. It should draw on examples of best practices from across the EU. The EU should establish an organisation specifically to promote this work and to provide**

**recommendations to education systems. It should also promote non-formal education as well as innovative and creative teaching techniques (e.g. participative games).**

We recommend this because introducing lessons on online safety and digital safety literacy (dealing with online scams, false information etc.) at school are important to give everyone the tools to protect themselves from online threats. It is important to target the younger generation as they are very exposed to online threats. Schools can also communicate with parents to promote good practices. This course can draw from examples of best practice across Europe (e.g. such as Finland) while also being adaptable for each country's needs.

### Substream 5.3 Data Protection

- 42. We recommend further limiting the misuse of data by 'data giants' through better enforcement of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and creating more standardised mechanisms throughout the EU and by ensuring that even non-European companies that operate in the EU comply with it. The improvement should require clear and short explanation of terms of use to avoid ambiguity, provide more information on how and by whom it will be used, avoiding default consent to re-use and resell of data. It should ensure that data is permanently deleted when a citizen requests it. It also should improve enforcement of consistent compliance around profiling of individuals based on their online activities. We propose two types of sanction: a fine proportional to the company's turnover, limitations of company's operations.**

We recommend this because currently there is very limited transparency on what kind of data is collected, how it is processed, and to whom it is sold to. We need to further limit the abuse of power by data giants and make sure that consent citizens give for data processing is well-informed.

- 43. We recommend creating an independent pan-EU agency that would have to clearly define intrusive behaviour (e.g. spam) and create guidelines and mechanisms for how citizens can opt-out and revoke data, especially from third parties. It must have a mandate to identify and sanction fraudsters and non-compliant organisations. It should work on ensuring compliance with the EU regulations for non-EU based entities operating in the EU. It would be funded by the EU institutions and composed of a mixed council of independent**

**bodies (i.e. experts from universities and entities representing professionals). It should have a rotation praesidium. We propose two types of sanctions: a fine proportional to the companies' turnover, limitations of companies' operations.**

We recommend this because there is no central agency with a strong mandate that can help citizens especially when they have an issue and need help, advising, or support. There are no clear and mandatory rules for companies to follow and sanctions are either not enforced or negligible for the companies.

- 44. We recommend creating an EU certification system that would reflect compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in a transparent way and it should ensure that information on data protection is presented in an accessible, clear, and simple way. This certificate would be mandatory and visible on websites and platforms. This certificate should be issued by an independent certifier at European level, possibly existing or specially created, which is not linked to national governments or the private sector.**

We recommend this because there is currently no or little transparency about how well data is protected by each company and users / customers cannot make informed choices.

- 45. We recommend better explaining GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and improving communication around it by creating standard text on compliance that uses simple and clear language understandable by everyone. This text should present a core message and/or core principles. The process of providing consent should be more visual (i.e. like an App that asks explicit permission for access on the phone). It should be accompanied by an information campaign (including on TV) and consistently providing mandatory courses (at least those who work with data) and advising those who need assistance.**

We recommend this because at the moment, the language of GDPR is too vague and technical, the amount of information is overwhelming, and is not accessible for everyone. The communication is also not similar across different countries and it often excludes different cohorts mainly elderly people and non-digital natives.



## Substream 5.4 Healthy Digitalisation

### 46. We recommend that the EU addresses the problem of 'fake news' through two means:

- Legislation for social media companies to implement machine-learning algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact-checked information. We recommend that the algorithms are kept in check by experts to ensure their well-functioning;
- The implementation of a digital platform that rates the information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) independently from political and economic interests, and informs citizens about the quality of the news without applying any kind of censorship. The platform should be open to public scrutiny and adhere to the highest standards of transparency, and the EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used for the intended purposes.

We recommend this because different types of media need to be addressed and we believe that sanctions or removing content could lead to censorship and infringe on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. We recommend that experts check and monitor the proper functioning of the algorithm to ensure its proper working. Finally, we recommend that the platform should be apolitical and independent to ensure transparency and freedom of expression. Furthermore, since it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, providing these tools to citizens will help to diminish their effects in Europe.

### 47. We recommend that the EU implements different actions in order to ensure a healthy use of internet:

- First of all, the EU must address the lack of infrastructures and devices that prevents citizens from accessing the Internet.
- Then, we also recommend that the EU encourages the Member States to implement training about the internet and its risks for all age-groups. This could be done by introducing classes in schools for children and young people, and creating different programs and curricula to reach adult and elder citizens. The content of these classes should be decided at the European level by a group of independent experts.
- Finally, we demand that the EU takes all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people, ensuring that essential services can also be accessed in person.

- **The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because there is a lack of infrastructure and hardware (e.g. devices) in some places in Europe, and connection needs to be ensured before educating citizens, as we know there are certain regions and profiles that have limitations on internet access. We recommend classes in order to help children achieve digital literacy, to include other programs to help older generations in this digital transformation and to take the needed measures to reassure that elderly population's rights are not diminished by the digital transformation.

- 48. We recommend that the European Union promotes the education of citizens in every Member State to improve critical thinking, scepticism and fact-checking in order to teach them how to evaluate independently whether a piece of information is trustworthy or not. This should be implemented in basic education as a specific class and it should also be offered in other public spaces for citizens of all ages that willingly want to profit from this training. The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because we think that it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, so this training will help the citizens to recognise them by themselves. By doing so, the effects of fake news on society and on the citizens themselves will be lessened. This would also give the individuals more agency, rather than depending on the institutions to acquire reliable information.

## Annex: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL AND NOT ADOPTED

### Stream 3: A Just Society

#### Substream 3.2 Equal Rights

**We recommend that the EU creates a mechanism to ensure the monitoring and enforcement of minority rights (e.g., a portal or office where people might lodge complaints).**

We recommend this because we believe that every individual can express their opinion and has the right to seek and receive help. Such an office is necessary in order to reduce the tension between minorities and the majority.

#### Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports

**We recommend that the EU should raise awareness of physical activity by "role modelling" through public figures (e.g. Parliament events should include some form of physical activity or gesture for a few seconds like stretching, walk the talk or jumping).**

We recommend this because engagement from public figures on physical activity will raise awareness.

### Stream 5: An Ethical and Safe Digital Transformation

#### Substream 5.3 Data Protection

**We recommend creating a Web ID that will store personal and sensitive data but will make it available only to the authorities and the police. Online platforms and sellers will use online code associated with a Web ID and the data that is relevant for a given activity. The default setting for data sharing through this ID should be non-consent. The data should be only given to the parties directly involved and not a 3rd party. If the data is given to a 3rd party a citizen should be able to easily opt out. The data should be available only for a limited time or a specific transaction. The authorisation to use data should have expiration or clear definition on what actions that can be taken by a company with this data.**

We recommend this because at the moment companies can harvest all the data including personal and sensitive data and can use it for many purposes without disclosing how and why exactly. So, the actors get more information than they actually need to provide us with services and then can re-sell or re-use other data without our consent. At the same time it will guarantee accountability of internet users while preserving their relative anonymity.