

TRANSNATIONAL MINI-PUBLIC REPORT

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REGROUP

REBUILDING GOVERNANCE AND
RESILIENCE OUT OF THE PANDEMIC



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Culminating more than a decade of crisis in Europe, the Covid-19 pandemic has opened an important window of opportunity for institutional and policy change, not only at the “reactive” level of emergency responses, but also to tackle more broadly the many socio-political challenges caused or exacerbated by Covid-19. Building on this premise, the Horizon Europe project REGROUP (*Rebuilding governance and resilience out of the pandemic*) aims to: 1) provide the European Union with a body of actionable advice on how to rebuild post-pandemic governance and public policies in an effective and democratic way; anchored to 2) a map of the socio-political dynamics and consequences of Covid-19; and 3) an empirically-informed normative evaluation of the pandemic.



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Contents

This report provides an overview of the transnational citizens' jury, which was held in the context of the Horizon Europe research project REGROUP. The report discusses (1) organisational matters, (2) provides a summary of the discussion contents, (3) presents the jurors' policy recommendations, (4) analyses the attitudinal participant surveys and includes (5) citizens' feedback and a (6) self-evaluation. For more information about the method used and on the domestic citizens' jury reports, we recommend the readers to have a look at the other publications from REGROUP's Work Package 4 (regroup-horizon.eu/publications/).

Organisational matters

The transnational citizens' jury took place on 23 and 24 March 2024, at the premises of the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels. A total of 20 citizens took part in the event, with REGROUP covering their travel and accommodation expenses. They were chosen among the participants of the national citizens' juries that were held in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland between June and October 2023, with four participants coming from each country. The transnational jury was equally divided between men and women. The random selection was also based on age and education criteria, as shown in the table below.

Age	
18-24	30%
25-44	40%
45-64	5%
65+	25%
Education	
Primary	0%
Secondary	10%
Tertiary 1	20%
Tertiary 2	25%
Tertiary 3	45%
Gender	
Male	50%
Female	50%

The first day of the event, i.e. Saturday 23 March, started at 9:00 and concluded at 17:00. It was followed by a visit of Brussels' city center and a dinner with all participants and the team. The second day, i.e. Sunday 24 March, debuted again at 9:00 and

ended around 13:30 as participants had to make their way back to their home countries. The plenary sessions and one of the working groups took place in the European Policy Centre's auditorium. The other working group convened in an adjacent, smaller meeting room of the EPC.

Interpretation into all five languages of the participants, i.e. French, German, Italian, Dutch and Polish, was provided remotely during the entire event. English was the default language in the presentations and for the facilitators, but each participant could listen and intervene in their own language.

The local organisation involved a team of seven people from the EPC: Corina Stratulat (overall organisation, co-facilitator), Johannes Greubel (co-facilitator), Eric Maurice (coordination), Rabea Schmucker and Matteo Gorgoni (notetakers and support to staff), Tatiana Caftea and Oceane Zarcone (Events team).

Five 'resource persons' participated in the transnational mini public to support the participants' deliberations in their work with their policy expertise and answer their questions. These included, on the first day, Janis Emmanouilidis (EPC's Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Studies), who provided insight on EU decision-making and the role of experts during the COVID-19 pandemic and acted as an expert in a working group, and Alberto Horst-Neidhardt (EPC), who acted as an expert on disinformation. On both days, Benjamin Leruth (University of Groningen), Gianna Maria Eick (University of Amsterdam), and Eric Maurice (EPC) were available to act as experts in the working groups, ready to answer any content-related questions from participants.

In addition, nine research team members (five from the University of Groningen and one from each research partner - i.e. Europa-Kolleg Hamburg, European University Institute, Jagiellonian University, Institut Jacques Delors) attended the mini public. They served as contact persons for the participants from their respective countries and split up into the working groups to observe and help out in case citizens needed help, for example, with translations.

Content of the discussions

Both days were full of engaging exchanges and deliberations. On the first day, after participants got to know each other, activities focused on deepening their knowledge about EU policymaking, presenting the recommendations from the domestic citizens' juries, and starting to identify potential final policy recommendations on the four issues covered within the framework of this multi-level experiment: disinformation, scientific communication, the role of experts in policy-making, and political trust. The second day was devoted to finalising and adopting the recommendations.

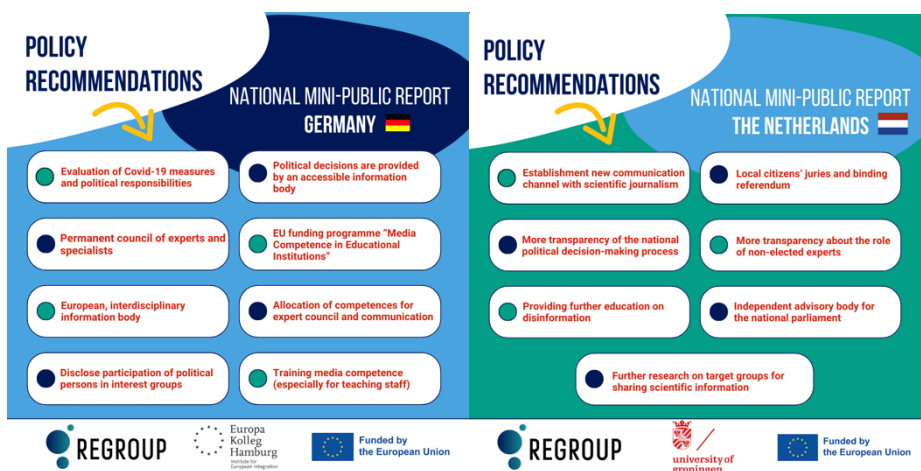
The two-day programme followed a deliberative structure introduced in the project’s methodological brief, with plenary and working group sessions to help the participants going from a general to a more precise approach of the topics. This methodology enabled them to have a more comprehensive understanding of the issues discussed and to formulate specific policy recommendations.

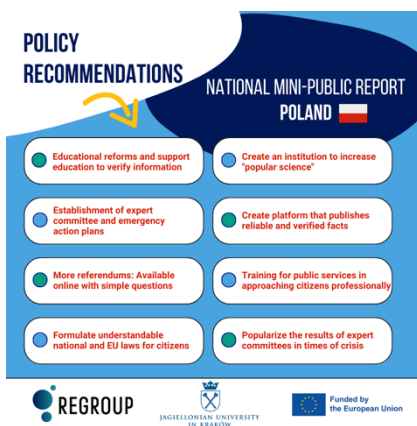
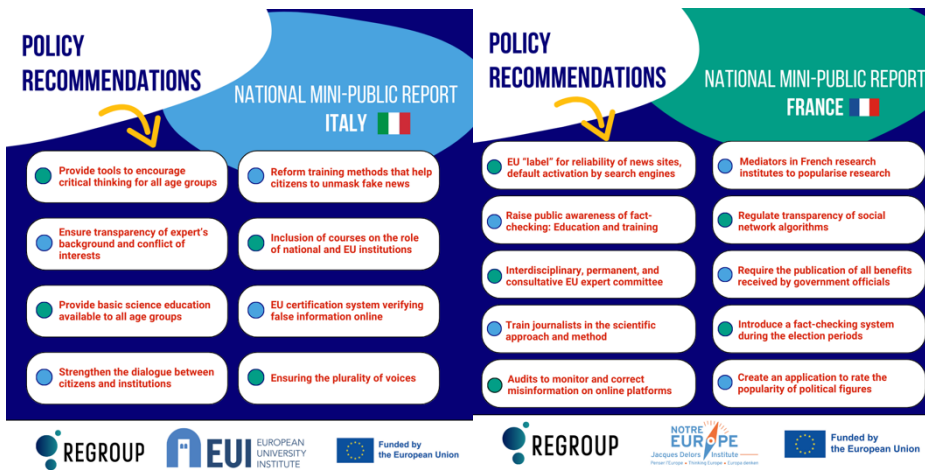
Day 1: Learning and selecting recommendations

The first day started with a brief explanation of the REGROUP project and its objectives, followed by an ice-breaking activity. This fostered an open atmosphere and motivated the participants for the upcoming tasks. Next, one representative from each country gave a presentation on how their respective domestic citizens’ jury went and detailed the recommendations formulated in their context. After each presentation, the other participants had the opportunity to react to the input provided and ask any questions of clarification. For example, one participant asked the Italian jury how their recommendations reflected the specific situation in the country, considering that Italy was one of the most affected member states by the pandemic. The Italian delegation answered that trust in institutions was an important topic for them:

“In the beginning [of the pandemic], the situation was disorienting. There was a lack of preparation and incredulity. However, instruments to manage the crisis were quickly adopted. We must work on citizenship, on entities involved. For example, the method of verification is the scientific method, meaning the capacity to doubt things. We must be able to dissect a scientific output, to access its sources online and bibliography, its information sources, in order to understand how a given information is constructed and has been developed.”

National recommendations





The second part of the first day began with a short session on “Formulating policy recommendations for the EU”, in which Janis Emmanouilidis and Eric Maurice explained the EU institutional architecture, decision-making process and role of expert groups. Participants asked questions about the legislative process after the Commission presented its proposals, inquired about the potential conflict of interest of non-elected experts, and sought more details about decision-making during the COVID-19 crisis.

The following hour was dedicated to a panel discussion entitled “EU perspective: what has been done so far?”, which delved into lessons learned and actions taken by the European Union, following the Covid-19 pandemic and regarding the four themes covered in the mini-publics: i.e. disinformation, scientific communication, the role of experts in policy-making, and political trust. The panelists included Janis Emmanouilidis, Benjamin Leruth, Alberto-Horst Neidhardt and Eric Maurice. Corina Stratulat moderated the exchange. After collecting the experts’ insights, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

On disinformation, a participant asked whether a mechanism to compare and evaluate member states’ action in the fight against disinformation existed at the EU level, and if the Union had already defined any best practices in this regard. Another participant

asked if artificial intelligence could be used to identify disinformation or modifications in videos and photographs. On political trust, participants remarked that the EU likely faced a dissemination problem and asked how it could get better at effectively sharing information. Participants also pointed out that scientific journals are mostly read by scientists, and asked how scientific information could be better communicated and made accessible to the broader public.

During this part of discussions, citizens showed great interest in the presentations and used the Q&A session to inform their upcoming work on the formulation of concrete policy recommendations for the EU level. The exchanges were also an opportunity for participants to further introduce themselves to their colleagues, in particular by speaking about their personal background and experiences. This helped to create links between participants and foster a constructive working atmosphere in the subsequent group discussions.

After lunch, participants were divided into two working groups. Working Group (WG) 1 included participants from France and the Netherlands, as well as half of Poland's delegation, and it was tasked to deal with the themes of disinformation and political trust. Working Group 2 included participants from Germany and Italy, as well as the other half of the Polish delegation, and it worked on the themes of scientific communication and the role of non-elected experts. The selection of countries in each working group was motivated by technical interpretation considerations. Poland's delegation was divided between the two groups in order to balance the number of participants in each group, as well as to ensure that a Central and Eastern European perspective was taken into account in all policy recommendations.

Corina Stratulat acted as facilitator in WG 1, and Johannes Greubel took on the role of facilitator in WG 2. Both groups were first asked to identify their top 5 recommendations for each domain. The top scoring recommendations would then be used to elaborate final EU recommendations. Facilitators reminded participants that an important criterion for the choice was for the recommendations to be actionable at the EU level, considering EU competences as explained in the morning presentations. In some cases, there were discussions before participants could select their preferred recommendations. In WG 2, for example, a recommendation from the French jury referred to "French research institutes". Participants in WG 2 decided that this phrasing would have to be changed to "European research institutes" before choices could be made.

Given that some recommendations seemed to overlap, or because some received the same number of votes, participants proceeded to debating about the choices available and those already made. In some cases, participants decided to merge overlapping recommendations or to complete a specific recommendation with parts of another. Participants also asked for further clarifications. For example, in WG 1, a question was raised

about what training journalists meant in one of the recommendations, or who would be concerned by a different proposition to offer “further education about disinformation”.

After one hour in the working group, participants gathered for a plenary session and rapporteurs from each working group presented to the other participants the 5 recommendations they had selected for each of the four topics. To choose these rapporteurs, facilitators asked in the WGs if any participant would be willing to volunteer. In each WG, a woman and a man quickly volunteered.

Table 1: Selected recommendations on Theme 1: Disinformation (by preference order with number of votes)

1. Raising public awareness of fact-checking: Train journalists, educate children, highlight fact-checking content (TV, press, etc.). These actions are to be supported by public funding.	8
2. Providing tools to encourage active participation and the development of critical thinking at all ages through various proposals in schools, the media and society, useful for understanding social and communication dynamics.	6
3. Introduce audits to monitor misinformation on platforms in order to identify problems (fake accounts, sharing, etc.) and introduce corrective measures.	5
4. Introduce training in the scientific approach and method for all journalists.	5
5. We recommend that: A commission be created at the European level that: a) develops a certification system, which provides for the development and promotion of websites or platforms for verifying false information. b) is composed of competent multidisciplinary experts from each member state, who are responsible for verifying information.	4

Table 2: Selected recommendations on Theme 2: Scientific communication (by preference order with number of votes)

1. Introduce mediators in the major European research institutes, responsible for communicating and popularising the work of researchers. This will include the creation of new information formats, such as videos, specially designed for young people.	9
2. Providing basic science education to all age groups through various proposals in schools, the media and society, also by promoting the training of science communicators.	8
3. Ensure transparency in communication in the various media, regarding experts, making explicit their CVs, any sources of conflict of interest (e.g. funding, any public or private commitments) and sources of news.	6
4. Contexts, situations, and political decisions are provided by the information body in understandable language.	6
5. Establishing a communication channel, managed by civil society, journalistic, advisory, administrative and academic organisations, that uses videos, podcasts, and newsletters to inform citizens about new scientific research, including through Open Access channels.	5

Table 3: Selected recommendations on Theme 3: Role of non-elected experts (by preference order with number of votes)

1. Reform education by: a) moving religion lessons to parish catechism halls and introducing a subject dealing with religions and cultures. b) promoting third age universities and senior education also in smaller communities (community centers, day care centers, housewives' circles, etc.); c) making the teaching profession highly esteemed through increased salaries, better selection of candidates and offering more opportunities for professional development. d) making the person of the teacher highly qualified as a pedagogue and able to build his or her authority on knowledge and personal example rather than solely on professional status. e) ensuring the independence of experts who create textbooks and the core curriculum, which will be modern and interactive and up to date.	8
2. Popularize and disseminate the results of the expert committee's work in times of crisis - through government websites, and simple, intuitive, and active social media platforms, coupled with the M-Obywatel app.	7
3. The creation of an interdisciplinary, permanent, and consultative European expert committee, whose members are chosen by their peers, dedicated to the subjects of climate and health and with mediators responsible for communicating with the general public.	7
4. Ensure transparency in communication in the various media, regarding experts, making explicit their CVs, any sources of conflict of interest (e.g. funding, any public or private commitments) and sources of news.	6
5. Establishment of expert committee and emergency action plans.	5

Table 4: Selected recommendations on Theme 4: political trust (by preference order, with number of votes)

1. The strengthening of dialogue with citizens by the institutions: - not necessarily through referendums but also through polls - communicating the political and technical decisions taken in a popular, simple and comprehensible manner - developing continuous active participation and communicating how this participation can be carried out.	10
2. Creating more transparency about the national political decision-making process by presenting the political considerations and rejected alternative options behind decisions in understandable language.	9
3. Initiating local citizens' juries with a representative group of participants, followed by a local binding referendum and encouraging voluntary participation in these citizens' juries.	6
4. The inclusion of courses that provide the basics of the role and functioning of institutions on a national, international and European level in the training curriculum. We also recommend the streamlining of public services.	5
5. Ensuring the plurality of voices.	5

The presentation of the selected recommendations in each WG triggered questions from participants in the other WG, for example on what “ensuring the plurality of voic-

es” meant. A discussion also took place about the idea of promoting referenda. A German participant pointed out that having referenda at the federal level is not possible in Germany. Other participants remarked that much also depends on how a referendum is being implemented.

After a short break, the two working groups reconvened to incorporate the feedback they received during the plenary session, and to discuss how recommendations could be fine-tuned to become more concrete and actionable.

In WG 1, expert Alberto Horst-Neidhardt gave more information on what is already done at the EU level concerning the certification systems for fact-checking websites, with the EU digital media observatory based in Florence, and concerning the monitoring of disinformation on platforms, in the context of the Digital Services Act. He also explained to participants the difference between disinformation, which is spread intentionally for profit or to cause public harm, and misinformation, which is usually done unintentionally. Participants also exchanged with experts Gianna Eick and Eric Maurice on EU competences and work on education, with a view to formulating relevant recommendations. Corina Stratulat stressed that participants must agree on recommendations relevant for the EU level.

Work then resumed on the first topic, disinformation. Discussions centred on the idea of a regulatory entity on the European tier for journalists and mechanisms to share good practices. A participant proposed to regulate content creators in general and not only journalists, and another proposed that the EU focuses more on the transparency of social networks’ algorithms.

On political trust, participants had a debate about how referenda can be made useful to strengthen the link between citizens and institutions. A participant noted that “Yes or No answers are too simplistic. It is quite complicated to instil political trust this way. We have to reflect on how the average Joe reflects. Need time to take everything into consideration and make a decision that is well-founded”. Participants then had an exchange on Europeans’ sense of belonging and how to improve it. The working group session ended with a discussion on transparency. A participant said: “It is important for governing bodies to be representative of the people, and that they should explain what they are doing, and why they are doing it in a specific way. To be more democratic, the EU needs more transparency.”

In WG 2, the session started with the topic of scientific communication. Participants discussed the idea of a mediator, a person in charge of communicating science to the broader public, and whether the concept would be useful. A German participant mentioned the German GEZ, in the context of which public broadcasters work with and support talented content creators on social media platforms to boost scientific communication to the public. An exchange ensued on whether this should be done at the

EU level. The importance of lifelong learning and of reaching out to people who are generally less interested in politics was also stressed. As in WG 1, the question of EU competences in education was raised. Expert Benjamin Leruth noted that “the question is not only about which competences the EU has”, but also the financial elements that should be considered. Despite not having competences, the most effective lever for the EU in the field of education is financial support. Participants were encouraged to consider this possibility when formulating their recommendations.

In the discussion on the role of experts, participants focused on what the EU could do in times of crisis/emergency. The group insisted on the transparency of expert committees, as well as on the importance to have a common European solution. A participant stressed the need “to have common European emergency action plans, because it is important that the EU works together in times of crises.”

In both working groups, the afternoon discussion allowed participants to have a better grasp of the issues and a deeper understanding of each other’s perspectives. The fruitful exchanges during day 1 continued on day 2, towards the finalisation of the recommendations.

Day 2: Finalising and adopting the recommendations

The second day of the mini public started with another working group session, with the aim of finalising the policy recommendations for the REGROUP’s final report. In order to frame the discussions, the facilitators reminded the participants of the three questions they should try to answer when formulating recommendations: “Is it relevant to the EU? What is the rationale? What is the expected effect?”

To facilitate participants’ engagement in the collective work, Corina Stratulat and Johannes Greubel used an online tool that translated in real time the draft recommendations discussed during day 1 in the five languages of the participants.

In WG 1, the first topic that was addressed was political trust. The debate focused on how EU referenda could be organised and on which topics. Participants proposed to recommend EU referenda on education, climate change, health, and immigration. After a participant pointed out that “it would be difficult to have a referendum on a yes or no question, because it oversimplifies things”, a discussion ensued on how binary referenda could be supplemented by polls in which citizens would be asked to give their opinions in a non-binary way. A participant then pointed out that this posed questions of legitimacy: “Why would EU polls be more interesting than those we already see on TV and other channels?” A Dutch participant addressed this point by explaining that in The Netherlands, there are “preferenda”, that is, referenda where voters can show their preference over several proposals. Participants agreed that recommending polls,

preferenda and referenda would offer a coherent set of tools for citizens' participation.

How to communicate about the referenda and whom to involve in the information campaigns was then discussed. Participants stressed the need to involve and train civil society organisations at the EU and local levels, and debated how much the EU itself should intervene in the contents of the campaigns and referenda. All questions raised and the exchange of views were followed by writing and correcting the draft recommendations, until a final version was agreed. Unfortunately, deliberations on the first topic did not allow any time to finalise the formulation of recommendations regarding disinformation.

In parallel, the WG 2 discussed the recommendations about the role of experts, and in particular the recommendation to “reform education”. Exchanges between participants focused on the need to guarantee freedom and independence of schools, and on the role and place of religion. A participant proposed to delete the word “reform”, as member states would not agree to the EU reforming their education. This opened a discussion about whether the recommendation should be implemented by the EU or addressed to member states. As in WG 1, the recommendation was drafted and fine-tuned as the discussions unfolded, until a final version was agreed.

The group then started to work on a second recommendation about the creation of a European expert committee. The debate between participants mainly concerned what such a committee would do, whether its objectives were clear, and which policy areas it should deal with. All agreed with the idea that “the aim is to strengthen European cooperation. The idea behind this recommendation is that Europe must act as one in times of crisis.”

Discussions on the recommendations regarding scientific communication mainly revolved around how the EU could best support efforts to communicate and popularise the work of researchers to make it accessible for everybody. Participants insisted that bodies charged with making science accessible should be independent from the EU and private interests. The collective thinking was translated into several complementary recommendations.

After a break, all participants convened for the final plenary session, where they worked together on the adoption of their final set of policy recommendations for the EU and all areas. Rapporteurs from each group presented their group's proposed recommendations to the others. Questions and comments were heard and answered before a vote was held on each recommendation by show of hands.

WG 1 presented four recommendations concerning political trust.

Recommendation 1:

“EU should provide clear guidelines for when referenda should be held, on what topics, how the questions should be formulated, what is the threshold that can validate the vote, and commit to providing citizens’ with feedback on how the result will be used. The EU should choose topics that are of EU-wide relevance, for example, education, climate change, health issues, immigration, or in crisis, irrespective of whether they fall under the Union’s competence or not. (“referenda etiquette”).”

Some participants proposed to add war and pandemic to the topics about which referendum could be organised. This was rejected by most participants because it would be difficult for citizens to assess the situation and vote in a referendum during a crisis. An agreement was found to replace “in crisis” by “potential crises scenarios”, and the recommendation was adopted with 15 votes in favour and 5 against.

Recommendation 2:

“The EU should engage in communication campaigns at all levels of government in the member states (e.g. local, regional, national) and should join forces with different stakeholders on the ground (e.g. academics/scientists, civil society, media, activists, etc.) in order to amplify and raise the visibility of the plurality of positions so that people are aware of the different choices and can make informed decisions. The EU should be especially aware about the distribution of the information provided, and that certain target groups (e.g. young people, first time voters or people who less interested or supportive of EU and who feel far away from the Union) should be priorily identified and prioritised in this effort. This should complement and not replace the national campaign efforts.”

The recommendation was adopted without debate with 17 votes in favour and 3 against.

Recommendation 3:

“Polling by EU institutions should take place regularly, its results should be more widely distributed with a delay in publishing between 6 and 12 months and it should be clear how polls are used by policymakers; There should be sequence of polling, a preferendum and then a referendum.”

A participant said polls should be conducted with people that make them representative of the European population. Another suggested removing the reference to polls. The recommendation was put to vote without modification. It was adopted by 12 votes

in favour and 8 against.

Recommendation 4:

“EU institutions should jointly promote instruments of citizens’ participation in important decisions in national decision-making. The EU should use instruments of citizens’ participation in important decisions in EU decision-making. The institutions should collect and distribute EU-wide best practices about local/regional/national/EU initiatives of citizen’s participation. Results of citizen participation initiatives should be considered in decision-making, and it should be clear to participants in the initiatives how the results are used.

The recommendation was adopted without debate with 19 votes in favour and 1 against.

As far as disinformation is concerned, no vote could take place as the group did not have time to finalise the formulation and justification of the recommendations. The draft recommendations focused on the following points:

- Education should target citizens, including from a young age, to improve their ability to fact-check the information to which they are exposed, through life-long learning programmes.
- Education should target journalists and politicians, including continuous training/education.
- An EU-level institutional body to investigate disinformation practices in the member states.
- EU certification system for content-creators.

WG 2 presented three recommendations on the role of experts and three on scientific communication.

Recommendation 1:

“Member states should ensure that education is free and independent. Member states should especially support the independence of experts who create textbooks and the core curriculum, which will be modern, interactive and up to date. The EU should support basic science education to all age groups through various proposals in the media, society, and schools, for example promoting third age universities and senior education also in smaller communities.”

There was an exchange to clarify the notion of “independence” in this context, and to clarify what the role of the EU would be - it would be to provide support and funds for

the implementation of the recommendation.

The recommendation was adopted with 17 votes in favour and 3 against.

Recommendation 2:

“The creation of an interdisciplinary, permanent, and consultative European expert committee, whose members are chosen by their peers. The Committee should ensure preparation and standardisation of concrete emergency action plans.”

A question was asked to clarify the meaning of standardisation. The group explained that the idea was to have EU-wide standards that all member states would follow. Some participants expressed the view that electing experts would politicise science. The group answered that experts would be chosen by their peers, precisely to avoid politicisation.

The recommendation was adopted with 15 votes in favour and 5 against.

Recommendation 3:

“Popularise and disseminate the results of EU expert committee’s work in times of crisis - through government websites, and simple, intuitive, and active social media platforms, coupled with a universal app. Members of the expert group should also act as mediators responsible for communicating with the general public.”

Doubt was expressed about whether people would trust things that are being published. They also asked that this doubt be noted down in the report. A participant also observed that a lot of information was published during the pandemic and that many people did not get really exposed to it.

The recommendation was adopted with 18 votes in favour and 2 against.

Recommendation 4:

“There should be EU programmes to advise mediators and communicators, by sharing best practices and providing funding. EU support should be dependent on the fact that research institutes have a dedicated mediator responsible for communicating and popularising the work of researchers, making it accessible for everybody.”

The recommendation was adopted without debate and by unanimity.

Recommendation 5:

“The EU should support introducing additional open European communication channels which are independent and transparent and provide information to the general public in clear and easily accessible language, ensuring that different voices are represented. There should also be dedicated support and funding of independent experts and science communicators in different fields.”

There was a question about the difference between this recommendation and the previous one. The group explained that the two were indeed similar, but that, for them, recommendation 5 had a more general scope than recommendation 4. A participant asked for the definition of “independent experts”. The answer was that their independence would be ensured through scientific standards and peer review, and that the EU should keep an eye on this.

The recommendation was adopted with 14 votes in favour and 6 against.

Recommendation 6:

“Ensure transparency in communication in the various media, regarding experts, making explicit their CVs, any sources of conflict of interest (e.g. funding, any public or private commitments) and sources of news.”

Participants asked whether this would harm experts’ privacy and whether this would give too much power to the media that select the experts.

The recommendation was adopted with 14 votes in favour and 6 against.

Attitudinal study

At their arrival on the first day and before their departure on the second day, participants were submitted a questionnaire in order to analyse their attitudes towards the four themes covered in the citizens’ jury and check whether their attitudes would be modified by their participation in the deliberative process. Questions in the surveys were mainly about participants’ media consumption habits and level of trust in institutions - i.e. EU and national institutions, public services and media.

Figure 1 shows that a large number of participants consume news on a daily basis. Figure 2 shows that the majority get their news from traditional media sources and through their social circles (family, friends, colleagues), with a significant part also using Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.

Figure 1: Frequency of news consumption

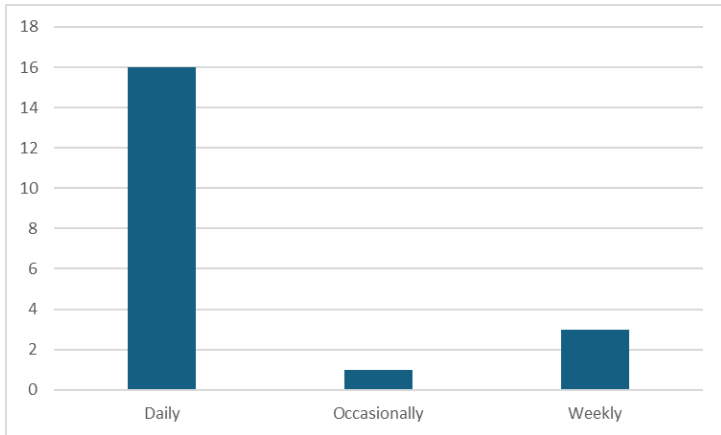
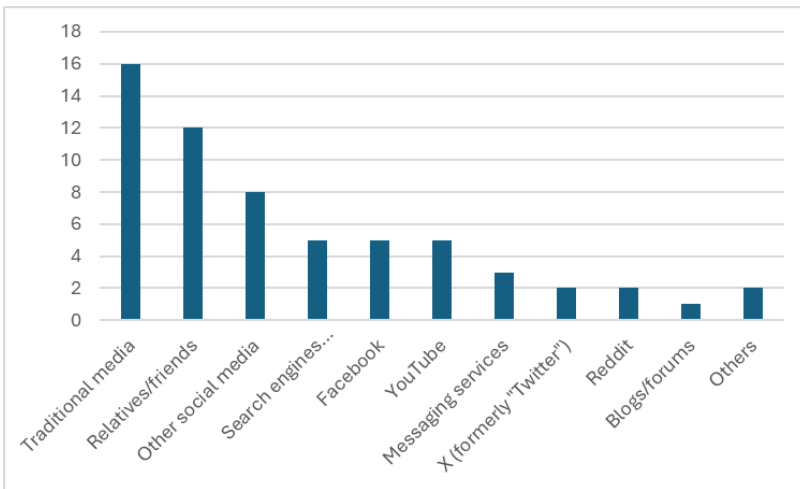


Figure 2: Use of information sources



Notes: Other social media = Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat; Messaging services = WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, etc...

Figure 3 shows that a majority of participants consider themselves capable of spotting disinformation. Between day 1 and day 2, three participants changed their attitude: two (age 18-24 and 65+, education level tertiary 1 and 2) became more confident in their ability to spot disinformation, and one (age 25-44, education level tertiary 3) changed their perceived ability from often to sometimes.

Figure 3: Perceived ability to spot disinformation

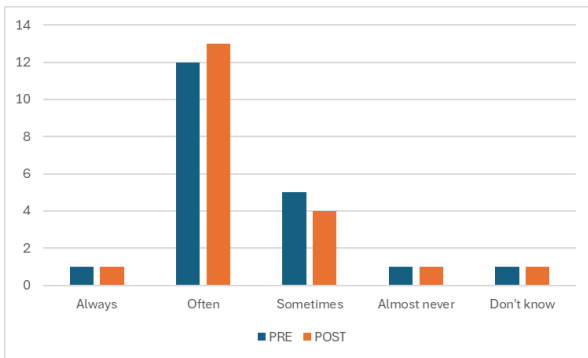
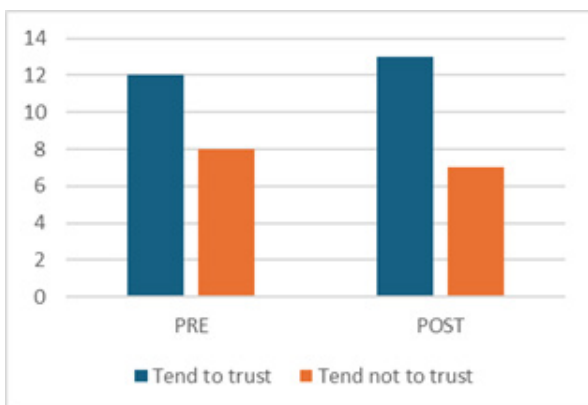


Figure 4 shows that 12 out of 20 participants said on day 1 that they tended to trust other people. On day 2, the number went up by one person. Figure 5 shows that a majority tend to trust institutions, except political parties and social media companies.

Figure 4: Level of trust in other people



Participants' attitudes towards institutions, political and non-political, as shown in figure 5, reveal an elevated level of trust in the EU, national parliaments and public administrations, as well as in health services. Political parties and social media companies are the least trusted, with a non-significant change before and after the deliberations. Interestingly, a quarter of participants expressed a lower level of trust in media after the event than before.

Figure 5: Trust in institutions

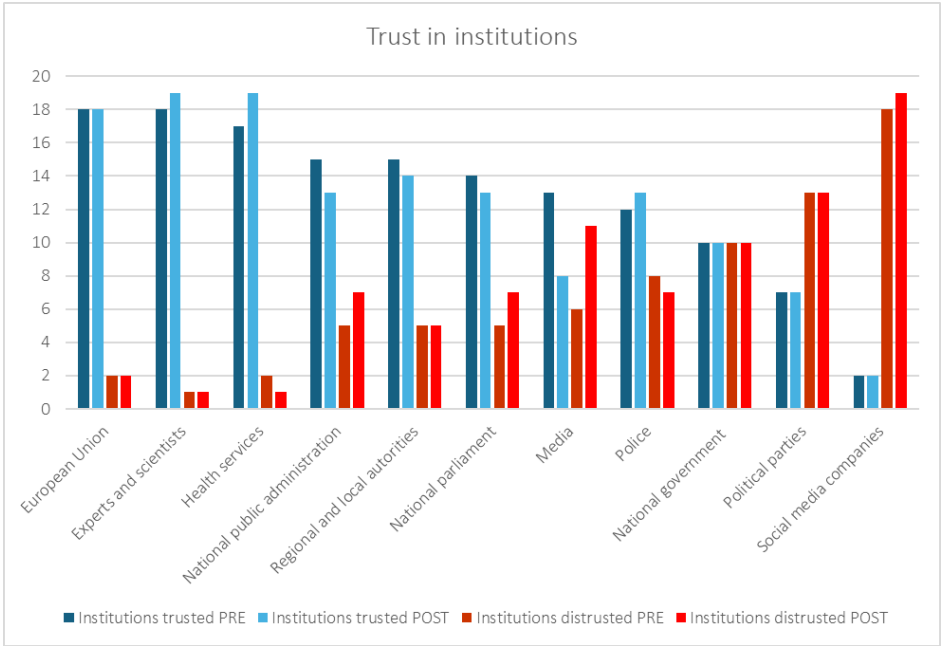
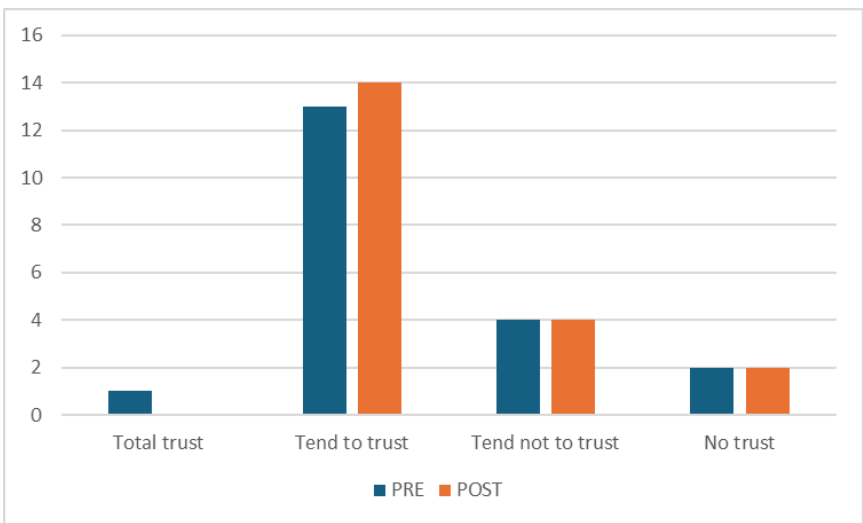


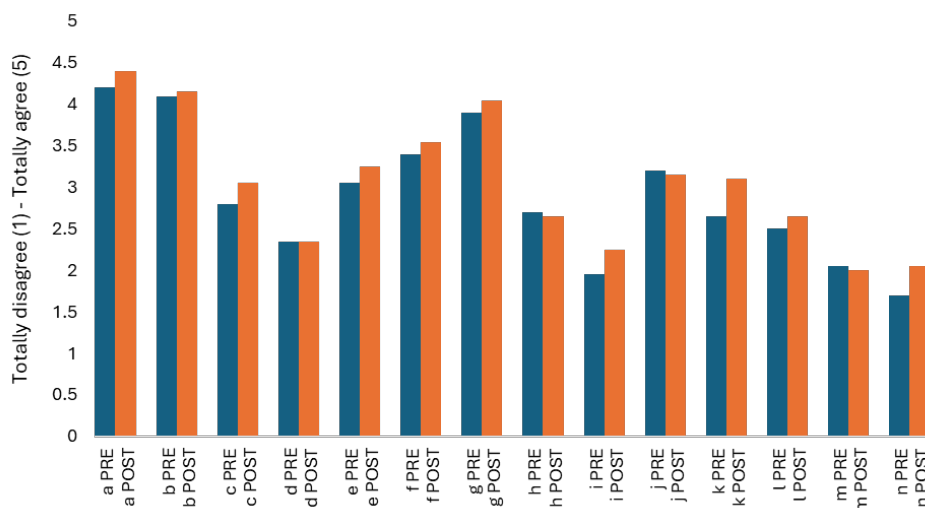
Figure 6 shows that in the light of their government’s response to the pandemic, a majority of participants “tend to trust” the government to take the right decisions in case of future health crises. Only one participant expressed total trust on day 1, and said on day 2 they did not anymore.

Figure 6: Trust in government in case of a new health crisis



Participants were proposed a series of statements related to the topics covered during the min-public discussions. Figure 7 shows no important attitudinal change but a tendency to agree more with the statements after the discussions.

Figure 7: Average citizens' agreement with various statements



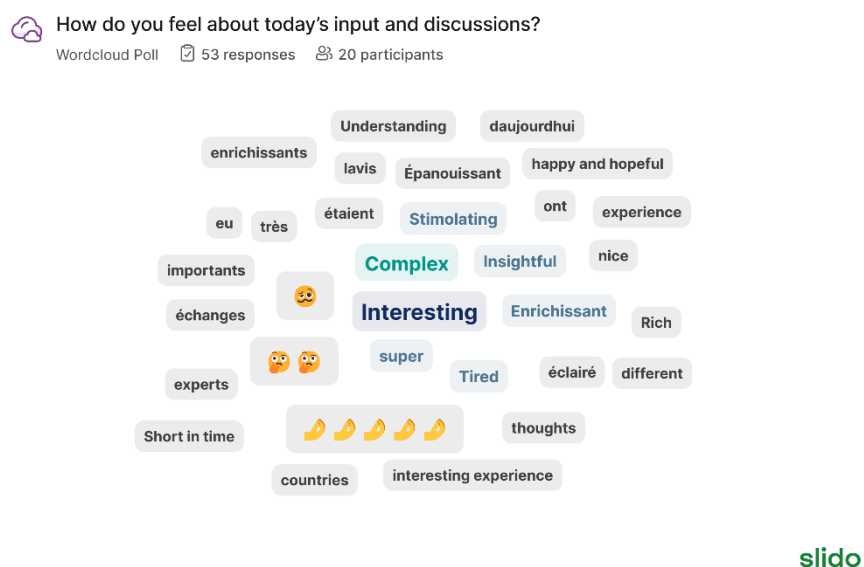
(a) Disinformation is a major problem in our society
(b) Scientific experts must play an active role to shape public policy
(c) Information about the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic was well communicated by the government
(d) I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialised politician
(e) Politicians should be like managers and fix what does not work in society
(f) The leaders of my country should be more educated and skilled than ordinary citizens
(g) Social problems should be addressed based on scientific evidence, not ideological preferences
(h) The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions
(i) Most citizens have all the competences required to make political decisions
(j) Most citizens are capable of understanding the needs of people like me
(k) Politicians do not understand what is going on in society
(l) Scientific experts know best what is good for people
(m) Decisions about science and technology should be based mainly on what the majority of people in a country think
(n) The government does enough to tackle disinformation

Citizens' feedback

During the last plenary session on day 1, participants were asked to share their feelings about the discussions with words or smileys using the participatory tool Slido. This al-

lowed them to express themselves spontaneously. The word and smiley cloud shown in figure 7 indicates that participants rated experience positively, in terms of content as well as of personal satisfaction.

Figure 8: Participants’ feedback as expressed on Slido



In a dedicated and anonymous “thought box” that was available during the whole event, participants were also given the opportunity to express their views and feelings about the event, as well as any ideas regarding the four themes that were discussed.

Their main feedback was that the discussions were very interesting but “intense” and did not allow enough time to gain a comprehensive understanding of the themes or discuss all the implications of the recommendations before finalising them.

In sum, citizens appreciated the participatory format and were keen to engage in in-depth discussions. The general mood was summed up in one note: “More time for discussion! Loved the opinions and giving mine”. The participant added a proposition that reflected the general interest for the topics that were discussed: “Maybe the working of the EU could be given as homework.”

Self-evaluation

The transnational citizens’ jury was a positive example of deliberative democracy. The participants showed commitment to their mission, respect for each other and interest in the topics discussed. During the two-day event, including the walk to Brussels city centre and dinner on Saturday evening, the atmosphere between participants was

friendly. They did not stay in their national groups, and all talked to each other, including about the EU. This created a pleasant group dynamic and was an opportunity to establish links between Europeans with different backgrounds and perspectives.

The two-day mini public included activities in different formats which required intense coordination between the organisers ahead of and during the event. Organisers were not able to secure external experts or representatives from EU institutions, because the event took place during the weekend and before the Easter holiday, so none of those invited accepted. But commitment from EPC colleagues and REGROUP partners allowed participants to benefit from extensive internal expertise and experience.

Organisers faced difficulties that are inherent to debates with citizens coming from different countries. In preparing the presentations, panel and working groups, it was difficult to anticipate the level of knowledge and understanding of the EU and its functioning on the part of participants. Speakers were therefore careful to use accessible language and went into more details when questions required it. Secondly, when participants engaged in long exchanges of views during the working groups on day 1, it was difficult to find the right balance between cutting the discussion short in the interest of time and letting citizens raise all points and questions they deemed important/relevant. That helps to explain why WG 1 ran out of time on day 2 to finalise the recommendations on disinformation.

Interpretation was also a challenge for the organisers and participants, because of occasional technical issues as well as delays in some languages getting translation in real time. But overall, interpretation served its purpose and participants could fluidly engage in their own language, which ensued that there was good interaction and deep discussion.

Overall, the frustration expressed by some participants with the limited time reflects the fact that citizens took ownership of the topics proposed and were keen to go explore them as much as possible, to inform their opinion and think concretely about possible solutions. The event also helped to further participants' learning and awareness of how the EU works, how decisions are taken, and how complex the issues are. This transnational citizens' jury proved that European citizens are perfectly capable of having difficult conversations about complex issues of EU-wide relevance and agreeing on common proposals for action. It also demonstrated that involving experts who can directly answer the citizens' questions during the deliberations empowers them to take ownership of the topics and make concrete proposals. The participants' feedback also suggests that providing them with relevant information ahead of a participatory exercise would increase their ability to engage in policy discussions. This experience is therefore expected to benefit the participants' engagement with EU affairs in the future and allow them to share their insights with other citizens.

Transnational Mini-Public: Agenda

23.03.2024- 24.03.2024

Day 1

8:45-9:00	Arrival, registration, welcome tea or coffee
9:00-9:15	Welcome
9:15-10:00	Introduction of participants and ice-breaking activity
10:00-11:10	Presentation of domestic policy recommendations by each country's rapporteur
11:10-11:35	Formulating policy recommendations for the EU
11:35-11:45	Short break
11:45-12:45	Panel: What has been done so far in the EU? Theme 1: Disinformation Theme 2: Scientific communication Theme 3: The role of experts in policy making Theme 4: Political trust
12:45-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	Work in small groups Group 1: Political trust and disinformation Group 2: Scientific communication and the role of experts
14:35-15:05	Plenary Session
15:05-15:15	Coffee break
15:15-16:40	Work in small groups
16:45-17:00	Plenary Session and Conclusion
18:30	Walk to dinner
19:30	Dinner in Brussels historical centre

Day 2

9:00-9:15	Welcome and recapitulation
9:15-10:15	Work in small groups
10:15-10:30	Coffee break
10:30-11:15	Work in small groups
11:20-12:15	Vote on recommendations
12:15-12:30	Conclusion
12:30–13:30	Lunch and end of the event