

Criteria catalogue for public civil dialogue

Adopted by the Board

First signatories: Confederation of German Industry (BDI), German Federal Youth Council (DBJR), Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), German Society for Nature Conservation (DNR), German Civil Service Federation (dbb), Federation of German Consumer Associations (vzbv), Young European Federalists (JEF), Citizens of Europe e.V., International Federation (IB), National Network for Civil Society (BBE)

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Background

In 2017 the French President Emmanuel Macron proposed “citizens’ panels” on the future of Europe. The Commission President Jean-Paul Juncker would also like to strengthen dialogue with EU citizens. The Coalition Agreement of the current Federal Government has taken up France’s idea: “We want Germany to actively participate in the debate about the future of the EU and a strengthening of European integration, and we want to involve all citizens in the reform debate in Europe by means of nationwide public dialogues. We thus want to make Europe more transparent and closer to its citizens and gain new trust.”

The board of the European Movement Germany (EBD) welcomes the intensified communication with citizens about the future of the EU. In order to ensure the quality and sustainability of these dialogue formats, the board has approved the following criteria:

Criteria

- **Conduct a representative survey of the general public and involve them in the debate on the future of Europe!** There should be a representative involvement of all citizens (also those without voting rights in the respective member states) to allow them the opportunity to speak at the Federal Government’s planned “public dialogues”. The Federal Government has a great responsibility to create public spaces in which the general public can make their voices heard. It damages credibility and the constitutional aim of a united Europe, if not all voices are part of the dialogue.

- **Issues must not be determined on a top-down basis!** The choice of issues or questions should be developed through a preceding process, regionally balanced and without any “channelling from above”.
- **Ensure regional balance!** The events should take place locally all over the country and be aligned to everyday life and the questions and interests of citizens. Germany has many centres which are superbly suited for regional events with local participants. Rural areas in particular must not be forgotten here.
- **Dialogue must take centre stage!** Dialogue formats which allow individuals to express their opinions and views and be taken seriously must have a participatory nature, so that it is possible for all participants to be heard (= as few speeches/welcome addresses as possible, no podium discussions, as much time as possible for real dialogue, a safe environment for discussion, possibly offering different methodical approaches for various target groups). Special emphasis should be given to the choice of suitable moderators for these events.
- **Committed associations and organisations as well as parties are as much a part of democracy as individual citizens!** Allowing people to speak freely and at the same time allowing democratic social forces to have their say, is of great value for the debate on the future of Europe. Diversity is not only represented at an individual level, but also in democratically composed associations, groups and organisations. These contribute, as parties do, to the formation of political opinion and should be included in the dialogue.
- **High transparency fosters credibility!** It is essential to have an overall process that is transparent for the participants and the public and this should be ensured through the documentation of the individual stages and the central content and results of the dialogue.
- **Clear objectives and feedback on the results of the dialogue!** The process should have specific addressees and clear objectives, which connect the various dialogue formats with one another. The result should not only be released in a publication, for example, and presented at a closing event to political representatives. Instead, it should be a requirement for the political representatives to seriously consider the content and results of the dialogue formats and report back to the participants why certain impulses have been taken up or not. The manner of the feedback should be made clear at the outset.
- **International orientation!** The citizens’ dialogues should take place with similar principles throughout Europe and be assessed accordingly. Pooling results from the different countries is important, in order to fully exploit the European dimension of the dialogue formats.
- **Implementation through organisations with democratic experience!** For this reason, it would be preferable to assign the planning of citizen dialogues to organisations which can themselves demonstrate democratic structures and whose board members reflect a broad range of social groups.