



Contribution of the Danish Parliament to the Conference on the future of Europe

## Engaging with Citizens on EU Affairs

Examples from the Danish Parliament

The Danish Parliament's European Affairs Committee has a long and consistent tradition of engaging with citizens in EU affairs, partly due to a high number of national referenda on EU issues held in Denmark during the past 30 years.

Two such referenda held in the 1990's on Denmark's accession to the Maastricht Treaty convinced the Danish Parliament to create an EU Information Office that could offer impartial information to citizens on any EU-related issue through various platforms and events. The office also produces education material for upper levels. This year it celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament has a vast experience when it comes to organizing both small and big debating events on EU-related issues, often in cooperation with the Danish government. These regularly held parliamentary events are supplied by numerous citizens meetings in other fora, where MP's and MEP's participate.

An example of a parliamentary event is the so-called citizens' hearings or 'deliberative polls', which the committee has organized a number of times, for instance in connection with national referenda. The last time such a hearing was organized was in 2018 as part of the Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe. This was realized through an additional allocation from the government to Parliament that included hearings in the capital and around the country.

For these citizens' hearings a representative group of 400 people were invited over a weekend to discuss the above mentioned questions with a broad selection of politicians. The sample was selected by a polling institute to ensure that it generally reflected the composition of the Danish population. It is imperative that the entire set-up is run in a non-biased manner with regard to the subjects in question.

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Before and after the hearings, the participants responded to a questionnaire with a series of key questions regarding the theme of the hearing. These show if and in which direction participants have changed their opinions.

To ensure the linkage to the European level, Members of the Danish Parliament meet 6-8 times a year with Danish MEP's for an informal exchange of views on matters of common interest. This common forum has proved to be well suited for an exchange of views regarding issues of concern to our citizens.