



first aid  
democracy  
toolkit

# European Elections Dystopia

To: *Civil society  
organisations*

Your guide to improving  
EU democracy ahead  
of the 2024 European  
Parliament elections



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## WHAT IS CROWDSOURCING?

Crowdsourcing is a digital democracy tool that harnesses the collective 'wisdom of the crowd' to address public policy challenges. As an e-participation instrument, digital crowdsourcing promises to bolster representative democracy by facilitating direct citizen engagement in decision-making. This method has the potential to generate policy perspectives that better resonate with citizens' concerns, thus reaffirming a fundamental democratic principle: not merely hearing citizens but actively incorporating their input in the formulation of public policies that impact them.

## WHAT WAS THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS DYSTOPIA?

In 2023, ECAS implemented the European Elections Dystopia crowdsourcing process in all 27 Member States, which challenged EU citizens to imagine fictional dystopia scenarios that could highlight vulnerabilities that the EU democratic system might face under extreme circumstances. From a starting point of 'creative destruction' and an approach of gamification, participants were encouraged to share their fears and start thinking about their actions to finally end with possible solutions to avoid their worst nightmares for Europe. This crowdsourcing process was carried out online via ECAS's own Crowdsourcing Platform, and workshops were implemented in person, online, or hybrid format by our civil society partners across the EU.

## WHAT THIS PROCESS ACHIEVED:

- ✓ Engage citizens in reflecting on the future of EU democracy, especially in the context of the upcoming 2024 European Parliament elections
- ✓ Identify solutions to improve the electoral process and functioning of the European Parliament
- ✓ Raise awareness among citizens about the upcoming elections
- ✓ Inform EU policymakers about the preferences of EU citizens regarding specific policy priorities

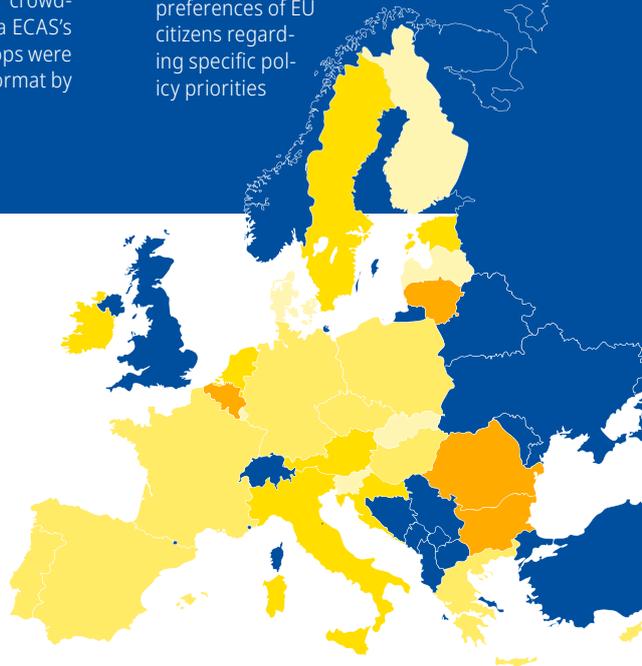
## HOW MANY PEOPLE PARTICIPATED, AND FROM WHERE?

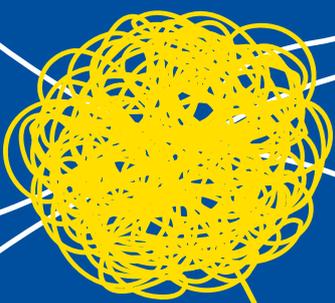
Total number of contributions:  
**1,435**

Number of contributions via online crowdsourcing:  
**665**

Number of contributions via workshops:  
**770**

Participants per country: **1**  **169**





**WHAT ARE  
CITIZENS  
CONCERNED ABOUT?**

**CONFLICT**

Citizens worry about the potential for a large-scale conflict, particularly fearing World War III or involvement in nearby conflicts like the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

**EXTREMISM**

Citizens worry about how the prevalence of extremist parties in the European Parliament can lead to political gridlock and impact the efficiency of the decision-making process.

**NATIONALISM**

Citizens worry about how far-right MEPs will advocate for nationalist agendas and policies that may challenge the EU's inclusive and cooperative principles, thus deviating from the values that unite EU citizens.

**UNFAIR ELECTIONS**

Citizens worry about manipulation, electoral fraud, and disinformation impacting the upcoming elections. Particularly in the context of advancing digital technologies, citizens raised concerns about the electoral system's susceptibility to external manipulative forces.

**POPULISM**

Citizens worry about democratic backsliding as populist leaders seek to consolidate power, limit the independence of democratic institutions, and curtail the rights and freedoms of specific population segments.

**UNEQUAL REPRESENTATION**

Citizens worry that low voter turnout may result in a European Parliament failing to adequately represent the general population's interests, characterised by skewed representation and diminished legitimacy of elected officials.

**Citizens expressed concerns regarding the upcoming 2024 European Parliament elections, highlighting the potential risks and challenges that could shape the future of the EU.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the main messages of this crowdsourcing process is that, while citizens believe that some threats to EU democracy are out of their control, they also think that certain unfavourable situations can be prevented if they actively engage in the upcoming European elections. By the end of the crowdsourcing activity, citizens reached real decisions about what they could do (or stop doing) to prevent their 'European Dystopia' from becoming a reality. Citizens also reflected on what they think EU decision-makers and civil society organisations should prioritise before and after the European elections in 2024.

- 1 Enhance civic education:** Develop educational programmes and initiatives to ensure citizens comprehensively understand the electoral process, candidates, and policy issues.
- 2 Conduct workshops and awareness campaigns to **enhance digital literacy**,** helping citizens navigate online information responsibly and critically evaluate sources.
- 3 Commit to fact-checking and countering disinformation campaigns.** Provide accurate information that is readily available and easy for citizens to understand.
- 4 Advocate for transparency in election processes,** pressuring authorities to provide clear information on registration, voting procedures, and candidate selection.

### 5 Work together with decision-makers to...

- Develop and implement awareness campaigns with more concrete and unbiased information about the EU, including what it can do (and does) for citizens and their countries and regions, what it means to be a citizen of the EU, and the advantages of being part of the EU.
- Develop and implement educational initiatives aimed at helping voters understand the consequences of their votes. This can be done, for example, through an online voting simulation to explain the implications of electoral programmes for each political party and potential coalition.
- Address Euroscepticism by actively monitoring and counteracting anti-EU rhetoric on digital platforms by disseminating accurate and objective information about the EU's policies, achievements, and challenges.