



The Conference on the Future of Europe

Austrian events, contributions, topics and ideas (2020–2022)

Who and How?

At national level, activities regarding the Conference on the Future of Europe started already in June 2020—almost one year before its launch at EU level on 9 May 2021.

Debates on the future of Europe were and are organised on federal, regional and local level in various formats. Also civil society, social partners, other organisations and citizens themselves were and are organizing a multitude of events.

Since 9 May 2021, the dedicated national website "Unser Europa. Unsere Zukunft" (eu-zukunftskonferenz.at) offers information about the Conference and allows citizens to ask further questions via a dedicated e-mailbox. A specific website calendar informs about events in Austria. Another section provides news updates concerning the Conference on a weekly basis.

We share content regarding the Conference also on the social media outlets of the Austrian Federal Chancellery and of the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution—with a focus on Facebook and Instagram. Austria has also created a special logo (see left below) for the national process of the Conference. This logo is available for use to the participants in addition to the official Conference logo.

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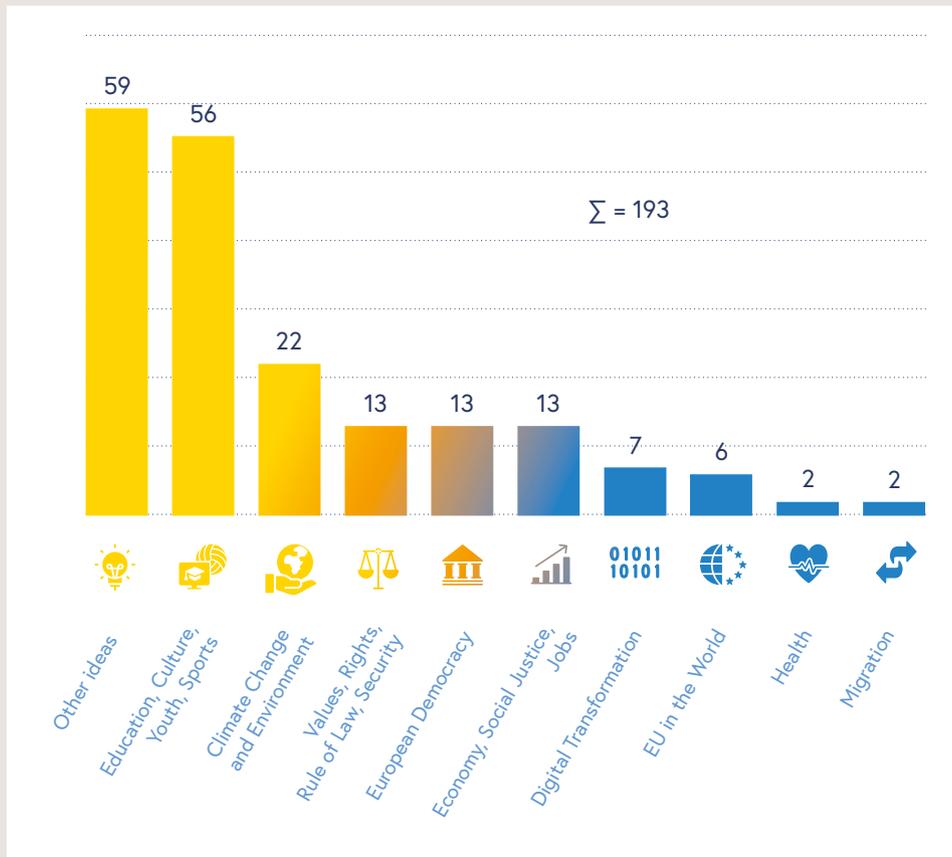
Conference
on the **Future**
of **Europe**

Overall result:

Austrians care about the EU's future!—There is a high willingness in Austria to discuss and reflect on **“a better and stronger”** Europe acting in unity.

Events—overview

Events registered on the Austrian website (eu-zukunftskonferenz.at)



Events related to the Conference on the Future of Europe since 9 May 2021 registered on the Austrian Events-Website:

- 2021: May: 20 | June: 24 | July: 29 | August: 9 | September: 36 | October: 18 | November: 25 | December: 12 | $\Sigma = 173$
- 2022: January: 5 | February: 7 | March: 5 | April: 1 | May: 2 | $\Sigma = 20$

Since the beginning of the Conference on average one event every 2nd day, including

- 8 events with EU-Councillors at local level
- **56 youth events** (= more than 1/3 of events within 9 thematic blocks, excluding "other ideas")

Data and Facts: concrete topics of interest

According to a recent survey for Austria by the Austrian Society for European Politics (ÖGfE)¹ :

- 63 % of participants feel that curbing the Corona-pandemic and its consequences is of high priority for the EU,
- 62 % consider climate change and the protection of the environment of high priority,
- 56 % see an important need to reduce the gap between rich and poor,
- 55 % rank a uniform EU policy on migration and asylum as crucial,
- 44 % consider strengthening democracy at EU-level as key.

In the Special Eurobarometer 517 “Future of Europe”², participants in Austria stated that climate change and the environment (46 %) and health (38 %) were the most important topics regarding the future of Europe. Other topics of high importance to respondents were a stronger economy, social justice and jobs (35 %), migration (31 %), values and rights, rule of law and security (30 %).

The Kantar country-specific report³ showed that the highest number of contributions (events, ideas, comments) in Austria was recorded on the topic European democracy (239), followed by climate change and the environment (209), digital transformation (165), other ideas (128), the EU in the world (109), stronger economy, social justice and jobs (108). There were fewer contributions on values and rights, rule of law, security (83), education, culture, youth and sport (76), migration (64) and health (58).

Citizens’ ideas sent to the Conference e-mailbox (eu-zukunftskonferenz@bka.gv.at): Most ideas concerned climate change, followed by—ex aequo—EU in the world, democracy and migration.

1 Representation of the European Commission in Austria in Cooperation with ÖGfE, Auf EU-Zukunftstour durch Österreich—Europa im Gespräch, p.47, December 2021, fieldwork between 8 June and 5 October 2021.

2 Factsheet Austria, p.6, January 2022, fieldwork between 16 September and 17 October 2021.

3 Kantar Public, Contributions per Member State on the Multilingual Digital Platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe, November 2021. Fieldwork between 19 April and 03 November 2021.

Contributions on the Digital Platform⁴

- Austria is one of the Member States with the highest number of contributions (ideas, comments, events) to the Digital platform. With 140 contributions per one million inhabitants, Austria ranks fifth among EU Member States. In terms of total contributions (1.239) Austria ranks sixth.
- Contributions from Austria consisted of 732 comments, 404 ideas and 103 events.
- 82% of the contributors identified themselves as male, only 11% identified themselves as female (no gender information provided by the remaining 7%).
- The most active age group on the platform were 25–39-year-olds.
- Professional workers (26%), manual workers and managers (both 16%) were most active on the platform.
- People with higher education account for 59% of contributions, people with basic or upper secondary education account for 20%, while only 6% of contributions stem from people still studying (15% no answer).

4 Kantar Public, Contributions per Member State on the Multilingual Digital Platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe, November 2021. Fieldwork between 19 April and 03 November 2021.

Selection of flagship events

- In Austria, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution started the national discussion process on the future of Europe as early as June 2020. Between June and September 2020, she travelled to all Austrian regions during her “Bundesländer-Tour/Tour des régions” where she held “**Austria dialogues**” (“**Österreich Dialoge**”) and met local and regional politicians, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders.
- The formal launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe in Austria took place on 9 May 2021 in the framework of the “**Digital Europe Day 2021**”. It comprised of a meeting of EU 27 Heads of Mission, a videoconference with representatives of the regional governments, a videoconference with EU Local Councillors, Mayors and the Association of Municipalities, a dialogue with stakeholders and a meeting with pupils.
- Upon Austrian initiative, on 2 September 2021 at the European Forum Alpbach, Ministers and State Secretaries responsible for European Affairs of Austria, Hungary, Ireland, Greece and Spain, later joined by Cyprus and the Czechia, signed the “**Alpbach Declaration on the Future of Europe**”. The declaration reaffirms the importance of the Conference and the need to strive for tangible results. It calls on European citizens, especially young people, to participate.
- On a regular basis, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution invites Austrian “**EU-Councillors**” (“**Europagemeinderätinnen und -gemeinderäte**”) for an exchange of views on EU-topics, including the future of Europe (“**Europa-Sprechstunde**”). The meetings not only touch upon current events regarding the EU but also aim at entering into an informal dialogue with regional representatives and listening to concerns of citizens in order to bring them forward to the European level.
- The discussion series “**Future Labs**” (“**Zukunftslabore**”) offered room for an exchange of views between the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution and experts, entrepreneurs, representatives of companies and young people. It addressed various topics, such as industrial policy, climate change, data security, migration, location policy for creative people, capital markets, innovation and entrepreneurship, female founders.

The following discussions took place:

- Strategic industrial location Europe on 12 May 2021
 - Climate Change and Innovation on 17 May 2021
 - Security in a common European data room on 2 June 2021
 - Exchange with adolescents and young adults on 9 June 2021
 - Climate change as a worldwide challenge on 21 July 2021
 - Creative location Europe on 29 September 2021
 - EU in the world on 6 October 2021
 - Monetary policy and capital market on 24 November 2021
 - Europe as a centre for innovation and entrepreneurship—what is needed? on 19 January 2022
 - Strong women for Europe—perspectives from businesses on 26 January 2022
 - Womens’ policies in the EU on 8 March 2022
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- On 16 October 2021, a **“Future-Hike” (“Zukunftswanderung”)** on Gaisberg was organized by Europe Direct Land Salzburg. More than 70 citizens joined the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution, Martin Selmayr, Head of the Commission Representation in Austria, and Paul Schmidt, Secretary General of ÖGfE, for a direct and personal exchange on the future of the EU. Participants discussed a variety of issues ranging from climate change and migration towards very concrete topics such as the EU-Forest Strategy, the exchange of medical staff in the EU and online hate.
 - The “Future-Hike” was only one stop of Martin Selmayr’s and Paul Schmidt’s **“EU-Future-Tour” (“EU-Zukunftstour”)**, in the course of which they are visiting the Austrian regions in order to enter into direct contact with citizens.
 - In the context of the Conference of the Future of the EU, also the Platform **“Citizens Forum Europe” (“BürgerInnen Forum Europa”)** and its chairman Othmar Karas, First Vice President of the European Parliament, organizes “citizens dialogues” (“BürgerInnen Dialoge”). One of these events took place on 26 November 2021 in Innsbruck, Tyrol, where also representatives of the government of South Tyrol and of the autonomous province of Trient participated.

- On 8 October 2021, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution visited the **Greek Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miltiadis Varvitsiotis in Athens**, where they held a discussion with postgraduate **students** from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Panteion University (“**Let’s listen to the future**”). The major issues of concern to the participating students were migration, European security policies, EU enlargement towards the Western Balkans, challenges in the Southeastern Mediterranean, the EU’s economic competitiveness and the climate crisis.
- During the work visit to **Poland** by the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution on 14 February 2022, she met students on the campus of the College of Europe in Natolin under the motto “**European Union, quo vadis?**”. Points of discussion raised by students particularly focused on strengthening the rule of law, on the crisis in Ukraine and on Austria’s respective role.
- Austria attaches special importance to the involvement of the **younger generation**. Therefore on 17 November 2021, the Austria Federal Chancellery, in cooperation with the Federal Youth Representation, organized the „**Young Conference on the Future of Europe**“, hosted by the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution. More than 100 young people between 16 and 30 shared their ideas and impulses for a better Europe. The results were debated with the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution and the Federal Minister for Women, Family, Integration and Media and brought forward to the Conference on the Future of Europe. The young participants especially expressed interest in the topics **climate change and environment**. Two groups worked on ideas such as an EU-wide “CO₂-traffic light system“ for product labelling, awareness-raising, knowledge transfer and climate friendly transport. Other ideas focused on **education**—upgrading professional apprenticeship (berufliche Lehre) in the EU, more support for programs such as Erasmus+ and more political education in schools. Young people pleaded for **strengthening of the European Parliament** and the **European citizens’ initiative**. They expressed special concern for **mental health**, a topic, they argued, often overlooked within the debate about the pandemic. They concluded that the EU should provide more financial means. Further discussions focused on **digitalisation** (“online hate”, “digital divide”) and the role of the **EU in the world**.
- Also other national events aim directly at young people and pupils. For example, the “**democracy workshop**” („**Demokratiewerkstatt**“) organized by the **Austrian Parliament**, held a series of five workshops related to the Conference on the Future of Europe, where **young people** could meet Members of Parliament. School classes could present their ideas on the nine topics of the Conference.

- At the **“Salzburg Europe Summit“** on 26 September 2021, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution discussed EU enlargement to the **Western Balkans** with five high level representatives of the countries of the Western Balkans and the Regional Cooperation Council. Participants stated that the European perspective must remain a priority and rank high on the political agenda.
- The **Austrian Parliament** and the **French Parliament** organized two events on **“The Future of Europe from the point of view of the youth from the Western Balkans”** (28 October and 9 December 2021). These events offered an exchange of views between young people from Austria, France and six Western Balkan States as well as Austrian and French Members of Parliament. Topics of particular importance for young people from the Western Balkans were mobility, education and employment. The Members of Parliament underlined the importance of concrete measures in order to ensure a credible European perspective.

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