

# EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANEL ON PREPAREDNESS

## Information Kit

*150 randomly selected citizens  
from across the EU discuss  
population preparedness*



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# EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANEL

New European Budget



European Citizens' Panel  
on a new EU Budget fit  
for our ambitions

# 1/ Introduction

A warm welcome to the European Citizens' Panel on Preparedness. Thank you for joining us. We hope you will find this experience enjoyable, inspiring and meaningful! By accepting the European Commission's invitation, you are taking part in a special journey. Since 2021, close to 2 000 people from across Europe have joined similar European Citizens' Panels. They have shared their views and helped shape EU policies. Now, it is your turn!

You are one of 150 randomly selected citizens from all 27 European Union (EU) Member States to discuss the crucial topic of **population preparedness**. You will do so by engaging with experts and other citizens during three sessions in Spring 2026.

You are just about to start an important journey: a citizens' discussion about being prepared for crises. By a crises, we mean serious events that can disrupt communities and make everyday life difficult for many people. This includes extreme weather, pandemics, prolonged power outages, cyberattacks, or hybrid threats. Being prepared means taking action before something happens.

Together, you will think about how Europe and its population can better expect, prepare for, respond to, and recover from different kinds of crises.

## WHO IS ORGANISING THIS PANEL?

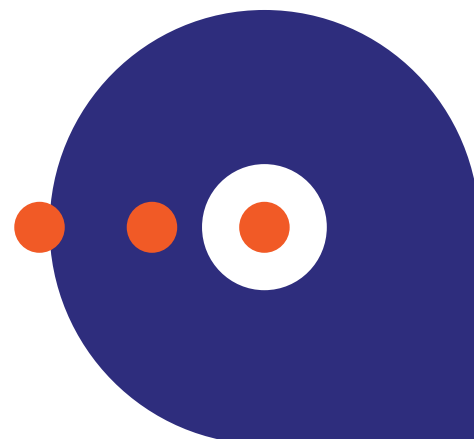
The European Citizens' Panel on Preparedness is organised by the **European Commission**. The Commission is the EU institution that proposes new laws and makes sure existing ones are followed. It deals with the EU's daily work – like running programmes and managing the budget. It works to improve life in Europe in areas such as trade, the environment and fair competition. It also supports the EU Member States in their national efforts to strengthen administration, education and health systems, and to ensure that Europe is ready to face different crises together.

One of the initiatives that aims to strengthen Europe's resilience is the [EU Preparedness Union Strategy](#) presented by the European Commission in March 2025. The Strategy depends on local organisations and citizens to become active participants in building collective resilience to ongoing and future crises.

Many activities proposed by the Strategy still need to be developed. Your recommendations and suggestions will contribute to shaping some of those activities and ensuring that they are inclusive, effective and aligned with the needs of all citizens. Together with other participants, you will help shape the future of EU preparedness.

This 'Information Kit' will help guide you step by step. It is divided into three parts.

- **The process:** What are European Citizens' Panels?
- **The task:** What will you be working on?
- **The topic:** What do you need to know about preparedness?



# 2/ The process

## WHAT ARE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANELS?

European Citizens' Panels bring together 150 randomly selected participants from all 27 EU Member States to discuss upcoming initiatives important for the EU's future. Now, it is your turn. You will join 149 other participants, selected to reflect the diversity of EU citizens – for example in terms of their age, gender, or nationality. One in three panellists will be under the age of 29. Together, you will form the European Citizens' Panel on Preparedness.

The Citizens' Panels on the European level were created for the first time during the 2021–2022 Conference on the Future of Europe. The Conference showed how valuable citizens' input can be, and the 800 randomly selected citizens asked for more ways to be involved in EU decision-making. In response, the Commission made the Citizens' Panels a regular part of European policymaking. Since then, citizens have worked on topics such as [food waste](#), [shaping virtual worlds](#), [fostering learning mobility](#), [energy efficiency](#), [tackling hatred in society](#), the [EU's long-term budget](#) and [intergenerational fairness](#).

## HOW WILL THIS EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANEL ON PREPAREDNESS WORK?

The Panel combines collaborative work in **small groups** (of around 12 people each) and in **larger sessions** where everyone comes together (called 'plenaries'). In the small groups, you will explore different aspects of the topic of preparedness in more detail, exchange views and draft ideas for the final recommendations. In the plenaries, you will be able to share your thoughts, listen to each other as well as to experts, and give feedback on the ideas of the other small groups. At the end of the process, the recommendations will be agreed by the entire panel. The European Commission will then take the recommendations into consideration when implementing the EU Preparedness Union Strategy.

You will be able to speak in the EU language you are most comfortable with, as professional interpreters will ensure that everyone understands each other in all 24 official EU languages.



You will also be supported by:

- **Experts** from the '**Knowledge Committee**', who will be able to answer your questions, explain the topic and provide background information – both on preparedness and on EU procedures. You will also exchange with other diverse speakers who may come from civil society, business associations, EU institutions or academia.
- **Facilitators**, who will help the small group sessions run smoothly and make sure everyone can speak and be heard. They will also provide you with a range of tools for collaborative work and collective decision-making.
- **Organising team**: If you require any assistance, have any questions or difficulties with the way things are going, or notice something that should not happen, please do not hesitate to speak to the **inclusion officer**.
- **European Commission staff**, who will listen to your discussions and try to integrate your recommendations in their work on the implementation of the EU Preparedness Union Strategy.

Some **observers** – such as academic researchers – may follow your sessions but will not take part in the discussions. **Journalists and media** might also ask to interview you to share your experiences with the wider public, but this is voluntary, and you won't have to take part in any interview if you do not wish to do so.



You will meet with the other participants three times: twice in-person in Brussels (Belgium) and once online.

- Session 1:  
**20-22 March 2026 (in Brussels)**
- Session 2:  
**24-26 April 2026 (online via a video conference tool)**
- Session 3:  
**22-24 May 2026 (in Brussels)**

Please respect the timing of the meetings and ensure that you are present for each part of the programme. All your questions regarding travel, hotels, and catering, as well as any organisational matters will be handled and answered by the event team. You can contact the team at [info@futureu.events](mailto:info@futureu.events). If you have any practical problems, our support team will help. If you have any medical needs, please let us know immediately – support will be available on site or through your hotel reception. If you have accessibility or support needs, you can bring an accompanying person to assist you during the Panel. If you are a minor, you will have to be accompanied. However, only the randomly selected citizens can take part in the Panel discussions. **Accompanying persons** are welcome to join as observers and attend social meetings.

Each evening (Thursday, Friday, Saturday), we will organise informal social events like dinners or receptions. These will be a great opportunity to meet other participants from all over the EU. Participation in these events is voluntary, but we warmly encourage you to join!

In addition to the Panel, we are also running an online debate on the [Citizens' Engagement Platform](#), which is open to any European citizen who would like to share their ideas about the topic of preparedness. Please feel free to inform your family, friends and colleagues to join this conversation and share their perspective online.

You are also welcome to communicate about your experience in the Panel on social media. Just make sure not to share other participants' personal details or views, and please respect everyone's privacy. You are welcome to use [#EuropeanCitizenPanel](#), [#EuropeanUnion](#), [#EUhaveyoursay](#), and [#EuropeanCommission](#) to tag your social media posts.

# 3/ The task

## WHAT WILL YOU BE WORKING ON?

Europe is currently experiencing a period of overlapping crises, including a recent pandemic, floods and wildfires, blackouts, cyberattacks, and geopolitical threats. These crises have contributed to a pervasive sense of insecurity among citizens.

As we are facing more intense and more frequent crises than ever, it is crucial that the EU and Europeans are sufficiently prepared for, and adapted to what might come, and able to respond effectively.

**Preparedness is about anticipating crises and taking practical steps before disasters strike.** It involves learning about possible risks, taking actions early, and working together to mitigate their impacts.

Citizens play an essential role in building resilient societies. Building a safer tomorrow requires all of us to become active participants in crisis readiness and response, and this

involvement must reach all parts of society. This is part of an approach called 'population preparedness' where everyone is aware of what can be done and prepared to act swiftly in the event of a crisis. And it is part of the [EU Preparedness Union Strategy](#) for which the European Commission is seeking your advice on how it can be put into practice among the European population. **Preparedness is a collective responsibility.** Public authorities, media, education, training and cultural institutions, youth and civil society organisations, businesses, local networks and communities, and individuals of all ages – they **all play a vital role.**

In the first half of 2025, the European Commission adopted the [EU Preparedness Union Strategy](#). It was a result of efforts undertaken at the European level – by the EU and its Member States – to change the way we think about prevention, preparedness and response. Most importantly, the strategy recognises that raising awareness and empowering everyone, including citizens, to engage in both individual and collective preparedness is crucial.



## YOUR ROLE

Your role as a member of the Panel is to share your experience, ideas and views on population preparedness, and to help generate input that could be taken on board by the EU when implementing the EU Preparedness Union Strategy at both European and local levels.

You are invited to discuss and answer the following main questions:

1. **How can all European citizens be engaged, empowered and better prepared for crises?**
2. **How do we ensure that the actions and initiatives of the EU Preparedness Union Strategy are inclusive, effective, and respond to the needs of all citizens?**

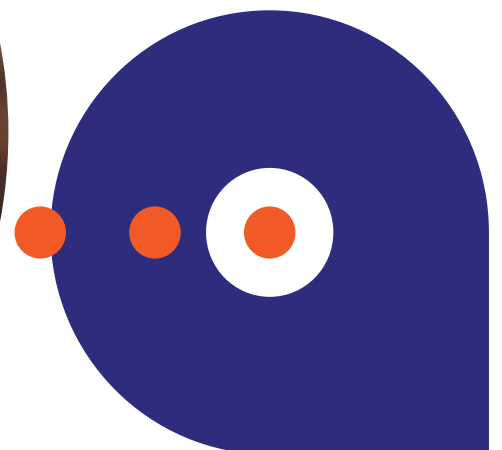
You will reflect on the guiding questions alongside fellow members of the Panel, with the support of experts and facilitators during the three sessions.

**SESSION 1:** Together with the other participants, you will begin by learning about preparedness efforts at local, national, and European levels. This will help you **develop a common understanding of population preparedness** and the scope of the Citizens' Panel. You will identify various challenges as well as opportunities and potential areas of action where we can improve our individual and collective readiness to face different crises in the future.

**SESSION 2:** You will start working on **suggestions and innovative solutions** on how to enhance preparedness in your communities and beyond. You will hear from experts, researchers and creative thinkers, and then work in groups to develop specific ideas and proposals.

**SESSION 3:** You will refine and finalise your ideas and proposals. Eventually, they will become the **final recommendations** addressed to the European Commission. The recommendations will be voted on and adopted at the end of this final session.

By the end of the Panel, your collective vision, priorities and recommendations will support ongoing reflections on the implementation of the EU Preparedness Union Strategy. They will help the EU and its Member States to design actions that address citizens' needs and are inclusive, meaningful and effective. The European Commission will also publish a final report of this European Citizens' Panel – it will include a summary of the discussions and all recommendations as proposed by you and the other 149 EU citizens.



# 4/ The topic

Crises can happen at any time, from floods and heatwaves to power outages and pandemics. How well we cope with them depends on how well we prepare beforehand.

## A) What is preparedness?

Preparedness is about building the ability of people, communities, businesses, and governments to respond and recover together when something unexpected happens.

Preparedness is about:

- **Engaging and taking responsibility:** The security and safety of a society is a shared responsibility in which each person plays a role. Everyone contributes according to their abilities - from local and national governments, media, schools, civil society and private businesses to local networks and individual citizens, young and old alike.
- **Risk awareness:** This means learning about possible risks, how they can impact society and its citizens, and the importance of working together to minimise their effects. It also involves mental crisis preparedness: recognising that a crisis can happen, knowing you can influence your own safety, and trusting your ability to cope during a crisis (**self-efficacy**). It is closely linked to **resilience**, which is the ability to respond effectively, to adapt and to recover quickly when emergencies or disasters occur.

- **Taking practical steps before a crisis strikes:** This can include knowing where to find information and how to stay informed, learning about local emergency plans, keeping an emergency kit in order to be self-sufficient for 72 hours, taking a first aid course, getting to know your neighbours, or engaging in local community networks, for example through volunteering.

## B) What aspects does preparedness cover?

You are invited to discuss the broad field of preparedness on different levels in society, but especially the ones that focus on population preparedness for different crises, like:

- **Natural hazards:** floods, wildfires, earthquakes, extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change and health threats such as infectious diseases and pandemics.
- **Human-induced disasters:** industrial accidents, technological failures, CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear).
- **Hybrid threats:** cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns as well as Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), and sabotage of critical infrastructure.
- **Geopolitical crises:** armed conflicts, including the possibility of armed aggression against Member States.

You can look at population preparedness from three key angles:

1. **Your own and your household's** preparedness for crisis.
2. **Your local community's** (like family, friends, neighbours, civil society) preparedness for crisis.
3. Support from and collaboration with **local and national authorities**.



## C) What is the EU Preparedness Union Strategy?

The [EU Preparedness Union Strategy](#) is Europe's plan to make sure that everyone – governments, communities, and citizens – is better prepared for crises. The idea is to help Europe to be ready to respond quickly and effectively if needed. It is built around three main ideas:

### 1. An integrated all-hazard approach

Instead of preparing separately for each possible disaster, the strategy looks at **how to be ready for all kinds of hazards**. This makes preparedness more flexible and efficient.

### 2. A whole-of-society approach

Crises can have far reaching consequences. Preparedness is not only a job for firefighters, ambulance drivers or health professionals and emergency services. It involves **everyone**: private businesses, local governments, communities, and all citizens.

### 3. A whole-of-government approach

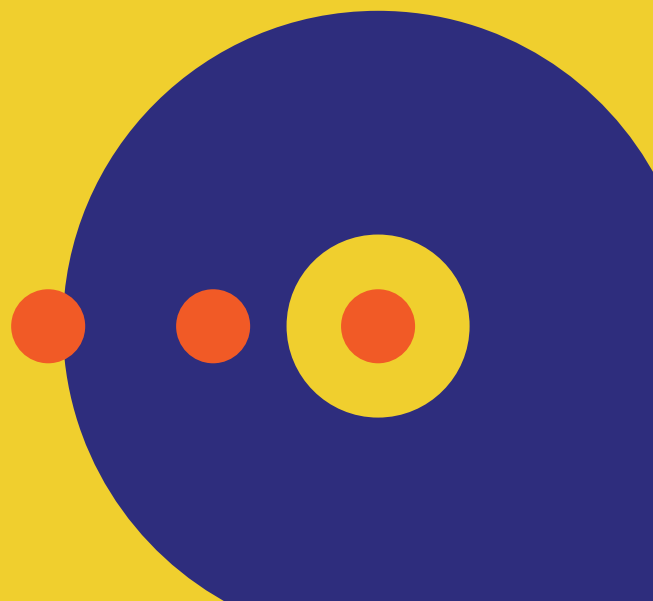
Different levels of government, from local to national, are encouraged to work together and **be prepared to mobilise across society**.

## D) What are potential impacts and trade-offs?

Some preparedness actions involve complex choices. They require balancing different factors, such as competing interests, limited resources, or potential tensions between different values. In some cases, there is no single 'right' solution, but rather a need to carefully weigh trade-offs and priorities. It is also important to adapt preparedness to individual needs and circumstances.

What needs to be considered is:

- How should public authorities communicate about risks and preparedness?
- How would you react if you would be asked to ensure the safety of your family and your community?
- How can we consider national and cultural sensitivities that influence people's capability to make efforts for better preparedness?



## E) What needs to be discussed?

To help you to take part in the discussion, think about these questions:

### 1. Individual and community preparedness:

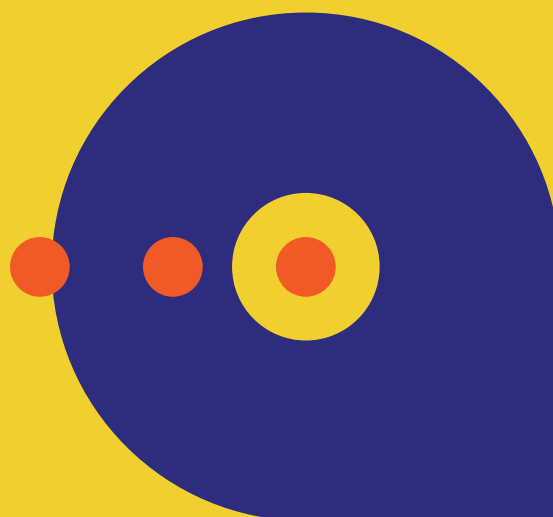
- What do you and the people around you need to know and to do to be prepared?
- What kind of information from authorities do you expect to have to support you to be prepared to react to crises (e.g. clear checklist for emergencies, alert systems via sirens, etc.)?
- Which stakeholders and areas of society need to be involved in different crisis scenarios (e.g. a health crisis or flooding)?
- What are the common challenges that prevent you and others from being prepared, and how can these be overcome?
- Do you know how to prepare an emergency supply kit at home to cope for at least 72 hours without electricity, water or other societal services?
- What can and should you do to enhance the preparedness and security of others in your community?
- What personal efforts are you willing to make to be better prepared?
- How can preparedness become a natural part of people's daily life? How can we encourage a culture of preparedness?

### 2. Communication and trust building:

- How can we encourage collaboration between citizens, governments, and local authorities to enhance preparedness?
- How can emergency information be made accessible and clear for all, including at-risk groups (e.g. people with disabilities, non-native speakers, children, older persons)?
- How can preparedness protect those in poverty or social exclusion who need extra or collective support?
- How should public authorities communicate about risks and preparedness in a way that makes you trust them?
- How should misinformation and disinformation be addressed while respecting freedom of information?
- How can we ensure information from the risk you encounter reaches the decision-makers?

### 3. Education and capacity building:

- Do you need to have the knowledge and skills to act as a first-line responder?
- What do you, your family and your friends need from local authorities to be prepared?
- How can citizens and local communities work together with experts to anticipate future crises, so that preparedness plans address emerging risks and not only disasters that have already occurred?
- How should citizens and communities be involved in the design of essential services and infrastructure (such as water, energy or health) to ensure they remain functional during extreme climate events?
- What are the best ways to integrate preparedness training into school curricula, youth programs and lifelong learning?



# 5/ Additional resources

Do you want to explore the topic further? Below you will be able to find a list of resources that the European Commission, as well as external experts from the Knowledge Committee, have selected for you. You do not have to read or watch all (or even any) of them - but if you are curious to learn more, they can serve as an easy, accessible and helpful introduction to the topic.

## LIST OF SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

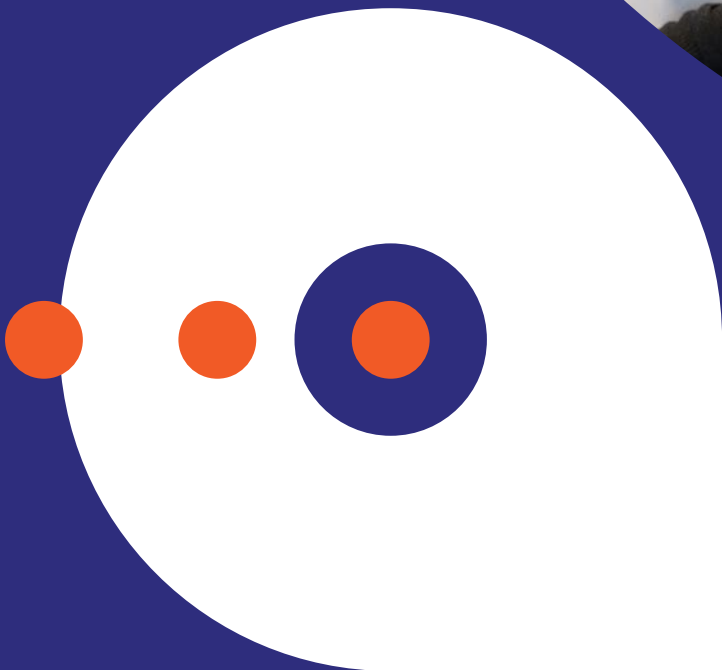
- **EU Preparedness Union Strategy**, including more background information, factsheets and strategy approaches – available in different languages
- **Disability-inclusive humanitarian action - Guidelines, tools & resources**
- **preparEU Pilot Project**, Recommendations for coordinated and inclusive actions to enhance population resilience across the EU
- **Eurobarometer Disaster risk awareness and preparedness** of the EU population
- **Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network** (includes a Library with a preparedness section with **National Preparedness guides for citizens (in English): Connect. Share. Grow.** | UCP Knowledge Network)
- **Video Convergence: Courage in a Crisis**
- **Video Cooked Survival by Zip Code (Trailer)**
- **Prevention, preparedness and response planning for health crises**
- **Medical Countermeasures Strategy - Public Health - European Commission**

## IF YOU WANT TO GO EVEN FURTHER:

- **Report by Sauli Niinistö**: Safer Together – Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness









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