European Citizens' Panel on Virtual Worlds

Session 1

24.02.2023-26.02.2023

European Citizens' Panel
Virtual worlds
Have Your Say

1. Overview

The European Citizens' Panel on Virtual Worlds consists of 150 randomly selected citizens and meets for three sessions. The first session took place from 24-26 February 2023 in Brussels and introduced the topic as well as the context of the panel. Citizens got to know each other and started to explore the topic through an exercise focused on their experience of "the digital". They, then, built a vision of what desirable and fair virtual worlds should be like (utopia) and should not be like (dystopia). Citizens also gathered key questions allowing them to better grasp the topic.

Day 1 (Friday)

Due to the 24th of February marking the day of one year of the invasion of the Ukraine by Russia, the panel started with a moment dedicated to voices from 5 citizens from Ukraine sharing their personal experience of the past year. The moment was officially opened by Vice-President of the European Commission Dubravka Šuica.

Citizens were, then, welcomed by the main moderators and by European Commission representatives: Director-General for Communication Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen and Director of Data in DG CONNECT Yvo Volman who gave an overview of the frame of the panel. To further introduce the citizens to the following discussions, Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, Deputy Head of Unit, Citizens´ Dialogues Unit, European Commission, shortly introduced the EU institutions, as well as the decision-making and legislative process. After that, Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak, Head of Unit, DG CONNECT, European Commission, introduced the topic of Virtual Worlds in more details.

After this common plenary, half of the citizens visited an exhibition where they could learn more and experience concrete examples and use cases of the virtual worlds. The other half reflected on the most important events, memories, news connected to "the digital" in the last 30 years in their personal life, but also for European societies in general through an exercise, where they created a common timeline. Resources persons from Academia and Policy were present to react to the timeline and offer a broad overview from their perspective.

Day 2 (Saturday)

On Saturday, citizens worked in 12 parallel working groups, with simultaneous interpretation, and facilitated by experienced facilitators. During the first slot of the day, group discussions focused on the past experiences of the citizens related to the digital and virtual worlds. The citizens were able to discuss the perception, fears and hopes on this topic.

After the lunch break, citizens started to work on their visions for the future of the virtual worlds. To do so, they first imagined the European Virtual Worlds of 2050 and its positive and negative impacts on the different aspects of the citizens' life. At the end of the day, they represented this vision of the future Virtual Worlds, by creating two collages representing the dystopian vision and the utopian vision of this future.

Day 3 (Sunday)

On Sunday morning, the group reflected on their vision. They also discussed about what knowledge they would need to develop solid recommendations for the European Commission.

After a coffee break, all citizens came back in the plenary where 3 randomly selected groups presented their vision to all. Then, a group of comedians reacted on the big topics discussed by citizens and the

Knowledge committee members responded to the question asked by citizens during the subgroup discussions. Final remarks and a farewell were given by the main moderators.

2. Short agenda

Friday 24 February PLENARY	
02:30pm – 03.00pm	Welcoming words by Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica. Marking one year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine
03.00pm – 03.30pm	Introductory speeches to the Citizens' Panel by: Director-General for Communication, Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen Director of Data in DG CONNECT, Yvo Volman.
03:30pm – 04:00pm	Introduction to the Panel's topic
04:00pm - 04:30pm	Coffee break
04:30pm – 07:00pm	Work in plenary (Gasperi) and exhibition (Visitor Center) in parallel Half of the participants stay in plenary; the other half go through the exhibition. The groups switch after an hour.

Saturday 25 February WORKING GROUPS	
09:30am – 11:00pm	Reflections and sharing experiences
11:00am – 11:30am	Coffee break
11:00am – 12:30pm	Virtual Worlds: What we know
12:30pm – 02:15pm	Lunch break
02:15pm – 03:45pm	Developing visions
03:45pm – 04:15pm	Coffee break
04:30pm – 06:00pm	Developing visions

Sunday 26 February PLENARY	
09:15am – 10:15am	Working groups: gathering questions
10:15am – 11:15am	Coffee break and transfer of all the groups to Charlemagne
11:15am – 11:45am	Plenary: Presentation of visions from the groups
11:45am – 13:15pm	Plenary: Discussion round and Theater
13:15pm – 13:45pm	Hyperfair platform presentation and wrap up

3. List of resource persons involved

Throughout the first session, the following speakers participated:

European Commission:

1. **Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul,** Deputy Head of Unit, Citizens´ Dialogues Unit, European Commission
2. **Rehana SCHWINNINGER-LADAK**, European Commission, Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, Luxembourg

External:

1. **Fabien BÉNÉTOU,** Independent WebXR expert, Belgium
2. **Cathrine HASSE,** University of Aarhus, Department of Education, Denmark
3. **Franck STEINICKE,** University of Hamburg, Department of Informatics, Germany
4. **Mariëtte VAN HUIJSTEE,** Rathenau Institute, The Netherlands
5. **Sara Lisa VOGL,** Virtual Reality artist, Women in Immersive Technologies Europe, Denmark
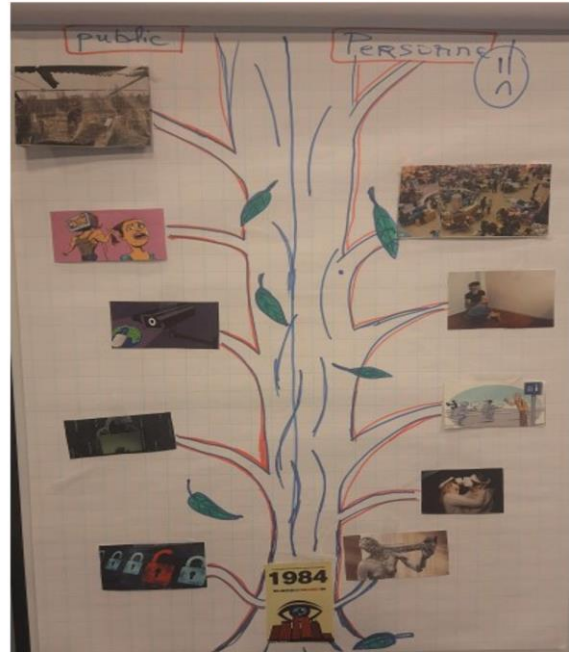
Annex

- Annex 1: Photos of the vision

Annex 1: Photos of the visions

Group1

Utopia

Dystopia

Group2

Utopia

Dystopia

Group3

Utopia

Dystopia

Group 4

Utopia

Dystopia

Group 5

Utopia	Dystopia

Group6

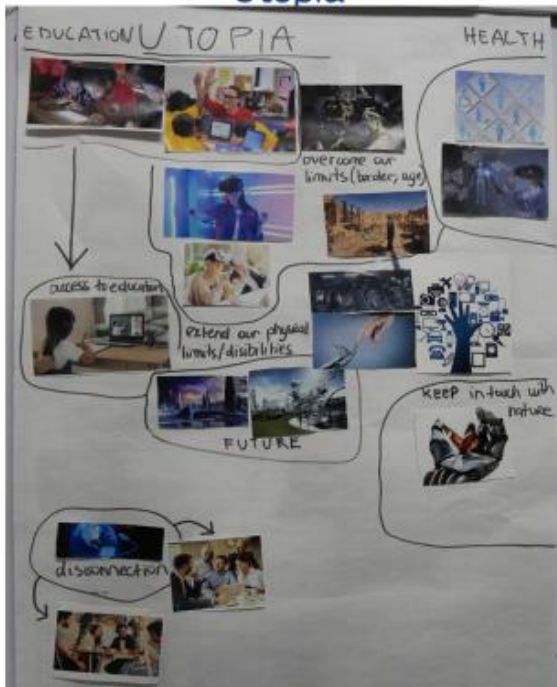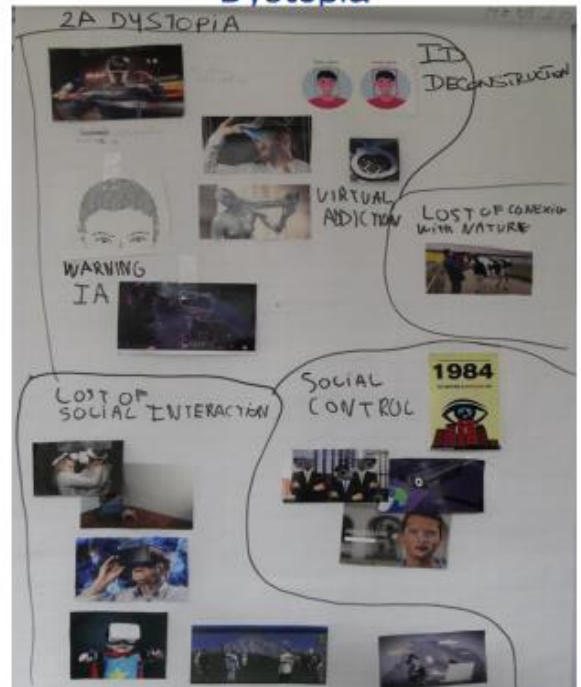| Utopia	Dystopia

Group 7

Utopia

Dystopia

Group 8

Utopia

Dystopia

Group 9

Utopia

Dystopia

Group 10

Utopia

Dystopia

Group11

Utopia

Dystopia

Group 12

Utopia

Dystopia