1. Key results

The European unification process is a globally unique project that is currently facing numerous international or global challenges, such as migration flows and climate change. Against this background, between May and October 2018, all citizens of the member states of the European Union were invited to participate in Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe. In Germany, both the Federal Government and its cooperation partners in civil society – European Movement Germany (EBD) and the German Adult Education Association – sought direct, personal exchanges with citizens within the framework of dialogue events. The objective was to learn more about the views and opinions of people on Europe and to give citizens the opportunity to communicate their concerns, wishes and criticisms. Thus, the dialogue events are an instrument of direct civic participation, which provides both an impetus for the European Union and the future direction of the Federal Government’s European policy. A total of approximately 120 dialogue events were held in Germany between May and October 2018, the central contents of which were documented by the organisers in the form of results protocols. In addition, participants were able to record their personal views on Europe anonymously in feedback forms. These forms – together with the results protocols – provide the basis for the present evaluation and analysis of the dialogue process.

The event minutes and the substantive feedback from participants revealed a marked overall desire for greater European integration and cooperation in response to the current political and societal challenges. This basic finding is also in line with the results of a representative Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Commission in May this year. According to this survey, the German population’s approval of membership of the European Union has reached a historic record level of 79 percent. In the view of participants, the positive aspects of Europe prevailed in most of the topics on the future of Europe discussed. One exception is migration and refugee policy – critical comments clearly predominated here, and people said that they felt that Europe needs to take urgent action. To a much lesser extent, this also applied to environmental and climate protection policy, and to the EU’s agricultural policy, areas in which the European Union was criticised. As a rule, negative aspects and references did not indicate a fundamental criticism of Europe; rather, they were mostly aimed at reducing Europe’s weaknesses and thus further strengthening Europe for the future.

Perceptions of policy areas

Topics and aspects associated with domestic policy & internal security were, for the most part, assessed positively in relation to the EU. The main reason for the positive evaluation is that participants particularly appreciated the openness of the internal European borders.

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This applied both to the resulting freedom of travel and to the cross-border movement of people and goods in everyday life. In particular, participants at dialogue events in areas close to the border expressly referred to the advantages of cross-border cooperation between companies and authorities. Accordingly, the desired changes sometimes mentioned related mainly to considerations on how to maintain free border traffic in view of the reintroduction of border controls in the wake of the refugee crisis. At the same time, in light of a changing security situation in Europe, a desire for greater pan-European cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism was often expressed. A need for increased cross-border cooperation between police and intelligence services in particular was seen. With regard to domestic policy and internal security, the positive statements made regarding Europe clearly outweighed the calls for change. The desire for a greater role for Europe was (accordingly) less pronounced than in most other policy areas.

With regard to foreign and security policy, Europe was highly valued as a unique peace project. According to participants, the common economic and monetary area and institutionalised dialogue and exchange among member states play a major role in this. The perception of Europe as a successful peace project often resulted in a clear desire for a strengthened common foreign and security policy of the European Union. In addition, it was recognised that the European Union has significantly greater global weight in foreign and security policy matters than any single member state on its own. Accordingly, most people wanted to see the EU speak with one voice in the wider world — especially vis-à-vis major global powers such as the United States, Russia and China. In this connection, the creation of a single European army, from which greater independence is expected, was also mentioned. In addition, in the context of foreign and security policy considerations, the security of the EU’s external borders and better protection against crime and terrorism were called for. Reference was also made to Europe’s influence and responsibility in relation to armed conflicts outside the EU and corresponding action was specified: restrictions on arms exports and an increase in humanitarian support were called for. With respect to foreign and security policy issues, on the whole it can be said that the positive aspects of the EU clearly outweighed any others. Moreover, this topic was linked more strongly than any other to the desire for greater European integration.

In the field of education, the programmes for learning and studying in other European countries, ERASMUS and ERASMUS+, were primarily positively associated with Europe. In this connection, participants emphasised the acquisition of language skills and intercultural encounters for young people. Participants praised easy and equal access to a wide range of educational opportunities and options in Europe, along with the Europe-wide harmonisation of educational qualifications (bachelor’s/master’s degrees). In some cases, there was also recognition of cross-border research projects and the transfer of knowledge across Europe. In particular, a need for uniform educational standards and improved access to education was seen. Those in favour of this believed it should be achieved in particular through increased funding for studies and stays abroad. In addition, measures to enhance the appreciation of educators, to expand political education and to invest more in the education sector were called for. In purely quantitative terms, participants in the Citizens’ Dialogue largely stressed the positive aspects of education policy. However, the need for change, mainly through strengthening pan-European integration efforts in this area, was mentioned almost as frequently in the feedback reports.
With regard to cultural and religious issues, cultural and linguistic diversity along with the possibility of cultural exchange are particularly valued as positive characteristics of Europe. In addition, common Europe-wide values, common cultural heritage and common values such as solidarity were often named as positive aspects of Europe. Occasionally, it was asserted that a common European identity exists. However, the majority of participants spoke of the need to create or strengthen a European identity. In this connection, participants proposed, among other things, the introduction of a European public holiday, a common official language and the harmonisation of the political and media landscape. However, in the opinion of many participants, such measures should certainly not lead to the member states losing their unique cultures. In addition, the expansion of opportunities for cultural exchange is desired, especially beyond the school and university sphere. With regard to religious diversity, there was considerable demand for openness in Europe with respect to all world religions, along with the strict separation of church and state. All in all, in this area, the amount of positive responses clearly outnumbered the calls for change.

There was just as much desire for Europe to play a greater role in the cultural sphere as there was with regard to education policy.

In the area of economic policy, the existence and impact of the EU single market was particularly highlighted as a success of European integration. Participants emphasised that the common European economic area is a strong antithesis to the major economic powers, especially in global competition. The visible desire for greater pan-European initiative in this area was mainly due to the perception of an economic imbalance within the Community. Participants saw a need for action both in terms of supporting weaker member states and in more closely examining the economic suitability of candidate countries. From a domestic perspective, this not least concerned limiting the migration of firms to economically weaker EU countries. Participants often criticised the export subsidies of the European Union (at the expense of developing countries), along with the manner in which the negotiations of free trade agreements (such as TTIP and CETA) are conducted. Participants particularly complained of the lack of transparency. Beyond such specific criticism, participants also asked fundamental questions about the direction of economic policy – in many cases, participants called for more sustainable economic activity, focusing more on environmental issues and social concerns. The quantitative analysis showed that, in relation to economic policy issues, participants predominantly referred to the positive aspects of Europe. However, a need for action was also expressed. On the question of a greater or lesser role for Europe in economic policy, opinion was divided.

In the area of financial and monetary policy, participants in particular highlighted the introduction of the euro as a single currency and the existence of the ECB as an independent central bank as positive developments. Only in isolated cases did participants mention the Europe-wide area for cashless payment transactions (the SEPA procedure) in this connection. The clear desire for a greater role for Europe in fiscal matters was reflected primarily in the call for the creation of a Europe-wide uniform tax system. The hope was expressed that a harmonised tax policy would reduce tax evasion, align basic economic conditions and social standards and strengthen regulation of financial markets. In this connection, participants frequently criticised the policy during the European financial and banking crisis and expressed the desire for a more supportive approach to the crisis countries. With regard to the euro as the single currency, participants mentioned individual failures in the introduction of the euro. On the political level, this concerned the varying economic power of the euro states, but on the personal level it also concerned their own financial losses.
In particular, however, participants criticised the ECB’s current zero interest rate policy for contributing to the fall in the value of German savings. All in all, however, the positive aspects of Europe prevailed with regard to fiscal and monetary policy, although criticism and the need for action were also mentioned comparable to that expressed with regard to economic policy.

In the area of law and justice, Europe is primarily seen as a guarantor of the rule of law. In principle, participants valued the EU states for their adherence to the separation of powers and enforcement of human rights, for upholding their constitutions, for democracy, the right to vote, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. In addition, participants often referred to the fact that European regulations have contributed to a strengthening of the rights the individual. In this connection, participants made particular reference to the development of consumer protection rights. On the other hand, participants called upon the European Union to defend the rule of law and monitor its implementation in all member states without exception. In doing so, participants criticised the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms in some member states and called for respect for human rights, also for those of refugees. In addition, participants also frequently saw a need for greater harmonisation of statutory regulations. In this respect, participants explicitly mentioned migration and refugee policy, social security regulations, transport policy regulations and measures for environmental and climate protection. In this connection, participants also occasionally called for sanctions under criminal law to be tightened. Participants also expressed criticism of individual European regulations to strengthen the intellectual property rights of individuals. Participants made explicit reference to the European General Data Protection Regulation (EU GDPR), which some participants believed has placed an excessive burden on ordinary citizens and whose effectiveness was called into question. Overall, however, the amount of positive responses in the area of law and justice still slightly outnumbered the expressed need for change. The desire for increased European integration was as strongly pronounced as it was with education and finance policy.

In the context of labour and social policy issues, participant assessed the free movement of workers across Europe and the opportunities for work and career opportunities associated with the European labour market as a positive element of the EU. In addition, participants made several positive references to the excellent reputation of the vocational training system in Germany and the minimum wage in Germany. On the other hand, participants often criticised the impact of intra-European competition on the German labour market, which was identified as the cause of company relocations to other European countries and wage dumping. Accordingly, participants saw a need for change with respect to creating uniform minimum wage standards across Europe. Participants also called for greater efforts to combat youth unemployment in some European countries, along with a Europe-wide recognition of professional qualifications. Only in isolated cases did participants identify skills shortages and the migration of labour, along with the spread of digital technology in the world of work, as challenges for Europe. In the social sector, participants particularly noted material wealth as a positive consequence of European integration and mentioned achievements of the German social insurance system (unemployment, health and pension insurance), which, from the point of view of participants, were exemplary in a pan-European context. On the other hand, participants levelled criticism at the differences in wealth levels within Europe, including the differing labour conditions in the member states and the differing national social security systems. Accordingly, some participants called for the harmonisation of social security systems and standards within the European Union. In addition to aligning social standards, participants also frequently spoke of the need for action with regard to the fight against poverty or the safeguarding of social participation. Participants expressed their desire for greater commitment to fair pay, but also to greater social recognition and social integration. As a whole, the amount of positive responses and the calls for change in the area of labour and social affairs was more or less balanced.
However, there was undeniably a clear tendency on the part of participants to call for more European solutions.

In the issue of the spread of digital technology, the abolition of roaming charges within Europe, which has already taken place, was seen by many as a direct tangible success of the EU. In some cases, participants also recognised Europe-wide measures for monitoring the spread of digital technology in the labour market. Participants saw the by far greatest need for action in the expansion of digital infrastructure. Accordingly, participants primarily called for an Internet connection throughout Europe and a greater harmonisation of mobile networks and charges. Only occasionally did participants mention needs with regard to the spread of digital technology in the world of work, the handling of cybercrime and the use of modern technology within the framework of democratic processes (citizen participation on the Internet). The topic played a comparatively minor role in both the dialogues and the corresponding feedback reports. At the events, the surplus of responses regarding the positive aspects of Europe accordingly does not appear to be very durable. However, although at a low level, the desire among participants for greater pan-European coordination in this area can be seen.

As a positive achievement of the EU in the area of supply and mobility, participants first and foremost pointed out the existing cross-border infrastructure in the area of electricity supply and mobility. Participants also praised the secure supply of clean drinking water and food within the European Union. In this connection, participants expressly mentioned the stable prices and wide variety of foods available. In individual responses, participants also referred to the existence of European programmes for the development of infrastructure in disadvantaged regions. On the other hand, participants also saw a special need for action with a view to the development of a common European mobility strategy. In this respect, participants particularly called for alternatives to the internal combustion engine, an expansion of public transport for local and long-distance transport, and a harmonised toll system. Participants also saw a need for action in Europe with regard to the future of the energy supply – here, the phase-out of coal-fired power generation was primarily mentioned. However, participants also discussed issues in the area of care and mobility with comparative infrequency. All in all, positive and negative perceptions were equal in number. The participants’ opinions on whether Europe should play a greater or lesser role were divided on this topic. However, the pressure to act – in terms of the number of responses – does not seem to be particularly strong and is similar to that in the area of digital technology.

In the area of environmental and climate protection, participants above all praised the EU for the existence of common environmental and climate protection targets along with uniform environmental and climate protection standards throughout Europe, but did not elaborate on them. In some cases, the European Union’s climate protection requirements were also seen as a welcome corrective for German policy. Most of the time, however, participants pointed out that greater commitment to environmental and climate protection was urgently needed. Participants expressly mentioned, among other things, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, better recycling measures, better animal welfare and a reduction in toxic and pollutant emissions. In this respect, participants called for much greater cooperation among the European states in the form of stricter regulations within the European Union. Measures to reduce CO₂ emissions play a central role for participants in this regard. Participants saw a need for change particularly in the areas of mobility (exhaust gas problems), energy production (phasing out of coal-fired power generation) and high-emission industries. However, environmental and climate aspects took up comparatively little space in the dialogues and feedback reports. Positive and negative perceptions are roughly balanced in this regard. However, participants particularly emphasised the need for a stronger, common and pan-European commitment to environmental and climate protection (comparable to that in the areas of education or law and justice).
In the field of health policy, participants praised the existence of a secure and regulated health insurance system only in general terms – and presumably against the background of the German health system. Only in individual responses did participants recognise European health and hygiene standards, the European health insurance card and the legal distribution of soft drugs in the Netherlands (which was also discussed as a conceivable pan-European measure) as positive aspects of Europe. On the other hand, participants especially saw a need for action in the form of harmonising health systems. In this connection, participants above all called for a standardisation of benefits and insurance premiums. Participants also made occasional calls for increased pan-European efforts to combat alcohol, tobacco and drug consumption and for the creation of pan-European standards for the manufacture and distribution of medicines. In addition, however, participants mostly addressed aspects without a direct European connection, such as the betterment of the nursing professions, higher investments in the nursing sector, the end of two-tier medicine and a limitation of the obligation to make cuts in the health sector. This underlines the great importance of the topic for the population. As a whole, however, topics from the area of health and nursing care played only a subordinate role within the framework of the Citizens' Dialogue. Positive and negative perceptions were balanced in this regard. The question of a greater or lesser role for Europe cannot be clearly stated in statistical terms, due to the small number of responses and the fact that some of these matters are national rather than European issues.

In the area of agricultural policy, the only positive aspect mentioned was the Europe-wide labelling obligation for genetically modified organisms – and this only mentioned in one case. On the other hand, participants saw a need for action in particular with regard to the future structuring of the European Union's agricultural subsidies. In this connection, participants primarily called for a reduction in subsidies, but in some cases also a restructuring of agricultural policy with greater consideration being given to sustainability aspects. In addition, participants called for the greater promotion of organic farming in the form of the lesser use of fertilisers, the abandonment of glyphosate and genetic engineering, and a move away from factory farming. Occasionally and in more rural areas, participants also spoke of the need for a reduction in European rules and regulations in the area of agricultural policy. The topic was not discussed much during the dialogue events, and was only addressed in the feedback reports a few times. The mention of negative perceptions and the desire for greater pan-European initiative predominate – although at a very low level.

In the area of migration and refugee policy, there were only a few positive and largely generalised references to the fundamental willingness of Europe or selected individual states to take in and support refugees. More often, however, participants levelled criticism at the lack of humanity, empathy and solidarity in dealing with refugees in Europe. Participants primarily called for an agreement on a common European refugee policy, which should be characterised by solidarity and fair distribution, and should take into account issues related to combating the causes of migration. With regard to conditions within Germany, some participants called for measures to better integrate refugees. Above all, participants demanded better access to education and work. Likewise, in a few isolated cases, legal migration possibilities in connection with the discussion on the immigration of skilled workers and the structuring of an immigration law were mentioned. In some cases, however, participants also addressed feelings of fear caused by immigration and expressed concerns regarding uncontrolled immigration due to insufficiently protected external borders of the European Union. However, only in isolated cases did participants call for a significantly more restrictive approach or absolute refusal to take in refugees.
The EU's migration and refugee policy is the only policy area within the framework of the Citizens' Dialogue where negative assessments, along with the demands for change, clearly dominated. Moreover, the desire for greater cooperation among the European states in this area is very clear.

**Perceptions of value dimensions**

The Citizens' Dialogue clearly shows that, from the point of view of participants, Europe and the European Union must be seen not solely as a political community, but also as a community of values.

Participants in the dialogue events did not associate any other topic more positively with Europe than the guarantee of individual rights of freedom. Participants above all appreciated the freedom to travel within the Schengen area, but also free movement aspects such as the right as an EU citizen to live and work anywhere in the EU. In some cases, fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press were also mentioned as particularly positive achievements of Europe. Only in isolated cases did participants mention desires for change with respect to rights of freedom. Some of these were aimed at their further development, such as the introduction of a European passport, while others – particularly in view of developments in member states in Eastern Europe – called for greater enforcement of binding constitutional and democratic norms and the defence of freedom of opinion and freedom of the press. Only in isolated cases did participants level criticism against an excessive amount of freedom in the form of open borders – as a gateway for illegal migration and crime. The ratio of positive to negative responses shows that this area was seen more favourably than any other. Participants thus relatively rarely called for an (even) greater role for Europe in this context. Only in isolated cases did participants demand a lesser role for Europe regarding civil liberties.

With regard to justice, participants primarily noted the actions in solidarity of the member states among each other as the positive side of Europe. Conversely, however, participants frequently criticised the lack of a European idea of solidarity. This applies both to solidarity among EU member states and to solidarity with countries outside Europe. In particular, with regard to asylum and refugee policy in the EU, participants frequently noted an excessive lack of justice, which is mainly reflected in the distribution of refugees within Europe. In addition, participants often saw the need for action to create greater social justice. In this connection, participants referred to the social imbalance within the EU and called for greater equality of opportunity, especially with regard to educational opportunities. In addition, participants spoke of injustices in the distribution of (agricultural) subsidies and costs within the framework of the euro bailout. With regard to gender equality aspects, in some cases participants mentioned the professional and income-related equality of men and women. All in all, the negative aspects noticeably predominate in the responses. However, greater European integration was clearly seen as providing solutions.

With regard to equality aspects, participants occasionally made positive references to the alignment of living and social conditions within Europe. In this connection, participants referred to uniform international standards, rules and norms, and discussed the harmonisation of regulations and structures that facilitate cross-border living and working. Moreover, participants occasionally mentioned the EU’s image in a globalised world and the euro as a single currency as positive elements. Participants saw a need for action in particular with regard to greater alignment in an entire range of policy areas.
Participants mentioned finance and tax policy, law and justice, healthcare, energy and environmental policy, military equipment, social policy, along with adjustments to vocational and training qualifications. However, some participants also expressed concerns regarding levelling down within Europe and the loss of cultural, social, political and economic diversity. Participants levelled criticism against the high level of "superfluous standardisation". If equality was mentioned in a negative sense, this mostly occurred in the context of the demand for greater social equality – participants wanted to see a greater harmonisation of working and living conditions, wages and pensions, but also votes and educational opportunities. All in all, equality is predominantly associated with negative aspects of Europe or with corresponding needs for action. However, opinion was divided on whether Europe should play a greater or lesser role in connection with equality issues.

Within the framework of the dialogues, openness was often understood as a buzzword in the context of keywords such as peace, freedom and democracy, or as openness to the world and cultural openness. In this connection, participants called for the reduction of prejudices and an increase in understanding and tolerance. In part, however, participants also referred to the openness of borders as a prerequisite for cultural exchange and cooperation among the EU member states. On the other hand, the need for change was primarily seen with a view to strengthening transparency in political decision-making processes – for example, in negotiations on free trade agreements or on the influence of lobbyists – and in some cases was linked to the demand for greater information, knowledge transfer and citizen participation. As a whole, positive aspects of Europe and the need for action in matters of openness and transparency are roughly balanced. A small number of participants advocated more European solutions.

Positive perceptions in the area of respect and tolerance mostly related to a pronounced (perceived) tolerance towards minorities or dissenters in Europe. There was also a special appreciation of fundamental values such as democracy, peace, freedom and diversity. In some cases, however, participants also saw a need for more social tolerance. In isolated cases, participants called for greater appreciation within society of Europe in general, but also of the work done by politicians or the European Parliament. At national level, there were also occasional calls for greater consideration for (economically) weaker member states. Weighing up greater empathy and respect, on the one hand, and excess tolerance (especially with respect to autocratic states), on the other hand, was described as a balancing act. All in all, participants pointed out the need for action on respect and tolerance somewhat more than positive aspects of Europe. In isolated cases, participants spoke in favour of more European solutions.

Perceptions of institutional structures

In addition to specific policy areas and values, institutional issues also played an important role within the framework of the Citizens' Dialogue.

With direct reference to the European Union, participants expressed their appreciation of a whole series of specific achievements, such as open borders and freedom of travel, the free movement of workers, opportunities for educational exchange, the EU single market, the single currency, the guarantee of basic freedoms and Europe as a peace project. Accordingly, the added value of membership is explicitly viewed as positive. In a positive sense, participants also referred to the existence of uniform norms and standards throughout Europe. In isolated cases, participants praised European institutions as platforms for exchange and dialogue among the member states and referred to the democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament.
In particular, change was regarded as necessary in order to **generate more awareness and enthusiasm for the European Union**. In this connection, participants called for greater political education and knowledge transfer. In addition, many participants were in favour of enhanced European integration and improved cooperation in selected policy areas – these included aspects of foreign and security policy, labour and social affairs, migration and refugee policy, environmental and climate policy, law and justice as well as education policy. In part, participants desired greater efforts to combat the divisive tendencies within the EU. Participants also criticised the so-called "Brussels bureaucracy" and a perceived **democratic deficit** on the part of the European Union. The resulting desire for change is aimed primarily at both greater de-bureaucratisation and the abolition of the unanimity principle in favour of majority decisions. It was also frequently pointed out that the European Union has an image problem. In this connection, participants often demanded greater transparency and closeness to the people. As a whole, positive aspects and need for change were roughly balanced, with a clear majority wishing for a greater degree of European integration.

On the one hand, with respect to the political system in Europe, participants praised the **existence of a living democracy** with corresponding opportunities for participation and civic participation. In this context, participants appreciated the role of Germany in the UN and the efforts to secure a seat on the UN Security Council, although this is of no direct relevance to Europe. On the other hand, participants also saw the need for change particularly with regard to democracy and civic participation. In particular, participants pointed out that democracy cannot be taken for granted and that a greater degree of political participation is desirable in the form of **more direct democracy**, for example in the form of referendums at the European level. Other demands included **de-bureaucratisation** and a reduction in the perceived over-regulation at the European level, along with an **expansion of the powers of the European Parliament**. In this context, participants spoke of the strengthening of Parliament vis-à-vis the Council, the collection of European taxes and the election of the Commission by the European Parliament. In addition, a desire for greater transparency in the work of Parliament was often expressed. All in all, political structure issues are associated to a noticeably greater extent with the need for change than they are with positive aspects of Europe. On the other hand, opinion was divided on whether Europe should play a greater or lesser role in this area.

In the Citizens' Dialogues, there was also much discussion regarding what can be done to combat the **rise of right-wing populism** in Europe – especially in view of the perception that populist governments in individual member states are increasingly blocking pan-European processes. However, participants rarely mentioned specific strategies for this and mostly referred to political education and awareness-raising work. Relatively often, the responses and references were limited to the importance of combating racism and xenophobia. As a whole, the subject was discussed almost exclusively as a negative phenomenon in Europe. In this respect as well, participants desired a greater pan-European initiative.

**Social agenda**

The findings on the Federal Government's Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe provide, in particular, information on how citizens experience Europe in their daily lives, what role Europe plays for Germany from their perspective and what the future of Europe should look like in their view. However, the opinions and points of view expressed in this context should not be viewed in isolation from current political events; rather, they need to be placed on the agenda of society as a whole, which is also shaped by media coverage.
A comparison of the contents of the Citizens' Dialogue carried out for this purpose with the findings of the BPA Topic Monitor\(^2\) makes it clear that, in the European political context of the Citizens' Dialogue events, the achievements of the European Union are emphasised in particular, whereas in the context of the Topic Monitor survey they in no way stand out.

When classifying all the findings from the Federal Government's Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe, it should be borne in mind that, due to the limited target group (participants in the dialogue events) and their socio-demographic characteristics (disproportionately high proportion of feedback from younger participants, persons with high formal educational levels and residents of the eastern German states), such findings cannot claim to be representative of the population as a whole; rather, they should be regarded as impulses from selected population groups.

**The methodological approach in a nutshell**

Since the text material was available on a comparatively large quantitative scale (73 results protocols and 1,244 feedback forms) and only in semi-structured form (primarily openly collected answer texts to key questions), the evaluation was carried out using a software-based and automated content analysis called “text mining”. This process ensures a high degree of scientific objectivity and transparency. The first step in the text mining process was to prepare the texts to be analysed for further analysis (spelling correction, word stem formation, removal of words with no content, identification of multi-word concepts, formation of umbrella terms). In a second step – using artificial neural networks – the individual words of such texts were integrated into a context-based word network and assigned word vectors that represent the semantic core of the words. Such word vectors were then used to identify topic groups or categories using analytical cluster methods. Such groupings formed the starting point for the derivation of a coding scheme, which was gradually condensed and finalised as part of manual coding steps. As a result, it was possible to define both overarching main themes and correspondingly assigned sub-themes, which as a category system formed the basic framework for further quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Federal Government's Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe. On the basis of this category system, an artificial neural network was trained; in the course of the further evaluation process, this was able to automatically process the continuously new texts and classify them into the category scheme that had been developed.

IAs a result, approximately 3,900 meaningful terms or word combinations from the results protocols and feedback forms could be identified using the text-mining approach; in turn, these could be combined into 267 basic word clusters. In the course of the condensing categorisation, these basic clusters were assigned 87 sub-themes in an intermediate step and 14 selected policy areas, five value dimensions and three areas of institutional design at the highest level. In order to do justice to the complexity of the text contributions, individual word clusters or subtopics could also be assigned to several overarching topics. Thus, this **category scheme** formed the framework for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Federal Government's Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe.

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\(^2\) The BPA Topic Monitor is a CATI representative survey carried out by infratest dimap every week since 2006. In each survey, approximately 1,000 German-speaking people aged 14 and over are asked openly — i.e., without answer templates — what topic from politics, business and society has concerned them the most in the last few days.