

EUROSENSE : MAKING SENSE TO THEN MAKE CHANGE

15 Nov 2026

Gretchen Knoll-Rask

1. INTRODUCTION

"La paix mondiale ne saurait être sauvegardée sans des efforts créateurs à la mesure des dangers qui la menacent. La contribution qu'une Europe organisée et vivante peut apporter à la civilisation est indispensable au maintien des relations pacifiques. »

"World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it. The contribution that an organized and vibrant Europe can make to civilization is essential to maintaining peaceful relations."

- Robert Schumann, 9 May 1950, extract from the Founding text of the Robert Schumann Foundation

EUROSENSE

The introductory quote above from Robert Schumann reflects how essential he considered citizen engagement to the future of Europe.

But how can we best collect, support and utilize for change these EU citizens' voices?

Why was Eurosense created?

Eurosense was created in 2024 by several Volt Europa members to provide a voice to the European populus, to empower its citizens by creating a platform that permits easy collection, centralized pooling and tangible output of their thoughts, wants and needs. Most importantly, the analysis is done by each person providing his or her input: what does this story mean? How do I feel? How do I see others?

Using a number of complexity frameworks, taken from the works of Cognitive Edge, Pte Ltd and Cynefin®, Eurosense seeks to uncover emergent issues in the EU to address. There are therefore no outcomes or goals that are established in advance as a hypothesis.

While providing their individual input of the current system characteristics, Europeans participating in Eurosence are also called to "make sense" of it by mapping out the various influencing factors and how easy or hard it would be to change them in terms of time and energy. Once this has been done, proposals for actions can be determined. Micro-experiments that would allow (and engage) the public to do the "next best thing" to begin to help people at all levels of society make the desired changes.

From this, Eurosense can use the data and stories to find ways to reinforce empowerment and sense of pride from positive experiences and put in place actions to reduce or temper negative experiences, with the solutions suggested by the authors themselves.

This process is very different from “group think,” as the outliers and anomalies are welcomed and contain real insight into the novelty of human thinking, which is where creativity begins and innovation can occur.

Through Cynefin, Eurosense’s goal is to expand out into a wider, more representative audience in order to more accurately reflect the needs of Europe, but also the needs of each country, of each region, of each community, as the direction of the desired changes will not come from a country- wide roll-out or a European mandate, but from identifying what actions can be taken at a local or regional level to move in the desired direction of change.

What are some of the biggest constraints to Eurosense expanding?

The question remains and was made obvious yet again in a face-to-face Estuarine Mapping Sensemaking forum the other night in Paris: how much do European citizens feel that it is within their power to be the drivers, the active participants in change?

At the individual level, how do we couple this Eurosense invitation to empower each citizen by registering their own voice, their own perspective, with the fact that many people feel disenfranchised, pessimistic to the impact their input could provide, silent due to a lack of interest in the civics of their town or country, or simply due to a lack of motivation?

How many people continue to consider it the responsibility of policy makers to take the lead, and that they do not have an active role in their government, except maybe to volunteer in local civic events and to vote?

How to drive Eurosense into a larger experiment and instill hope in its purpose?

There is a general understanding that Eurosense’s “safe to fail” small experiments and initiatives can drive long term change in ways that will engage the community, as well as move in the desired direction for desired outcomes, step by step, incrementally. These are the projects that need to be conceived of instead of overly-ambitious initiatives that aim for sweeping changes which are too far removed from the current status to be achievable and are therefore are destined to fail.

2. INPUT

The data for Eurosense came from volunteer contributors from all across the EU. It was collected by:

- requesting people to provide embedded stories (as Europeans, from the inside, looking out, not from the outside looking in), providing their perspectives as stakeholders in the future of the EU.
- trying to solicit input from a range of users (across a wide span of ages, nationalities, professional experiences, income levels, population levels)
- asking each person to tell their own story, mapping out the issues, assessing further by asking, “who has agency over these issues?” and even “to what degree?”

There are no pre-determined outcomes or goals. The data as well as what conclusions and subsequent actions can be drawn from this data is driven by the people providing it. This is made clear to the individuals and the questions and statements in the Eurosense questionnaires are therefore open-ended.

Here are some of the questions that the Eurosense community are trying to answer:

1. What are the changes that the narratives have revealed as important to address?
2. How have the stories indicated that this change is needed? What effects on society and on individual rights, for example, have these stories revealed?
3. Do these stories permit insight into how these changes could be achieved? Are there local, regional or national players that need to be involved? These can then be taken on at a European level, and if appropriate, to bring this into European regulation (examples: OECD, Schumann Network, European Citizen Initiative, EU Parliament).
4. What are the constraints and enablers that might affect the path to change?
5. Who will benefit?
6. What are the most appropriate interventions for this process of change? For Eurosense and within the Cynefin frameworks, small “granular” interventions that permit incremental changes in the desired direction and which are “safe to fail” are the goals.
7. Using Estuarine mapping (a 2-dimensional mapping of issues and actants according to the level of energy and time needed) for each, we can determine which key changes could require the least energy/ money and the least time= “more of these”. Likewise, included in this Estuarine mapping are the undesired outcomes that can then be identified and nudged to favor “less of these” by increasing their time to deliver, cost, energy expenditure, etc…
8. What does existing evidence say about what works? It is the goal of Eurosense to collect the stories and then use them to take action in these micro-experiments. The successful deployment, the clear definition of evidence of what works, will encourage bigger groups to engage and participate in Eurosense. All these qualify as wanting to create “more of these.”

Summary and examples of data collected

Here are some of the highlights of the data collected over the course of the last XX years and through the summer of 2026 (data output from 08 June 2026) by Eurosense on the following topics:

- **AI**
- **Transportation**
- **Climate Change**

Each topic has been approached by the participants first telling a story, their personal first-hand experience or impression of it. These personal perspectives initiate the conversation and the start of the input of the data. Through **storytelling**, over 1,280 participants have provided insight into how each of these important topics affect them, where adaptability, regulation, speed, safety, cost, are all factors to be considered.

- To date, the majority (58.79%) of the stories and input that has been provided has been rated by the narrators as negative experiences. Thus, it appears that discomfort is often the fuel for change.
- Nevertheless, almost a full third, 30.72%, relayed positive experiences.
- 10.5% rated their experience as either “neutral” or “unknown.”

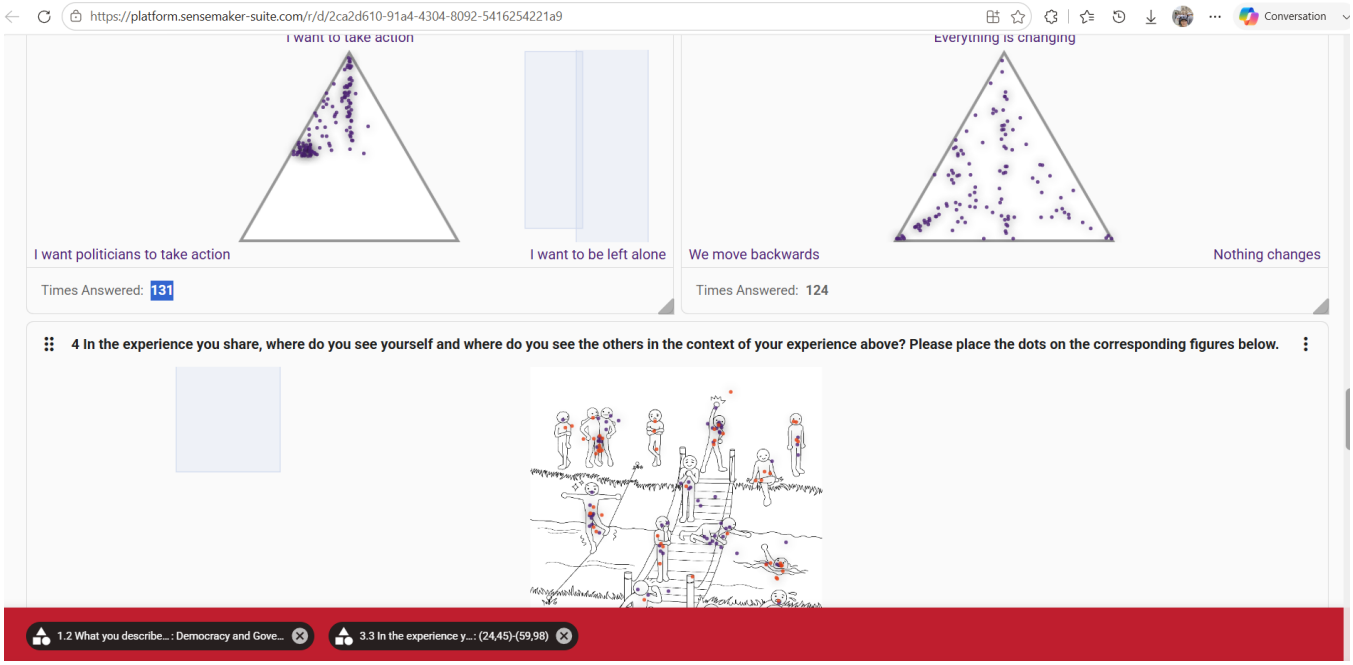
The response from these Eurosense inquiries indicated that in both the positive and the negative-rated experiences, people felt that their individual actions as well as actions taken by governing politicians would be needed.

This high level of individual engagement may have been due to the high level of participation by members of Volt and other civic-centered organizations in these Eurosense meetings. There may have been a bit of a bias in this sense, since these people most likely have a higher awareness and concern, sense of empowerment, and level of engagement than perhaps the general populus does. Likewise, the fact that already these people registered, joined and contributed to these questionnaires reflects their increased motivation, and reflects an engaged population that is undoubtedly not representative of the EU population overall.

Sensemaker® Digital Ethnography

There was a concentration of sensemaking responses that seem to indicate that contributors want to see government and their own individual actions taken, indicative of both a commitment to individual engagement as well as assignment of government level responsibility to prevent the Union from stagnating or going backwards. It is interesting to note how participants who rallied for both individual and government action mapped their emotional state. Blue dot is for the narrator; red dot is for the others. It may be a perception of other people’s inaction and the narrator’s sense of saving the day – but if everyone feels

this way, it appears as if we all consider ourselves superheroes coming to the rescue of our indifferent neighbors… which is probably a distortion.



Demography

Fewer than the total: 1,203 people out of the 1,286 declared their country of origin.

NATIONALITY or RESIDING COUNTRY

- **Over half of all entries (57%) have been coming from only 2 EU countries**
  - 31% of participating entries (374) were from Germany
  - 26% of participating entries (311) were from the Netherlands
- **35% came from a few other Western European countries**, without exceeding 10% in any one country
  - 10% were from Italy (120)
  - 7% from France (71)
  - Belgium (61) and Spain (38) each had participation of around 5%
- **The remaining 8 % (97) of contributors listed their country of origin as "other" or "non-EU."**

GENDER

Of the 1,286 entries,

- 35.7% declared themselves as male,
- 60.2% as female,
- with 4% non-binary/ other/ unvoiced.

AGE

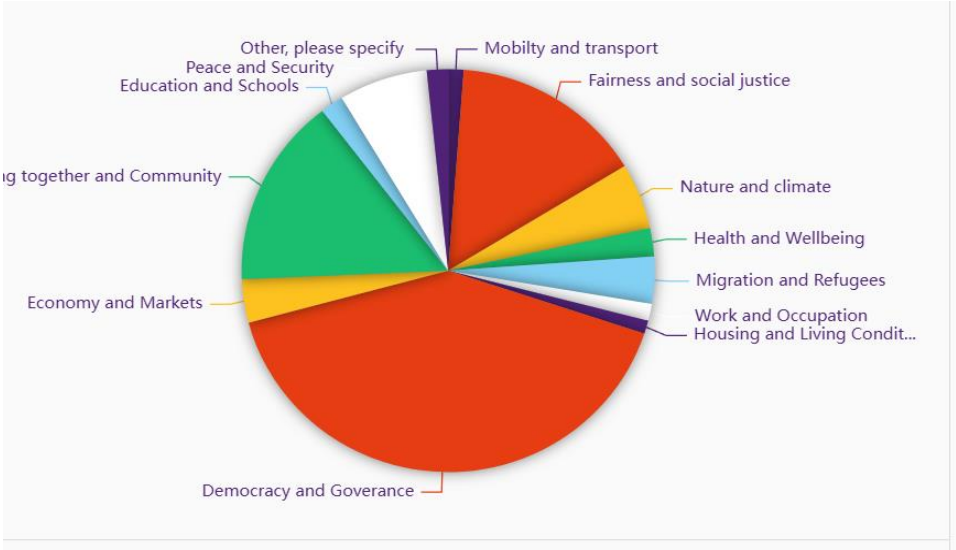
The representation of participants by age was unevenly distributed:

- Only 9% of the participant entries were from people under 24,
- 19% were aged 25-34, comprising a total of people under 35 to be only 28% of the contributors.
- 36% of people were between the ages of 35 - 54
- And another 36% were age 55 and over.

CLASSIFICATION of the TOPICS as a REFLECTION OF THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY

For each of the stories identified, it was permitted that 3 classifications were given for EACH story, which provides an interesting sub-categorization and ranking of what people consider AI, transportation, climate change fall under. For example, for **"Democracy and Governance"** the sub-classification was the following:

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

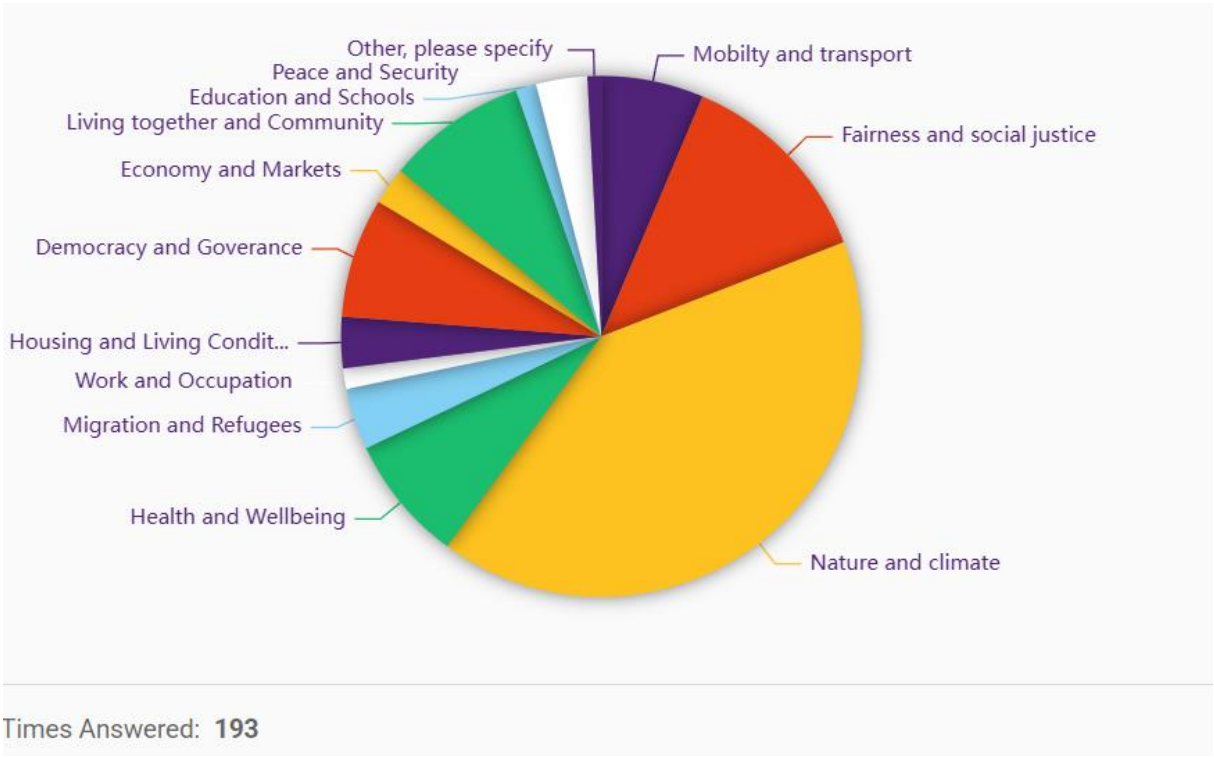


- Across the three subjects (AI, Transportation and Climate change), "Democracy and Governance" was the classification chosen preferentially
    - 270 people chose "Democracy & Governance" but the person could include up to 3 with 2 others being sub-categories.
    - It does seem logical that citizens would associate "democracy and governance" most often with "fairness and social justice," "peace and security," and "living together and community."
    - We rely on "governance": laws, regulations, protections to enshrine our ability as human beings and the ability of other living beings to thrive. These are the charters of how we live and interact with one another, aimed to be

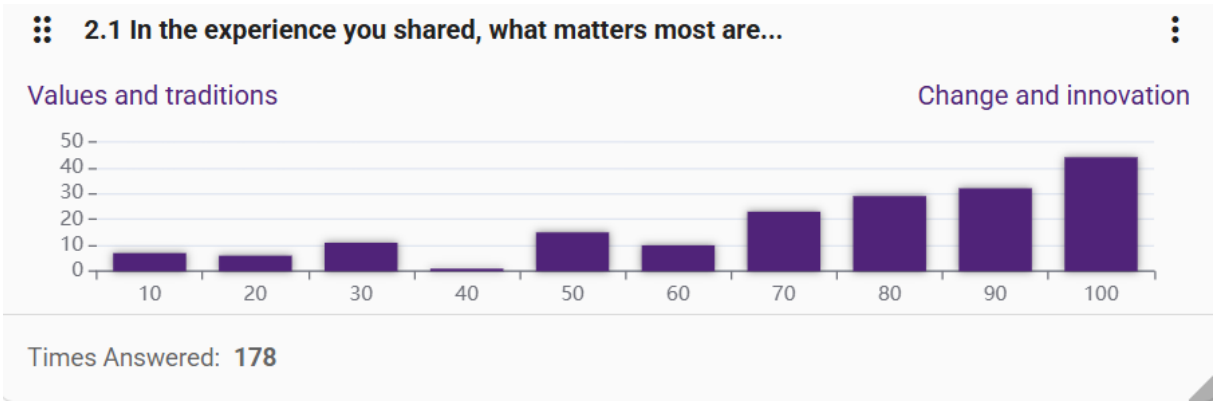
representative of our collective voices in a community, state, country and Union.

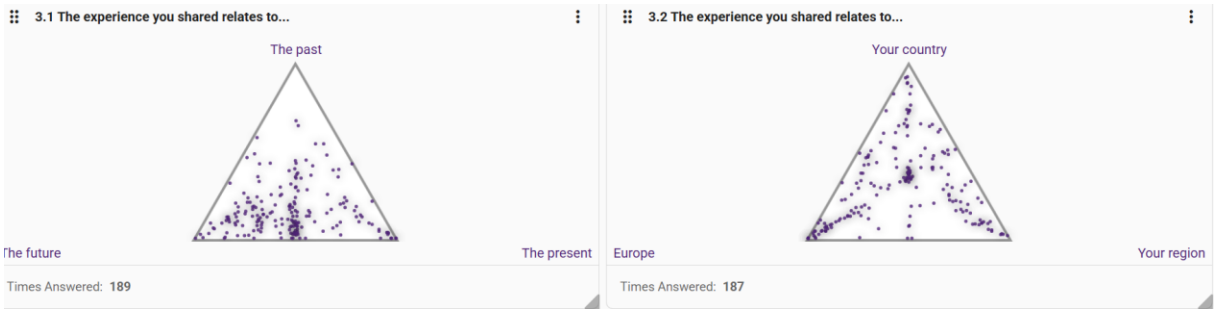
NATURE AND CLIMATE

- 193 people told a story about nature and climate (and related the story to other stories as well according to below (filtered for and clicked on N&C to obtain this graph)



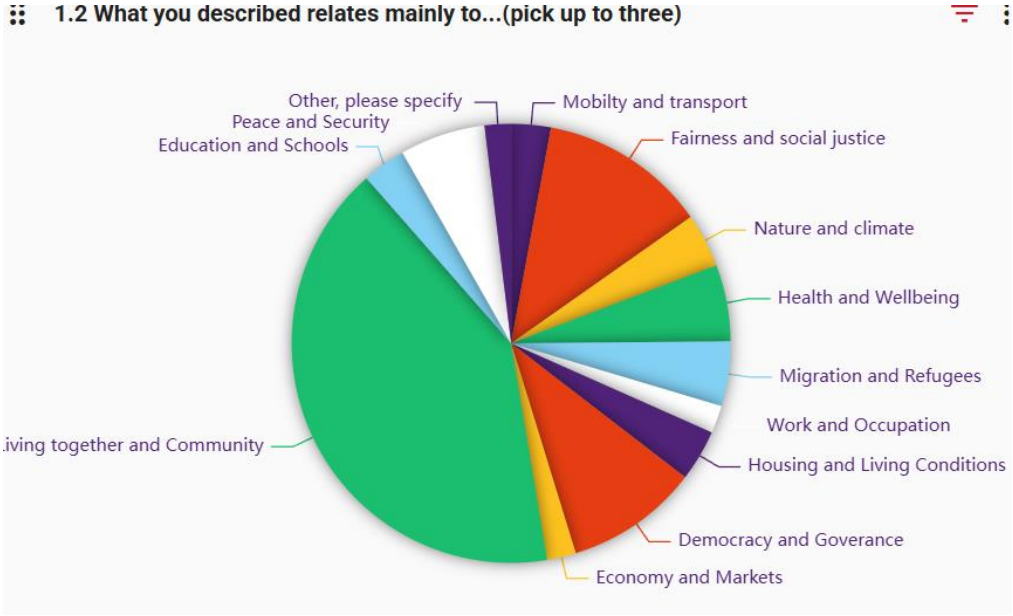
- Interestingly, this was oriented heavily towards innovation, the future, and towards all levels of EU society.



- 

LIVING TOGETHER AND COMMUNITY

- 424 people considered that among the 3 topics that were explored: “Community” / “Community” was one of the 3 main classifications their story relates to.



- 248/424 responses were by people who identify as male (58.5%)
- This classification was associated most often with other categories of democracy, fairness and social justice, peace, well-being, health.

3. OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Population

The goal for the future could be to encourage more participants from the under 35 age group to become involved.

Miro Estuarine mapping boards - Pre-work and Mini-experiment conceptualization

These collaborative, online boards are easy to use, but participants may benefit from smaller breakout groups (5-7 people) to do the pre-work, mapping each of their stories' (anecdote circles) **actants**: constraints, constructors and actors, to the Estuarine board, then conceiving of one or several micro-projects that could be put in place to address the issue.

In the larger group, once the actants have been shared and mapped by all into one comprehensive board, the overlaps and synchronicities could be identified and a few **common "safe to fail" microprojects could be prioritized**, based on the importance, potential impact, and the time and energy cost of each.

Participants can also use the ASHEN framework, in addition to these anecdote circles.

Facilitation and Communication

Looking at the data collected to date, it may be value to reemphasize that the goal is to conceive of small community projects, avoiding both sweeping general plans at state or country level, and niche or individual actions, as neither can succeed in moving towards a desired change in society.

It would be very helpful to concretize whether Eurosense's intent is to propose community or local level actions funded by / supported by the EU parliament or another EU entity.

The y axis represents any increase in energy, whether that be money, resources, strain on infrastructure and other dependencies, and is not limited to only the size of the group. In particular, it is unclear what the levels of "global" and "meta" pertain to, as nothing except space exploration, exploitation and settlement is beyond "global" level.

4. QUESTIONS

Data dashboard:

- Of the 1,275 stories, how many of these are individual stories around the 3 subjects vs training data?
- Is it possible to change the data download spreadsheet to translate all comments into one language to enable any EU member to read all and assimilate the responses

References

The Robert Schuman Foundation at the heart of Europe - Robert Schuman

Volt Europa

EuroSense — Making sense of Europe together

Estuarine framework - Cynefin.io

Anecdote circles - Cynefin.io