

BRIEFING NOTE ON THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

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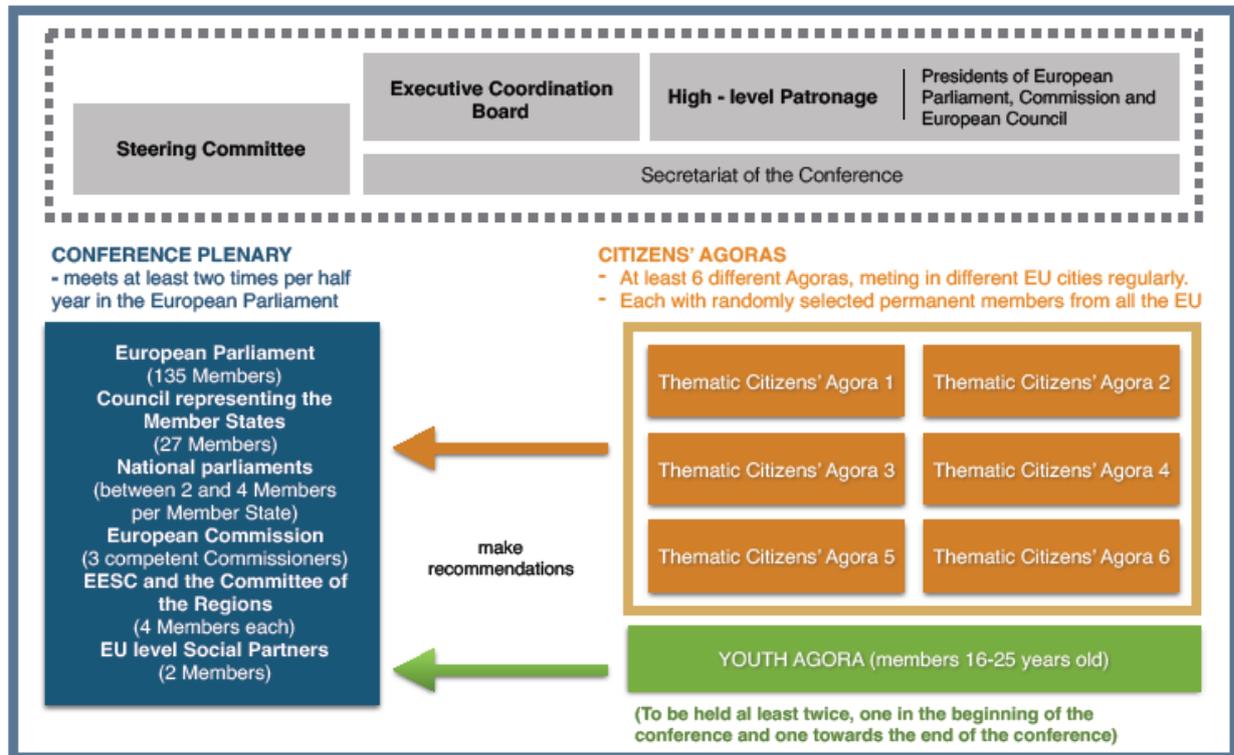
- In March 2019, President Macron proposed to organise by 2020, together “with the representatives of the European institutions and the Member States, **a Conference for Europe in order to propose all the changes our political project needs**”; in order “to chart together the road to European renewal”.
- After her election by the European Parliament in July 2019, **Ursula von der Leyen expressed her commitment to the discussion and debate on the future of Europe**. She also confirmed the Conference on the future of Europe will be organised by the European institutions and that citizens should “have their say at a Conference on the Future of Europe, to start in 2020 and run for two years”.
- **The composition, working method and mandate of the Conference remain unclear**. The political guidelines and mission letters of President-elect von der Leyen, the answers of Commissioner-designate Suica in front of the European Parliament and the proposal from the European Parliament can give first indications. The 3 Institutions are expected to develop a common position in an inter-institutional declaration.
- In her Mission letter to Dubravka Suica, von der Leyen stated that “we need a Conference on the Future of Europe, to start in 2020 and run for two years. [Which] should bring together citizens of all ages from across our Union, **as well as civil society** and European institutions”. There seem to be an agreement that the conference will start on Schuman day, 9th May 2020.
- Furthermore, President-elect gave Suica three concrete tasks: (1) To work closely with the European Parliament and the Council **to agree on the concept, structure, timing and scope of the Conference**; (2) To **ensure the widest possible participation in the Commission’s Citizens’** and (3) To work closely with the VP for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight and the VP for Values and Transparency **to ensure the follow-up on what is agreed by the Conference**.

The initial answers of the responsible Commissioner-designate Dubravka Suica to the written confirmation hearing questions indicate that the EP should play a leading role and Council and Commission should be involved. As regards the scope and objective of the conference, Suica has set out that the Conference should “lead to a concrete outcome” including on improvements of the lead candidate system and the introduction of transnational lists (TNLs). Suica does not rule out that the conference might lead to treaty revision under Art. 48 TEU.

- In the **European Parliament**, in order to facilitate the preparations for the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Conference of Presidents in its meeting on 24th October appointed **Paulo Rangel** (EPP); **Gabriele Bischoff** (S&D); **Daniel Adjuvant** (Greens); **Guy Verhofstadt** (Renew), **Zdzisław Krasnodebski** (ECR); and **Helmut Scholz** (United Left) as members of a new Working Group in charge of organising the Conference itself. The Working Group has been given a mandate to draw up a proposal and an organizational framework for the Conference on the Future of Europe on behalf of the European Parliament, and to report back to the Conference of Presidents by the end of the year. The AFCO committee also made a first proposal at the end of 2019. After both working proposals, the European Parliament recently stated its final position in a Resolution voted upon in Strasbourg on 15th January.
- The initial proposal of the Parliament consists of: a Conference Plenary, made of representatives

from national and European Parliaments as well as the Commission and the council, on the one hand; and different (thematic) Citizens' Agoras, made of citizens from all Member States of the Union meeting regularly in different cities around Europe. Additionally a Youth Agora gathering the input of young voices about all different topic that might be of concern to them.

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE (European Parliament's position - EP Resolution of 15th January 2020)



- The European Commission has established a working group on technical level attached to the cabinet of Commissioner Suica. The commission published its **communication: Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe on 22th January 2020**.
- **The European Council** established its guidelines on its conclusions of 12 December 2019 on the general approach to the Conference on the Future of Europe. The **Council of the EU**, under the lead of the Croatian Presidency; has started to exchange views and to set its position. The council affirms that the Conference should develop "EU policies in the medium and longer term to better address the challenges facing Europe", but avoids mentioning institutional reform.
- The initiative was put on hold by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. It should have been launched on Schuman day, 9 May 2020.
- Originally, experts were pointing out to different possible mandates with varying levels of ambition could result as outcome of the proposals and the trade-offs between the institutions, while trying to reach a common position: From the "open model" - where the conference is to make proposals for the improvement of the lead candidate system and to discuss the introduction of TNLs with an outcome that might include suggestions for treaty changes to "Citizen Dialogues 2.0", making the conference a platform for the exchange of ideas between citizens. However, **the Covid19 Pandemic has further shown the need for European Reform and is creating the momentum for political reform and further European integration.**

- **On a meeting of the Constitutional Affairs Committee on 25th May, the Council (of Ministers) was urged to adopt and agree upon a common position.** Various MEP's asked for a new position of the European Parliament to be drafted by AFCO and debated in the next plenary in June. According to AFCO, the Conference should be launched by September.
- The Council of the EU, which included all EU Ministers for European affairs, held a videoconference **on 26th May 2020**. In addition to discussing the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) taking into account the new realities and the proposed recovery fund, **the Council discussed the Conference on the Future of Europe.**
- Several Members of the Council pointed out that the Conference would be relevant for discussing with EU citizens and other stakeholders the challenges facing the EU in the medium and long term, including the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis. **The presidency (of the Council of Ministers – at the time Croatia) highlighted that its aim is to find an agreement on the Council's position on the conference as soon as possible** and to engage on this basis with the European Commission and the European Parliament.
- **The European Federalist openly call for “A constitutional conference”,** the current crisis is showing that our Union need to enhance its competences in order to be fit to defend the interest of its Citizens and it Member States. **The Covid19 pandemic is showing that** European Solidarity is essential to overcome current challenges and **federalism is needed to make our European Institutions fit for purpose.**
- **This “constitutional conference” must include a concrete proposal for a new (Constitutional) Treaty** to be submitted to the European Council by the European Parliament along the requirements of Art. 48 TEU, as we believe that is the only shy to really empower citizens and making them a meaningful part of the debate on the Future of Europe.