

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

Main outcome of the Working Group

19/12/2019

This paper summarizes the main outcome agreed by the Working Group on the Conference on the future of Europe with an aim to provide elements for the Conference of Presidents to define the Parliament's mandate in view of the organisation and set up of the Conference. The note reflects the current consensus among a majority of the political groups on the scope, governance and outcome of the Conference.

Objective and format of the Conference

The Conference on the Future of Europe must be a bottom-up exercise where European citizens are listened to and their voices contribute to the debates so that the future of the European Union is based on their ideas of that future.

The Conference should be a process and be governed through different bodies with defined/ad-hoc responsibilities, including the Conference Plenary, Citizens' and Youth agoras. The Social Partners, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region will be involved.

The Conference process should be an open and transparent process, taking an inclusive, participatory and well-balanced approach towards citizens and stakeholders. The involvement of citizens, organised civil society and different stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level should be the key element of this innovative and original process format.

Prior to the launch of the Conference, a listening phase should be initiated which will enable citizens from across the European Union to express their ideas, make suggestions, and propose their own vision of what Europe means for them.

The communication to citizens and the participation of citizens in the Conference process, work and outcome is of paramount importance. All existing and new communication tools for digital and physical participation should be coordinated among the three institutions, starting from the existing EP resources and EPLO's offices so that citizens can directly contact the Conference throughout the process and to follow proceedings once the Plenary sessions and Citizens' agoras start.

Throughout the Conference process, expertise from universities, research centres and think tanks across Europe will be important and welcomed to support the Conference process at the different levels and towards the different bodies.

Scope of the Conference

The Conference Plenary should enable an open forum for discussions between the different participants without limiting the scope to pre-defined policy fields or methods of integration. At most, pre-defined but not exhaustive policy priorities can be already identified, such as:

-) European values, fundamental rights and freedoms,
-) The democratic and institutional aspects of the European Union
-) Environmental challenges and climate crisis,
-) Social justice and equality,
-) Economic issues including taxation
-) Digital transformation
-) Security and the role of the EU in the world

This non-exhaustive set of policies can serve as a guidance for the Conference.

Organisation, composition and timeline

The Conference could ideally start its work on Schuman Day, the 9 May 2020 and aim to complete its work by summer 2022.

All Conference meetings (including Plenary meetings and Citizens' and youth agora) of the Conference should be webstreamed and open to the public. All documents pertaining to the Conference should be published including contributions from stakeholders.

All organs and bodies at all levels of the conference will be gender balanced and all proceedings will take place in the official languages of the Union.

The High-level Patronage

The High-level Patronage will be ensured by the three institutions at the highest level, by the Presidents of the European Parliament, of the European Council and of the European Commission. This high-level Patronage will have a role of guarantee of the process and patronage.

The high-level Patronage will kick off the Conference process and provide for its oversight all through its works until its final meeting.

The Executive Coordination Board

In view to ensure efficient guidance of the process as a whole and towards all different bodies, an executive coordination board, composed of the three responsible EU-institutions (EP, European Commission and Council) will be established under the leadership of the EP. The members of the executive coordination board will be part of the Steering Committee.

The Executive Coordination Board will be responsible for the daily management, including the practical organization of the Conference, working groups, the Citizens' agoras and any other initiative determined by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will be responsible for the preparation of the meetings of the Conference Plenary (drafting agendas, plenary reports and conclusions) as well as the Citizens' and Youth agoras and the oversight of the activities and organisation of the Conference. The Steering Committee will be composed in such a way as to ensure political and institutional balance.

The Steering Committee will consist of:

-) representatives of the European Parliament (all political groups represented)
-) representatives of the Council (EU-Presidencies)
-) representatives of the Commission (3 Commissioners responsible)

All of the components of the Steering Committee will have equal weight.

Plenary sessions

The Plenary of the Conference is constituted by:

- the European Parliament representing the Union's Citizens maximum (135)
- the Council representing the Member States (27)
- the national parliaments (2 to 4 members per Member States' parliaments)
- the Commission will be represented by the 3 competent Commissioners.
- the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will participate with each four Members in the Conference.
- the EU level Social Partners will each have 2 Members of the Conference.

The representation of the Council must be at ministerial level. Representatives from the European Parliament and from the national parliaments should ensure a balanced political representation reflecting their respective diversity.

The institutional parties of the Conference will participate as equal partners and strict parity will be ensured between the European Parliament, on one hand, and the Council and national parliaments on the other.

The Conference meets in plenary session at least four times a year in the premises of the European Parliament and the sessions should be webstreamed.

At its first meeting, the Conference Plenary should adopt a working plan. After each meeting of the Conference Plenary, a plenary report with conclusions and working groups' reports should be made available to the participants and the general public.

The recommendations of the Conference shall seek to find consensus or at least represent the views of the majority of representatives of each of the three EU institutions and of the national parliaments.

At the final meeting of the Conference Plenary, final conclusions should be adopted summarizing the result of the Conference.

Citizens' agoras

[Six] Thematic Citizens' agoras will be held throughout the process. They will be held in different locations across the Union and will have to be representative (geographical, gender, age, socio-economic and/or level of education).

The selection of the participating citizens will be made by independent institutions in Member States reflecting the criteria mentioned above.

The Citizens' agora will have different participants in the different locations whereas each individual thematic Citizens' agora must be composed of the same participants at each of its meetings in order to ensure coherence and consistency. Each Citizens' agora will be composed of a maximum of 200/300 citizens with a minimum of three per Member State apportioned by the principle of digressive proportionality.

There will be a minimum of two meetings of each thematic Citizens' agora in order to provide input for the Conference Plenary and receive overall feedbacks on the deliberations in another meeting in dialogue format.

The Citizens' agoras will need to be held across the EU whilst also taking into account practical consideration, such as accessibility and facilities.

Criteria should be defined to guarantee that elected politicians, senior government representatives, professional representatives of lobbies/political organisations/NGOs cannot participate in citizens' agora.

Arrangements should be made to ensure that all citizens participating in the Conference can be supported in terms of a contribution to travel and accommodation costs and, where appropriate, authorised leave of absence from their work place.

The Citizens' agoras will seek to find agreement by consensus and where this is not possible a minority opinion can be indicated.

Youth agoras

In addition to the Citizens' agora, at least two Youth agoras are to be held, one in the beginning of the Conference and one towards the end. Youth deserves its own assembly, because young generations are the future of Europe and they will be most affected by any decision on the future direction of the EU taken today.

Selection and size will be based on the same criteria as for the Citizens' agora. Participants' age will be set between 16 and 25. It will also have the same status and working methods as the Citizens' agora and report to both Citizens' agora and to the Conference Plenary.

The Secretariat

The Conference will be assisted by a Secretariat. Its members will be drawn from the three Institutions.

Output

The Conference will produce concrete recommendations that will need to be addressed by institutions and turned into actions, to meet the expectations of citizens and stakeholders after a two-year process and debate.

The three EU Institutions commit to a genuine follow-up of the Conference without delay, with legislative proposals, initiating treaty change or otherwise.

Date	Conference	Follow up
2020		
1 January		Start of the Council Presidency by Croatia
15 January		EP resolution on the Conference
End of January	Conclusion / Memorandum of Understanding/exchange of letters	
February	Instalment Steering Committee	
End of March		
9 May	- Constitutive session Conference	
1 July		Start of Council Presidency by Germany
September to December	2 Plenary session Conferences + Youth Agora	
September		
2021		
1 January		Start of Council Presidency by Portugal
January to June	2 Plenary session Conferences	
1 July		Start of Council Presidency by Slovenia
July to December	2 Plenary session Conferences	
2022		
1 January		Start of Council Presidency by France
January	Plenary session Conference + Youth Agora	
May	Closing session Conference	
May		Start formalisation proposals of the Conference