

## Conference on the Future of Europe

### How can philanthropy and foundations engage?

#### Briefing note

30 June 2021

The Conference on the Future of Europe is an initiative of the European Commission and the European Parliament, announced at the end of 2019, with the aim to review the medium to long term future of the EU and potential reforms that may be recommended. The Conference should be a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise for Europeans to have their say on what they expect from the European Union.

Philanthropic organisations and wider civil society organisations are at the forefront in developing responses to societal challenges, as well as in keeping governments and institutions accountable. During current particularly challenging times it is more important than ever for philanthropy and wider civil society to engage with policy makers and to make sure its voice is heard.

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a unique opportunity to live the civil dialogue and give civil society including philanthropy and foundations a prominent role in the shaping of the structure of the Conference, feeding into the process and content, as well as taking further the outcomes of the Conference. Policymakers need input from philanthropy and wider civil society in order to co-design the Europe of tomorrow. Philanthropy Advocacy already organised a [webinar](#) on why it is important for the philanthropy and civil society to engage with the Conference on the Future of Europe.

One of philanthropy's main role in the Conference should be facilitating the collection of input and ideas coming from citizens and civil society organisations in order to feed in the process and make sure that the voices of national stakeholders are heard and reflected in the final report coming out of the Conference. In addition, foundations have own expertise on different topics and should also provide input themselves on the issues they are working or sectoral issues. Moreover, there is the third role of philanthropy in the Conference, which is being an observer around the Conference.

#### What are the objectives of the Conference?

The Conference on the Future of Europe should be the vehicle through which we can bring about long-lasting change in the EU, including an increased and more meaningful involvement of citizens and of organised civil society in the European public sphere.

It will be key for the success of the Conference to be a wide, participative and bottom-up process, with a concrete and not pre-determined outcome.

The Conference provides an unique opportunity to work on a strong, shared narrative for the European Union, with a view to position Europe as: 1) guardian of shared fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, 2) global promoter of sustainability, open and fair trade and multilateralism, 3) haven for a unique economic and social model based on fair competition and solidarity in an area without internal borders and 4) driver of a sustainable prosperity; with a strong European civil society at its heart.

## How is the Conference structured?

**Details on the structure and scope of the Conference** can be found in the [Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe](#) signed in Brussels by the European Parliament President, David Sassoli, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and by the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, acting as its **Joint Presidency**. The Joint Declaration sets out the scope, structure, objectives and principles of the Conference and reiterated that it is a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise for Europeans to have their say on what they expect from the European Union.

**The Conference is governed by the Executive Board** composed of representatives from the three EU institutions (European Parliament, Council and Commission), on equal footing. The co-chairs of the Executive Board are **Guy Verhofstadt** on behalf of the European Parliament, the Portuguese Secretary of State for EU Affairs, **Ana Paula Zacarias** as the Presidency's representative and the European Commission Vice-President, **Dubravka Šuica**.

The other representatives of the Executive Board are: from the Parliament's side **Manfred Weber** (EPP, DE) and **Iratxe García Pérez** (S&D, ES), from the Council's side the Slovenian Secretary of State for EU Affairs, **Gasper Dovzan**, and the French Minister of State for EU Affairs, **Clément Beaune**, and from the Commission side Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, **Maroš Šefčovič**, and Vice-President for Values and Transparency, **Věra Jourová**.

Parliament's observers are **Gerolf Annemans** (ID, BE), **Daniel Freund** (Greens/EFA, DE), Zdzisław Krasnodębski (ECR, PL) and **Helmut Scholz** (The Left, DE). From the Council's side the observers are the Czech State Secretary for EU Affairs, **Milena Hrdinková**, the Swedish Minister for EU Affairs, **Hans Dahlgren**, the Spanish Secretary of State for the EU, **Juan González-Barba Pera**, and the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, **Sophie Wilmès**, from the Council side.

Lastly, **COSAC**, the **Committee of the Regions**, the **European Economic and Social Committee**, **BusinessEurope** and **ETUC** have also been invited to participate to the meeting as observers, being represented by: Guido Wolf, Gunther Krichbaum, Luís Capoulas Santos, Marko Pogačnik and Bojan Kekec for COSAC, Apostolos Tzitzikostas for the Committee of the Regions, **Christa Schweng** for the European Economic and Social Committee, Markus Beyrer for BusinessEurope and Luca Visentini for ETUC.

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will be associated when the international role of the EU is discussed. Representatives of key stakeholders may be invited. The Executive Board will draw and publish the conclusions of the Conference Plenary.

## Conference Processes:

1. [Multilingual digital platform](#) - will be the place for citizens to share ideas and send online submissions. They will be collected, analysed, monitored and published throughout the Conference.
  - The digital platform is the hub of the Conference: it is your way to get involved and speak up at the Conference. Here you can share your thoughts on Europe and the changes which need to happen, see what others have to say, find events near you, organise your own event and follow the progress and the outcome of the Conference.
  - **Decentralised events** – online, in-person and hybrid events held by people and organisations as well as national, regional and local authorities across Europe;
  - Feedback collected on the platform will feed into discussions of the European Citizens' Panels and Plenary debates. A feedback mechanism will ensure that the ideas

expressed during the Conference events result in concrete recommendations for EU actions.

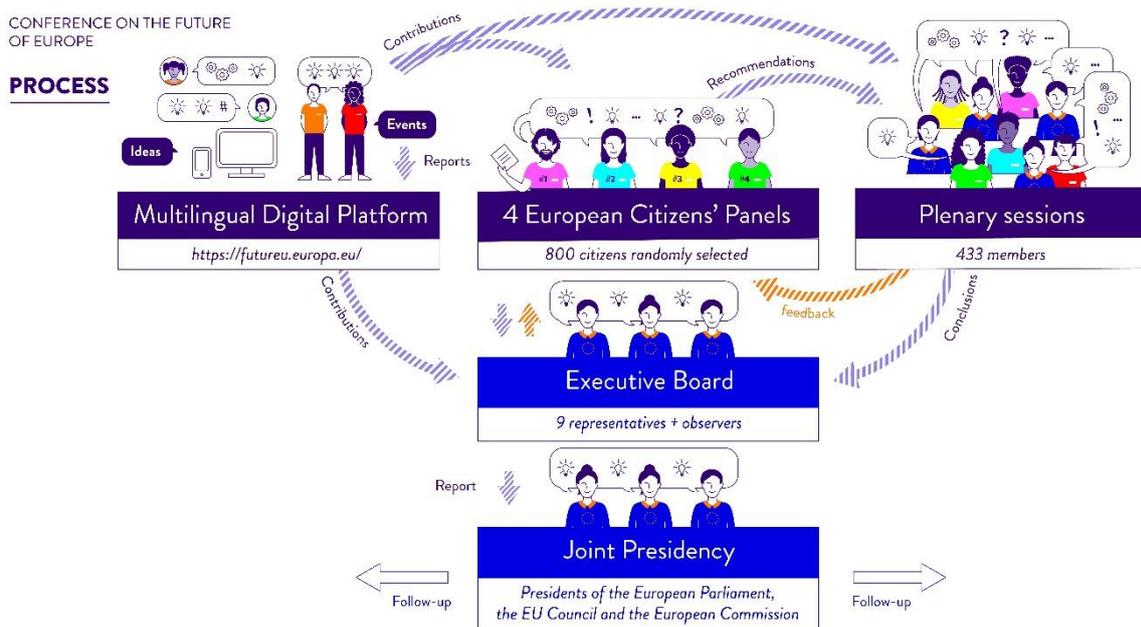
**Call for engagement:**

Simply choose from the comprehensive range of [topics](#):

- [Climate change and the environment](#)
- [Health](#)
- [A stronger economy, social justice and jobs](#)
- [EU in the world](#)
- [Values and rights, rule of law, security](#)
- [Digital transformation](#)
- [European democracy](#)
- [Migration](#)
- [Education, culture, youth and sport](#)
- [Other ideas](#)

and let the Conference know your opinion. Your ideas will be collected, analysed, monitored and published on the platform, throughout the Conference.

2. **European Citizens' Panels** – will discuss different topics and put forward their proposals; they will be representative in terms of geographic origin, gender, age, socioeconomic background and/or level of education;
3. **Conference Plenaries** - will ensure that the recommendations from the national and European citizens' panels, grouped by themes, are debated without a predetermined outcome and without limiting the scope to pre-defined policy areas. The Conference Plenary is composed of representatives from the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, as well as representatives from all national Parliaments, on an equal footing and citizens. The Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, the social partners, and civil society will also be represented.



Courtesy of the Common Secretariat of the Conference on the Future of Europe

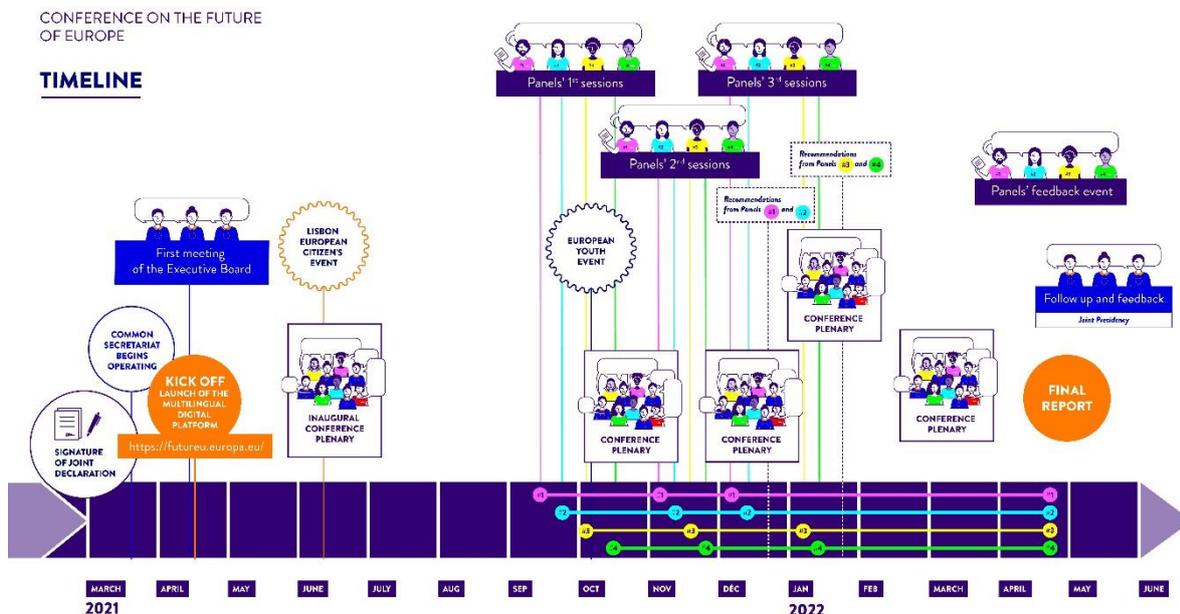
The final outcome of the Conference will be presented in a report to the Joint Presidency. The three Institutions will examine swiftly how to follow up effectively to this report, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties.

**Entry points for engagement for philanthropy and foundations:**

- **European Economic and Social Committee** directly – via EFC/Dafne members who are members of the EESC. EESC President holds a seat in the executive board and EESC also signed a MoU with members of the EESC LG including the EFC in order to join forces in view of the Conference and to partner up the organisational and visibility efforts of the EESC and of the LG CSOs at the maximum possible extent.
- **European Parliament:** Guy Verhofstadt (BE), Daniel Freund and Helmut Scholz (DE, AFCO) – engaging around the Civil Society Convention for the Conference for the Future of Europe (see more below for explanation) and authors of the [Working Document](#) on citizens’ and civil society’s participation in the Conference on the Future of Europe.
- **European Commission:** Věra Jourová – the spokesperson for civil society, European Democracy Action Plan is under her auspices, Dubravka Šuica, Maroš Šefčovič.

**Timeline:**

- second half 2021 – Launch of EU-wide expert meetings and citizens dialogues (by EU institutions and member states)
- 2022 – Closing Conference, during the French Council Presidency the Conference is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe



Courtesy of the Common Secretariat of the Conference on the Future of Europe

## Summary:

Idea in brief	Who participates	Key resources
<p>Conference on the future of Europe has been proposed by the French President Emmanuel Macron in 2019.</p> <p>It is citizen-led and first of its kind, with the purpose to enable people from across Europe to share their ideas on Europe's future. The outcomes of the conference are open.</p>	<p>108 European Parliament representatives</p> <p>54 from the Council, two per each Member State and three from the European Commission</p> <p>108 National Parliament representatives</p> <p>108 European citizens, including European and national Citizens' Panels as well as the President of the European Youth Forum</p>	<p><a href="#">Multilingual Digital Platform</a></p> <p><a href="#">Calendar with key events for 2021 &amp; 2022</a></p> <p><a href="#">EEESC liaison group</a> with civil society and networks</p> <p>Information on the <a href="#">Civil Society Convention on the Future of Europe Conference Observatory</a> initiated by a consortium of European philanthropic foundations and EPC</p>

## Next steps

The European Citizens' Panels will convene in September and October to prepare their input to future plenary debates, including a set of recommendations for the Union to follow-up on, based on citizens' contributions collected via the Platform. The Conference is committed to giving maximum space to young people and in this vein, preparations for the European Youth Event organised by the European Parliament on 8-9 October will also continue. The next Plenary session is scheduled for 22-23 October.

## Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe

### What are objectives of the Convention?

Philanthropy Advocacy has joined the civil society led [Civil Society Convention](#) which seeks to collect civil society input and bridge to the Conference. After all its civil society organisations' role to hold EU institutions and national governments accountable for a truly participative and democratic conference, but also for its follow up through policy, legislative and if needed Treaty change.

Civil Society Europe, as the coordination for civil society organisations in Europe, established a Civil Society Convention for the Conference on the Future of Europe, with the invitation for civil society organisations "working towards regenerating the European project around the shared values of Equality, Solidarity, Inclusiveness and Democracy", recognise themselves in the founding declaration and agree to reclaim a space for civil society organisations in the Conference on the Future of Europe to join the Convention.

### Structure of the Convention:

The Convention is composed of over 80 organisations active at pan European level that share EU values and subscribe to the joint declaration and it remains open for membership all along the process. The CSO Convention has been given 5 out of 8 seats in the Conference Plenary reserved for the organised civil society.

### Call for engagement:

The work of the CSO Convention is structured around 5 thematic clusters that are coordinated by member organisations in the Steering Committee, these clusters will work on outputs that will be presented and discussed in the plenary sessions of the Convention. Each of the thematic clusters is organised in working groups which will be able to self-organise the development of proposals in close relation to each other and coordinating with the leader of the thematic cluster. The outcome of each working group shall lead to a comprehensive set of proposals, under the coordination of the cluster leader. The clusters work closely together with all the others to contribute to the CSOs' vision for the future of European democracy and the priorities for the EU.

PA is currently actively involved in these thematic clusters:

- **Social Europe** covering topics of 1) a sustainable economic model: Fair and Progressive Taxation; 2) Equal opportunities: Quality Education, Training & Lifelong Learning; Gender Equality; Active Support to Employment; 3) Fair working conditions: Fair living wages; Social Dialogue and Involvement of Workers; 4) Social Protection: Childcare; Minimum income; Housing; Access to essential services; Health; Long-term care and
- **The Union's democratic foundations, and how to strengthen democratic processes governing the European Union - To make Europe a citizens' project (including the Rule of law)** focusing on the current European institutional and political setting as for citizens engagement, dialogue and partnership; elaborate ideas for improvement of the consultations mechanisms; sketch out innovative ideas for the EU governance based on citizens dialogue and democratic participatory approach.
- **Other thematic clusters:** Europe's digital transformation, Our European Life, The fight against climate change and environmental challenges

If you would like to put forward your ideas on these topics contact Nikoleta Bitterová:  
[nbitterova@efc.be](mailto:nbitterova@efc.be) who is coordinating PA input in the Convention.