



## Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe – Questions and Answers

Brussels, 22 January 2020

### What will the Conference focus on?

The Conference should give Europeans a greater say on what the Union does and how it works for them.

The Commission is of the opinion that no topic should be left off the table but it is necessary to structure the debates around key topics – as set out in the Commission's [Political Priorities](#) and the European Council's Strategic Agenda. These include the fight against climate change and environmental challenges, an economy that works for people, social fairness and equality, Europe's digital transformation, promoting our European values, strengthening the EU's voice in the world, as well as shoring up the Union's democratic foundations.

The second strand should focus on addressing topics specifically related to democratic processes and institutional matters: notably the lead candidate system and transnational lists for elections to the European Parliament.

### How will this second, institutional strand of the Conference work?

In her [Political Guidelines](#), President **von der Leyen** has made it clear that the Commission stands ready to broker discussions between the European Parliament and the Council on improving the lead candidate system and on the issue of transnational lists. Vice-President **Jourová**, responsible for Values and Transparency, will be in charge of this particular strand of the Conference, and will work in close cooperation with Vice-President **Šuica**, who will lead the Commission's overall work on the Conference.

The establishment of transnational lists would at least require changes in EU electoral law. This in turn would require a proposal by the European Parliament, adopted in the Council by unanimity, and the approval by the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. As the Commission does not have competence in this field, its role should be that of a facilitator between the European Parliament and the Council. If useful for the other institutions, the Commission stands ready to make available legal and institutional expertise, research on electoral processes and insight into inter-institutional relations.

### How will the Conference be organised?

The final concept structure, scope and timing of the conference will be defined in a **Joint Declaration** signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, acting as equal partners. This Joint Declaration should, in the Commission's view, later be open to other signatories including the other institutions, organisations and stakeholders, who would thus commit to respecting the objectives and modalities of the Conference.

In its contribution, the Commission is proposing a model focussed on citizens' participation, where Conference-related events will take place all across Europe, reflecting Europe's diversity. In addition to the town-hall-style citizens' dialogues involving Commissioners and other speakers, a wide range of other Conference-related events should be organised by local, regional and national partners on the ground: these would include national parliaments, social partners, regional and local authorities and civil society.

A **digital platform** would ensure the accessibility and transparency of the proceedings of the Conference at all times. It will have to be multilingual, in order to allow all citizens to follow the work of the Conference all across Europe, and facilitate their active participation. The results of the debates and all the documentation prepared for these events will be posted on the online platform.

Finally, thematic **EU-level deliberative panels** could be organised by the European Union institutions, gathering citizens and experts at regular intervals throughout the Conference. These panels could hear contributions gathered in the framework of the Conference, as well as the views of stakeholders and elected representatives and then reflect how best to follow-up with recommendations for action.

Vice-President **Šefčovic**, responsible for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, will ensure shared institutional ownership of the Conference; aim for all proceedings to be facts-based; and that

discussions benefit from future-proof insights into policy-making.

### **How will you ensure the widest number of citizens will participate in the Conference?**

Ensuring the Conference reaches wide and far will be one of the most important keys to its overall success. All Europeans should be given an equal opportunity to engage, whether young or old, whether living in urban or rural areas, whether knowledgeable about the EU or not. The Conference should reach beyond those citizens who are in favour of the EU, or those who participate regularly in discussions on European politics, in order to ensure that a wide range of views are covered.

National, regional and local governments and civil society will play a crucial role, organising Conference debates on the ground, as close to the citizens as possible so they do not necessarily have to come far to participate. In order to organise Conference debates, they will have to commit to respecting the principles and objectives set in the Joint Declaration, and to sharing the results of the debates they organise, using the online platform.

### **What outcome do you expect?**

A discussion of this magnitude will only be fruitful if, and when, real action follows. President **von der Leyen** has indeed pledged to follow up on the results of the Conference.

It will be the joint task of the EU institutions, and participants from national regional and local levels, to ensure that the Conference is a meaningful path to making our European democracy even more vibrant, and to making sure that people feel that their voice counts. The ultimate success of the Conference will be determined by its participants; and on how we follow up on citizens' contributions - turning ideas what was debated and agreed upon during the Conference into action.

### **Where will the budget for all these events come from?**

Ambitions will need to be matched with the appropriate means. If we want to ensure the widest reach-out possible, all EU institutions should be ready to contribute resources, notably financial, for the organisation and roll out of the Conference.

The Commission will also explore how European Union programmes such as Erasmus, DiscoverEU or the European Solidarity Corps could be used to support and promote citizens' participation in the Conference, also through for example, the DiscoverEU itineraries.

### **Next steps**

The aim is for the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission to agree rapidly on a Joint Declaration defining the exact concept, structure, scope and timing of the Conference, in order to be ready to launch the Conference by May 2020 and for it to run for 2 years thereafter. As the launch would coincide with Croatia's rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Commission believes that the main kick-off event could take place in Dubrovnik on 9 May 2020. Further events could be organised around this date in all the Member States, in order to underline the decentralised nature of the Conference.

### **For More Information**

[Press release](#)

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