

CoFoE – EP Executive Board delegation meeting

20.05.2021

- Draft calendar of the CoFoE
 - The plenary sessions will start on 19.06 with an inaugural one in Strasbourg. The day before, there will be a possibility given to the political families to hold their delegation meetings and caucuses.
 - The first citizens' event will take place in Lisbon on 17.06.
 - There will be the first two citizens' panels held in September, the other two will follow in October. There will be a European Youth Event and the 2nd plenary scheduled in October as well. The first sessions of each panel will take place with physical presence of the participants. They will be held in Firenze, Maastricht, Dublin and Natolin.
 - Second sessions of 4 citizens' panels will take place in November. For financial reasons they will be organised in remote way only.
 - Third sessions of the 4 citizens' panels will take place in December. They will be followed by a plenary to discuss the conclusions of the 1st and 2nd panels the same month.
 - In January 2022 another plenary session should discuss the conclusions of the 3rd and 4th citizens' panels.
 - There will be two other plenary sessions in February and March to come up with proposals based on those citizens' panels conclusions.
 - There will be a final event of the European citizens' panel in the end of April 2022.
 - The plenaries in Strasbourg are scheduled on Friday-Saturday after the EP plenaries (except for the first one in June). The MEPs (Weber + Garcia Perez) would prefer them to start on Thursday evening, i.e. immediately after the EP plenaries. Verhofstadt said he would raise this point with the other co-chairs but the EP delegation should also take into consideration the practical side of other session components' participation, who might prefer Friday-Saturday scenario for the plenaries.
- On 19.06 9 working groups should be established, according to 9 thematic fields of the Conference (the 10th one not being a thematic category per se). The topics from the open thematic category will be distributed among 9 WGs. Thus, each one of 9 Executive Board members will chair one WG. The WG will have around 40 members each, meaning every member of the plenary will seat in 1 WG only (they will have to indicate their preferences for more than one in order to facilitate the attribution of members to WGs). The WG will meet during the two days of plenaries, but there will be also digital meetings in between, if necessary.
 - M. Weber expressed his will to chair the "Democracy WG". He voiced a concern about representativity of the WGs and a fair distribution of seats. In fact, it will be important to avoid that f.e. all the Greens seat in environmental issues WG and no other points of view are represented in it. ID supported this point of view. GV assured it would not happen, but there will be no specific rules on the composition of WGs, just common sense.
 - The Left (6 delegates in the plenary only) criticised the limit of one WG per member. In fact, it would exclude them from 3 WGs. They also asked about the decision-making process' rules within the WG. According to GV, these will be determined by the second plenary session. He underlined that the idea is to find every time a consensus of the 4 pillars of the Conference, including on the level of WGs. He also underlined that the principle of 1 WG per member will not change due to feasibility reasons.
 - I. Garcia would like to chair "economic and social issues WG".
- GV informed the MEPs that most probably each Member State 2 representatives in plenary sessions should be a European affairs minister and a minister in charge of a subject discussed by the given plenary.
- Letters inviting the national parliaments to nominate their delegates will be sent out today. The deadline is 6 June.

- The Greens criticised the lack of visibility of the conference so far. They want the first plenary session to be very much public. In their opinion, a broad involvement of the national parliamentarians should help to achieve it.
- Proposals for the thematic distribution of the citizens' panels:
 - European democracy, RoL
 - Climate change, environment, health
 - Stronger economy, jobs, youth, digital transformation, social justice, education
 - Migration and EU in the world
- The Greens criticised such grouping of subjects, moreover that they will have to be discussed by the panels in a very short period of time (in total, 6 days of work for a citizens' panel).
- GV said there will be no list of questions to be asked to each panel. The citizens will be free to decide on the exact topics they would like to discuss. The citizens will get a list of experts on each thematic field, but it will be up to them to choose which one of the experts to invite as a consultant.
- The EPP trusts in the help of professional moderators to facilitate debates in the citizens' panels.
- Convention on the Future of Europe (a group of 77 NGOs) will be given, as representatives of the civil society, a role of advisors/consultants to the citizens' panels.
- First plenary session agenda:
 - Opening and approval of the agenda
 - Presentation of the citizens panels and digital platform – discussion on the citizens involvement (max. 2 hours)
 - Procedures, WGs and provisional calendar of works (max. 1h30)
 - Speaking time rules to be discussed (current proposal: EP – one hour, national parliaments – one hour, Council – 45 mins, Commission – 30 mins, others – 15 mins). In the EP case, the speaking time granted will be internally divided among political groups and then internally distributed among single MEPs). EPP proposed to distribute the speaking time among political families instead of institutions, as, at the end of the day, it will be up to the political families to make final decisions, not to the institutions. Greens supported this vision, claiming that it would also avoid the imbalance between the institutions (i.e. a Commissioner speaking for half an hour, and an MEP for 1 minute only).
 - As for the agenda of the first plenary, the EPP would prefer this gathering to briefly present each party's expectations from the Conference and for the future of Europe rather than discussing technicalities. Otherwise, the event will be even more boring than the opening ceremony. The Greens agreed and would like to have more topical debates from the very beginning of the Conference. GV agreed with them but said that debates clashing different political views will in practice not be possible before the technical side for such debates has been arranged. On the other hand, he said, political families' caucuses before the first plenary will be used for this more political purpose. In the end, he promised to try to make the first debate a central one, however, and limit the second one to keep it as short as possible.
 - The plenary will be chaired by the co-chairs, but opened by GV as the host in the Parliament, later replaced by the other co-chairs (and not seating next to each other all the time).
- The DG COMM of the 3 institutions will be asked before the next Executive Board meeting to prepare a strategy for a broader use of social media to promote the conference more effectively. For the time being, there have been 14 000 citizens who created accounts on the digital platform, with 600 events registered so far. GV estimated this is not a satisfying result and urged the three institutions to allocate some more money to this exercise. In his view, the publicity should be centred on social media and not traditional ones, as the citizens' participation will be mainly virtual.
- The point was raised about the lack of gender balance in the ID and ECR delegations.
- There will be an internal meeting of the whole 108 EP delegation next week. Before that, the EP Executive Board delegation will meet too. However, both meetings will most probably take

place only after the Executive Board meeting on Wednesday (so Thursday or Friday), with probably no EP Executive Board delegation meeting before the Executive Board meeting this time.