

Our suggestions

For the online platform

- *Ensure the automatic and total translation of all materials in the twenty-four European languages*
- *Ensure access to profiles, ideas, comments, and the organisation of events from non-EU citizens residing in the territory of the European Union*
- *Ensure easy access to representative associations and civil society, academia and research, local and regional authorities, European parties, cultural foundations and national cultural institutes, promoters of ICE, winners of the Spinelli Prize, and student organisations without prior or subsequent censorship*
- *Create a space to advertise events in the candidate countries of the Western Balkans*
- *Provide for the platform to be operational after the conclusion of the Conference. This would give citizens, representative associations and civil society the opportunity to monitor the follow-up to the Conference and to react to the operational proposals of the European and national institutions up to the European elections in May 2024*

Regarding the Composition of the Conference in Plenary Sessions

- *Guarantee the participation of a percentage of young people between 15 and 25 years equal to that existing in the European population (12.7%), i.e., a total of at least 55 young people out of the 433 participants in the plenary sessions*
- *Provide for the presence, in the role of observers, of representatives of local and regional authorities and their European networks (CEMR, Eurocities, Network of European Capitals of Culture, Covenant of Mayors for climate and energy, Macro-regions...) in addition to the representatives of the Committee of the Regions*
- *Strengthen the cultural dimension with the participation, in the role of observers, of the national cultural institutes associated in the EUNIC, the universities of the European capitals, the European research centres, the partnerships of the Creative Europe projects...*
- *Strengthen the relationship with the schools, educational institutions and their actors (teachers and learners) by associating, for example, a plenary of representatives of EP programs (EP Ambassador School, Euroscola...) and using pedagogically innovative tools such as the "Process to Europe" or "Europe at the theatre" promoted by EM-IT from 2016*

Communication, Information and Awareness Campaign

- *Involve public radio and television services as well as other networks such as Euronews or university radios (e.g., EUROPHONICA)*
- *Ensure publicity and retransmission of all Conference proceedings, not only in plenaries but also in panels and Executive Board meetings*
- *Urge European parties and their foundations to carry out the mission entrusted to them by the Lisbon Treaty (art. 10 "forming the European conscience of citizens")*
- *Facilitate the organisation of municipal and regional councils open to citizens*
- *Give mandate - and provide them with the necessary resources - to the representatives of the European Union in the member countries in cooperation with EDIC and CDE (and to the delegations in the candidate countries) to promote debate events on the future of Europe in the numerous cultural festivals, using the innovative tool of the "fringe festival" as well*

Let's Turn Hope into Reality

The Conference on the Future of Europe was born in a period of uncertainty about the destiny of the European integration process. Despite the optimism spread by the European institutions, in fact, it is not yet known when the European Economic Recovery Plan will start. The plan is still blocked in front of five national parliaments. The prospects of endowing the Union with its own strategic autonomy are very smoky in sensitive sectors of the digital agenda and artificial intelligence, not to mention foreign, security and defence policy. This is due to the fact that governments jealously manage migratory policies, showing little to no solidarity. Furthermore, the social dimension (which implies intergenerational balance, gender equality, the fight against precariousness and poverty) appeared once again at the Porto Summit as a sector firmly enclosed within national borders.

Yet, there is hope that the innovative idea at the centre of the Conference (making citizens and institutions discuss a plan of equality) can unhinge a mechanism that, from the Treaty of Lisbon onwards, has been taken hostage by the confederal and inefficient method. There is also hope that participatory democracy, using all the tools of the digital society, will be able to usher in a period of reform in the European Union.

In order for hope to turn into reality, the European Movement in Italy and its collective members submit their analysis, criticisms and a catalogue of constructive proposals to the attention of public opinions.

Pier Virgilio Dastoli

President of European Movement in Italy

Let's Open the Gates of the European Construction Site

As a tribute to France and its President Emmanuel Macron who launched the idea of the Conference on 4 March 2019 with his letter to European citizens "*for a European renaissance*", it was decided that most of the works on the future of Europe will take place in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Strasbourg in the building dedicated to Louise Weiss, a building inaugurated in 1999 to house the Assembly of the new Union extended to include the countries of Central Europe.

The choice of Strasbourg is, moreover, symbolically significant because, according to the Lisbon Treaty, it is the official seat of the European Parliament, the only institution that represents all European citizens.

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As anyone who is following the start of the Conference on the future of Europe knows, the main innovation compared to previous experiences (six intergovernmental conferences from the Single Act to the Lisbon Treaty and two Conventions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Constitutional Treaty) should reside in the opening of the European construction site to "*non-experts*", that is to citizens with particular attention to young people in the framework of **participatory democracy**.

In passing from auspices to facts by entrusting this passage to a small committee of institutional representatives (*Executive Board*), the preparation of the Conference has so far undergone some attempts at substantial changes and other attempts risk taking place in a complex or complicated exercise of participatory democracy. Some governments seem to aim at transforming the confrontation between the still inadequately organised civil society and the institutions into a **broad consultation**, leaving the same institutions with the task of drawing the consequences of the dialogue.

First of all, an **online platform** (<https://futureu.europa.eu>) was created by the three European institutions but managed by the Commission to offer citizens a means of circulating **ideas, comments, and events**.

As of May 19, 2021, that is exactly one month after its launch, just over thirteen thousand largely individual profiles have been created (the access for associations is still very problematic even if the European Movement in Italy was the first organisation to create a profile on April ¹19, followed by the European Federalist Movement on April ²22) if we consider that on average 78% of European families have access to the internet and that so far fewer than six hundred events have been created throughout the European Union.

Multilingualism is not yet fully and automatically ensured, access to the platform is currently not **allowed to non-EU citizens** living in the European Union thus excluding 5% of the resident European population. At the same time, **candidate countries have also been excluded from the debate on the future of Europe (and not the future of the European Union) for the time being. Nothing** of the sort happened in the Convention on the constitutional treaty.

As the platform includes ten "topics" ("Climate change and environment", "health", "a stronger economy, social justice and employment", "the EU in the world", "values and rights, rule of law and security", "digital transformation", "European democracy", "migration", "education, culture, youth and sport" that do not exactly correspond to the themes of the "joint declaration" of March 10 to which the topic "other ideas" has been added) and since many events touch on several topics, an unnamed "administrator" has self-attributed the right of censorship by deleting the report of events or ideas from the platform in the event that they follow under several topics, arbitrarily deciding in what subject they should be. This is obviously

¹ https://futureu.europa.eu/profiles/movimento_europeo/

² https://futureu.europa.eu/profiles/movimento_federalist/activity?locale=it

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an unacceptable preventive or subsequent censorship that must be denounced and removed from the power of the "administrator".

To ensure broad participation of citizens in the platform - which the Commission considers as "*the heart of the Conference*" - a communication, information and awareness campaign is urgently needed. The mobilisation of public opinion will be one of the criteria for measuring the success of the debate on the future of Europe and to open after the Conference a phase of reform of the European Union that the European Movement in Italy and its collective members believe must be constituent, with the role of the European Parliament at the centre.

There is no direct involvement in the Conference of **local and regional authorities** - beyond the participation of the Committee of the Regions - so that the hypothesis of participatory democracy is flanked by a democracy of proximity. Furthermore, there is a lack of direct involvement of the **academic world and of the research centres**, contrary to what was the case at the time of the Convention on the European Constitution. The participation of the network of **cultural foundations** in Europe³ and of organisations participating in **Creative Europe** is also missing.

The **cultural dimension** was not included among the themes indicated in the "joint declaration" of March 10 but was added - together with health - by the Commission on the online platform.

In this context, it would be useful to involve the association of cultural institutes of the Member States of the European Union, created in Brussels in 2007 (*EUNIC European Union National Institutes for Culture*) in the debate on the future of Europe.

Within this framework, the European Movement in Italy and its collective members are considering undertaking a new project. The idea is to ask promoters of the many cultural events that will take place over the coming months, to introduce in their programmes events dedicated to the debate on the future of Europe.⁴

It would also be worth reflecting on the modalities of direct involvement of **European parties**, whose role is specifically foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty and whose participation should go beyond the European and national parliaments since the European parties are assigned the mission of "*forming the European conscience of citizens*" (art. 10 TFEU).

³Many of which are part of the *European Foundations Centre*.

⁴We mention some of the most important cultural festivals that, COVID permitting, will take place in Italy in 2021-2022: Festival Internazionale della Storia di Gorizia, Festival dei diritti Umani di Milano, Festival della Comunicazione di Camogli, Festival della Mente di La Spezia, Festival della Scienza di Genova, Festival dell'Economia di Trento, Festival Internazionale di Ferrara, Festival dello Sviluppo Sostenibile promoted by ASviS in many Italian cities, Festival Internazionale del Giornalismo di Perugia, Festival della Letteratura di Mantova, Festival della Filosofia di Modena, Fiera del Levante di Bari, Forum PA di Roma, Meeting per l'amicizia dei Popoli di Rimini, Più Libri più liberi di Roma, Pordenonelegge di Pordenone, Salone Internazionale del Libro di Torino, Festival Leggere&Scrivere di Vibo Valentia. We could also cite some cinematic events that are often the forum for cultural debates such as the MedFilmFestival in Rome, and the Festival del Cinema del Mediterraneo in Lecce.

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The **transnational dialogue** in which citizens will be involved, selected by lottery by a company appointed by the European Commission, will be limited to **four thematic panels** on topics not yet chosen among the ten priorities indicated on the platform. In total, **eight hundred people** will be involved, of which eighty will be invited to enter the Strasbourg construction site together with one citizen per country, for a total of 107 people plus the President of European Youth Forum, equal to the number of European parliamentarians and national parliamentarians.

If we look at the experiences of participatory democracy lived more recently but with varying fortunes in **Belgium, France, Ireland** and **Iceland** in the collective writing processes of constitutional reforms or Green Deal, we see a substantial difference not only from a quantitative but also from a qualitative point of view that reinforces the fear of those who believe that the involvement of citizens will in fact be limited to a broad consultation (*citizen's dialogue* or *citizen's consultation*) far from the idea of a broad public dialogue.

Since the themes of the panels have not yet been chosen, the citizens have not been drawn. The eighty chosen to enter the European construction site will likely be selected only after the panels have taken place. The Strasbourg hemicycle will open to "non-experts" in autumn. The **first plenary session on June 19 (tbc)** could be open to institutions alone, to the extent that national parliaments and governments have chosen their representatives in advance.

As for **young people**, who should have been the protagonists of their future, the initial idea of the three co-chairs of the executive committee was to have only one young person enter the construction site, namely the president of the European Youth Forum.

This unacceptable idea was immediately and partially corrected by the Executive Committee which asked to introduce a third of young people under the age of 25 in the draw of the eighty predestined for the construction site, bringing the percentage of young people in the Conference from 0.23% to 6.23%. This represents, in any case, **less than half the percentage of Europeans between the ages of 15 and 25 (12.7%)**.

In this context, the question arises of the involvement of **schools** and **universities** (teachers and learners) also through European initiatives such as the European Parliament program aimed at the educational world (as the 50 Ambassadorial **Schools of the European Parliament** - EPAS), the Open Cohesion schools, the Europe = We program or the networks participating in the Erasmus Plus programme and the involvement of university students in cross-border mobility through the *Erasmus Student Network*⁵

The European Movement in Italy and its collective members believe that it is both an error and a negative signal to organise the first plenary session of the Conference on June 19 (TBC) without the direct participation of citizens and not having yet answered the request of the European networks

⁵EPAS is joined by Euroscola, the European Youth Event, Together-for-EU, the House of European History, the Parliamentarium and the European Charlemagne Youth Award.

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of civil society (in particular *Civil Society Convention*) and the pro-European organisations (UEF, EMI and JEF) to be associated with the Conference. We also believe that **the construction site should be immediately opened to participatory democracy** with an initial selection among the citizens who have created their own profiles on the online platform.

The European Movement in Italy and its collective members also propose to extend the composition of the Conference to some European organisations of local and regional authorities such as CEMR, Eurocities, the **network of European cities of culture** and a delegation of **the Covenant of Mayors for climate and energy**.

Reflecting on the broadening of the composition of the Conference, the European Movement in Italy and its collective members consider it essential to associate in its work the **Court of Justice of the European Union** and the **European Central Bank**. Their tasks and powers are, in fact, an essential part of the Union as it is today as well as it will be in its juridical and monetary dimensions in the future.

The European Movement in Italy and its collective members also draw attention to the following modalities which appear to be indispensable to widen the involvement of citizens together with the European civil society in the process of organisation, and to strengthen participatory democracy:

- **Ensure publicity and retransmission of all Conference proceedings** both of panels and Executive Board meetings
- Make **public radio and television services** available to the debate on the future of Europe through special spaces or within broadcasts on the work of parliaments and involve for example the **EUROPHONICA**⁶ university radio network
- Introduce in the "Citizens' Charter" and in the operating procedures of the Conference, a **phase of monitoring on the results achieved** and on the follow-up that will be given to them by the institutions. Citizens will monitor together with the social partners and civil society networks starting from the panels, on the online platform and in an evaluation within the component of the Conference dedicated to "non-experts".

Simultaneously with the immediate opening of the construction site to participatory and proximity democracy on June 19 (TBC) the European Movement in Italy and its collective members invite all those who have joined the "Italian platform" born on September 6, 2019, in cooperation with the National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL):

- to **create their profiles** on *futureu.europa.eu* as the European Movement did on April 19 and the European Federalist Movement did on April 22;
- to upload their events and the ideas that emerged from the events on the platform;

⁶www.raduni.org

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- to **ensure sharing ideas and events in English** until automatic multilingualism is fully guaranteed;
- to share and / or subscribe to the ideas of each collective member;
- to introduce new issues on priorities not foreseen in the "joint declaration" of March 10, by inserting them in the "other ideas" section starting from the **reform of the treaties, the fiscal capacity of the EU, the democratic *governance* of the EMU and the EU strategic autonomy in the world**;
- to **multiply local events** and promote transnational debates;
- to **create brainstorming groups**;
- to **communicate through social tools** (*web, newsletters, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Signal, etc.*) the existence of the online platform and how to access it.

The European Movement in Italy and its collective members intend to involve other actors belonging to intermediate bodies in a European dimension⁷, organisations operating in the social economy and promoters of European Citizens' Initiatives (ICE) in collaboration with EUMANS⁸.

Rome, May 25, 2021

⁷In this regard, the studies by ASTRID are illuminating and in particular those on "*intermediate bodies in the democracy of today and tomorrow*" (Franco Bassanini, Tiziano Treu and Giorgio Vittadini)

⁸www.formyrights.eu