

On 9 November, the AFCO committee held a virtual Inter-parliamentary committee meeting with national parliaments to exchange on *their expectations for the Conference on the Future of Europe.* There was general support to the idea of making citizens' participation at the EU level permanent, and consensus on the need to ensure more meaningful and transparent exchanges in the Conference plenary/working groups (WGs), as demanded by citizens. On the same day, AFCO considered amendments on its report on the Electoral Law. 731 amendments were tabled, and work for compromises had to be done fast to maintain the calendar for the file. Shadows intervening coincided that the objective was to have a strong proposal with the largest support possible in plenary ahead of consideration by the Council.

Conference on the Future of Europe: national parliaments' expectations

The inter-parliamentary session included interventions by the three co-Chairs of the Conference. State Secretary Dovzan stressed the importance of national parliaments and their specific role in the EU context, and considered that the CoFE could be an occasion to reflect on the link between national parliaments and the respective national governments. Mr Verhofstadt (Renew, BE) argued for close cooperation between EP and national parliaments to ensure a real follow up to the CoFE and parliamentary scrutiny of the process. VP Šuica focused her attention on the need to strengthen dialogue within the CoFE and increase media attention - echoed on this by some of the later interventions.

In the ensuing debate, which saw the participation of both MEPs and national MPs from a number of MS (SI, FR, IT, PT, HU, NL, RO, HR, PL, EL, DE, DK, ES, IE, AT), many speakers supported the idea mentioned by both co-Chairs Šuica and Verhofstadt of making citizens' participation at the EU level permanent, although some cautioned about the possible diminishing of representative democracy that might result from this. National MPs called for a greater role for national parliaments in the Conference and in the EU decision-making process more broadly, and the idea was put forward of a meeting to take place between the national parliaments and EP representatives in the CoFE plenary in order to better coordinate their positions on issues like the parliamentary right of initiative. Ideas for reforms in some specific areas were raised in some of the interventions, including on institutional aspects; Mr Verhofstadt suggested for instance that giving more power to national parliaments could take the form of replacing the Council with some sort of European senate made up of national parliaments' representatives. Some speakers, notably MPs from MS geographically close to the Western Balkans, urged to have partners from the latter region meaningfully involved in the Conference.

With regard to the Conference's procedural aspects, there was a general acknowledgement of the need to ensure more meaningful exchanges in the plenary/ Working Groups (WGs), as demanded by citizens. Interventions by MEPs and several national MPs highlighted demands to have the plenary WGs working in a more transparent way and presenting written proposals to the plenary, with some calls (notably from some AFCO members) to allow also for the possibility to table amendments and envisaging voting on the proposals/amendments in the CoFE plenary - co-Chair Šuica pushed back on these demands. pointing to the Joint Declaration and the CoFE's rules of procedure. There were also some demands to take into greater account the input on the digital platform. Mr Freund (Greens/EFA, DE) suggested for instance to allocate different time to topics in the CoFE plenary according to their popularity of the platform.