

Consultation on the Conference on the Future of Europe

1. What should be the aim of the Conference

The Conference should open a public space to build the necessary consensus between the representative democracy – which is identified in the central role of the parliamentary systems at national and European levels – and the participatory democracy well beyond mere consultations.

The participatory democracy makes it essential to have an open, ever transparent and structured dialogue with representative associations, European networks, CSOs and citizens, with a view to strengthening the process of forming a common European identity in the name of the principle written in our constitutions: “*sovereignty belongs to the people*” which delegates it in the forms and according to the procedures defined by our constitutional systems.

If it will be organised as a wide platform using all the tools offered by the digital society, the Conference could be the appropriate instrument to a public debate on the future of Europe.

The European political parties should take the opportunity of the Conference to give their contribution to “*form European political awareness*” between the EU citizens (art. 10, par. 4 TEU).

Finally and confronted to the mutation of the European public opinions turned in open criticism but taking advantage of the European election results, the Conference should verify if there is a strong will to make a decisive step towards a stronger, more efficient and more democratic united Europe.

To do this, it is necessary to clarify the main elements of the European project, seventy years after the Schuman Declaration and ten years after the enter in force of the Treaty of Lisbon, to find the best method and to establish the good agenda having in mind the deadline of the next European elections.

In this framework, the EMI confirm its strong support to the leading role of the EP as unique representative of European citizens.

2. What could be the best format for the Conference and who should take part in it

The usual approach, which prioritises agreements between governments, no longer seems fit for purpose for the present time, still less for the future. Nor does the holding of a new Convention as it is established in the art. 48.4 of the Treaty of Lisbon in place of a genuine, transparent, transnational European debate and of a constituent method to reform the European system in a democratic way.

To define the future of Europe it is necessary and urgent to involve citizens, popular movements and political parties, national parliaments, regional assemblies and local authorities.

The free flow of information and communication absolutely needs to be improved, both as regards the method of dissemination and as regards its level of detail. Universities and schools might make an ideal setting for debate, as they are able to offer opportunities for a structured form of discourse open to citizens and civil society.

The Institutional network of the Universities from the Capitals of Europe could create an advisory Committee.

As constituent members the Conference should be composed by an equal number of parliamentarian members (54+54 or 56+56 without Brexit) sitting together in political groups involving the Commission (three members) on a equal footing.

A special session of “*Assizes interparlementaires*” could take place during the German Presidency of the EU Council in Berlin following the example of the meeting held in Rome (November 1990).

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Representative of the Council, the ECB, the EESC, the Committee of Regions, the Fundamental Rights Agency, the Eurojust as well as the Ombudsman and the Prosecutor should take part in the debates.

When the Conference will meet in Brussels or Strasbourg, it will be hosted by the EP and the secretariat will be provided both by the Commission and the EP. The President will be elected by the Conference between the MEPs.

No variant of new forms of participatory democracy should be ruled out, including the direct participation of individual citizens and young people selected via internet such as:

- Crowdsources
- The method of participatory budget
- Internet for a
- Blockchains
- Contact groups
- Webinar and web streaming

The Conference should respect two main elements of a true public debate on the future of Europe:

- The transnational level of the points of views on its key issues. As President Ursula von der Leyen said, the Conference could meet in different countries avoiding the risk of the method “*Brussels speaks to Brussels*” but organising thematic debates in cooperation with the Economic and Social Partners, the Erasmus Student Network, the European Foundations Centre, the EMI, the CEMR, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development, the European Association for Education of Adults, the European Civil Society Assembly, Europe Ambition 2030....
- The absolute transparency and publicity of all the debates excluding Steering Groups with the task to coordinate or summarize the conclusions of the Conference and rejecting even more the proposal of the French-German non-paper to present the recommendations of the Conference “*to the European Council for debate and implementation*”.

3. In which political areas does the EU (i.e. the Conference) needs a more in-depth reflection, which priorities don't require Treaty change and which do require it

Contrary to the list of issues listed until now and mainly by the Franco-German non-paper, the Conference must be preceded and accompanied – not tackled – by major proposals and decisions to be taken by the EU institutions during 2020 on the basis of the priorities established by the new Commission:

- A European Green Deal
- The implementation of the Social Pillar
- The human and ethical implication of Artificial Intelligence
- The Banking Union and the roadmap to revise the EMU governance
- The quinquennial MFF founded on own resources
- The reform of the Dublin rules
- A strong and efficient instrument to respect the Rule of Law and the European values.

These are the top priorities for reform that doesn't require Treaty change.

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This list means that the Conference shall not replace the role of EU institutions in the development of common policies.

This development will serve as a stimulus for the transnational and transparent debate on the future of Europe while this debate will provide a fertile ground for facilitating consensus-building in the development of common policies.

The Conference will be a unique opportunity to tackle the key issues of:

- The division of responsibilities between local, regional, national and European levels, renewing the principle of subsidiarity and the list of exclusive, shared and supporting competences on the basis of a strict and permanent list
- The fiscal capacity of the EU and the future dimension of the EU budget with own resources
- The achievement of the SDGs
- The role of EU in a globalised world and a true CFSP
- The relationship between the European citizenship and the national identities
- The political boundaries of the EU and its relationship with the Neighbour countries
- The system of the European government and its democratic character including the election of the EU president and a uniform European electoral law.

Finally the Conference will debate on the method and the agenda for reforming the European system including the evolution of the “*ever closer Union*” in the event that some Member States aren’t ready to accept this evolution.

4. What should happen after the Conference at EU and national levels

If a majority consent will be reached to open the doors to writing a new treaty, the best way is to recognize the leading role of the EP avoiding the obstacles and rigidities of the rules that have characterised the procedure of the European Convention on the Constitutional Treaty and drawing inspiration from the method which led the first European Parliament to adopt the “*Draft Treaty establishing the European Union*”. This Treaty has been conceived as a global and coherent, new and independent Treaty intended to create a new entity.

Only the EP (and the AFCO) could assure that the constituent work will be done in conditions of maximum transparency and public disclosure and will be followed by a decision-making and ratification phases in accordance with the constitutional arrangements of each Member State.

At the end of the process, the EU citizens (“*sovereignty belongs to the people*”) will have to voice their opinion by means of *referenda* to be held in every Member State at the same time. In any case, *referenda* are already a legal requirement in many EU countries and politically indispensable in others.

The *referenda* would ask citizens to express their opinion on the new treaty, on its constituent and founding rules and on the idea of moving beyond the boundaries of today’s Nation-States into a new European, sovereign dimension.

The *referenda* would represent a completely new approach to consulting the EU citizens. If the European Conference and then the EP have success in galvanising a sufficient sense of involvement and in a common identity (the “*constitutional patriotism*” of Juergen Habermas), the body of voters invited to express its opinion will be more consciously *European*, thanks also to the public, transparent and transnational space create by the Conference.

Pier Virgilio Dastoli

On behalf of the European Movement - Italy