



Conference on the **Future** of **Europe**

Summary report of the sixth meeting of the Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe

Monday 19 July 2021

16.00 - 18.00, Europa Building (room S7, hybrid meeting)

Participants: please see the list of participants in annex

Summary and conclusions:

The Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe held its sixth meeting on 19 July 2021 in the Council building (in hybrid format).

The sixth meeting was co-chaired by MEP Guy VERHOFSTADT, the Slovenian State Secretary for EU Affairs, Gašper DOVŽAN, and Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka ŠUICA. Mr. DOVŽAN opened and closed the meeting.

The Executive Board endorsed the amendment to Article 16 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference concerning an increased representation of local and regional authorities and social partners in the Conference Plenary.

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the updated practical modalities for the organisation of the European Citizens' Panels, in particular in relation to the order and locations of the Panels, and the methodology to frame the topics.

The Co-Chairs also informed the Executive Board on the state of play of preparations for the Conference Plenary Working Groups.

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the Joint Communication Plan on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) opened the meeting.

1. Amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference concerning the representation of the local and regional authorities and social partners in the Conference Plenary

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and presented the proposal of the Co-Chairs to amend Article 16 in order to increase the number of representatives of social partners and of local and regional elected representatives in the Plenary. The following amendment to Article 16 was proposed to the Executive Board:

- To increase the social partners' seats from 8 to 12 representatives
- To add 6 elected representatives from regional authorities and 6 elected representatives from local authorities.

During the ensuing discussion, participants indicated their broad support to the proposed amendment.

Social partners were asked to nominate the additional 4 members of the Plenary, and the Committee of the Regions was asked to co-ordinate a balanced nomination of the 6 elected regional representatives and of the 6 elected local representatives, without these representatives being sitting members of the Committee of Regions.

Several requests concerning the possibility of allowing substitutes in the meetings of the Executive Board and of the Plenary were raised. The Co-Chairs referred to the previously agreed position that does not allow this; changes to the composition of delegations are possible if needed and the Co-Chairs are informed, but there can be no substitutes for specific meetings. In addition, a request to include the Western Balkans in the Conference was also raised under this agenda item.

The Chair concluded that the Executive Board approved this amendment to Article 16 of the Rules of Procedure.

Conclusion:

The Executive Board endorsed the amendment to Article 16 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference concerning an increased representation of the local and regional authorities and social partners in the Conference Plenary.

2. Updated modalities for the organisation of European Citizen's Panels: Information from the Co-Chairs

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point, highlighting the updates to the modalities that were circulated ahead of the meeting, namely the new elements concerning the order of the Panels, their locations and the methodology to organise the discussion. The Chair also informed the Executive Board about the state of play of the selection process, explaining that approximately 500 citizens have already been selected, out of the 800, and

that the selection process would be completed by mid-August. While the epidemiological situation needs to be followed closely, the Co-Chair underlined the importance of holding the Panels in person. Furthermore, she recommended that national citizens' panels should also be randomly selected and work in line with the guidance provided.

In the discussion that followed, the updated modalities were generally welcomed by participants.

Questions and remarks were raised inter alia on the selection process, with requests for more transparency and for a justification on the representativity of the selected citizens. Co-Chair Šuica explained that the external service provider in charge of the selection will provide information explaining the compliance with the selection criteria at the end of the process.

A few questions were also raised on the method for citizens to choose the topics to focus on, in particular given the limited time available to the Panels for discussions, and the broad topics. The Co-Chairs explained that an interim report will be prepared by a service provider describing and analysing the input from the Multilingual Digital Platform that would be available in early September. They noted that this interim report will provide a good basis for panellists to choose topics, and that they would be free to identify their priorities, or to discuss any additional issues. The Co-Chairs also indicated that independent experts would accompany the European Citizens' Panels.

Conclusion:

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the updated practical modalities for the organisation of the European Citizens' Panels, in particular in relation to the order and locations of the Panels, and the methodology to frame the topics.

3. Conference Plenary Working Groups: Information from the Co-Chairs

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and explained the state of play of discussions on Working Groups, highlighting that Working Groups were not provided for in the Joint Declaration, but were introduced in the Rules of Procedure as preparatory body to facilitate Plenary discussions. He noted that no compromise had yet been reached on several issues, such as the role of the Working Groups, frequency of meetings, reporting etc. He indicated that discussions in the Council were still needed to set its position, but that it should be possible to come to a compromise in September.

Co-Chair Šuica argued that Working Groups should be limited to preparing the Plenary, based on recommendations from citizens' panels, and with citizens at the core, with a representative of the European Citizens' Panels as rapporteur of each Working Group, possibly together with the Chair, to ensure the link between Panels and the Plenary. She also urged for Working Groups to take place on dates allocated to the Plenary, to limit the burden on citizens. Working Groups should be supported by the Common Secretariat and Chairs could have some flexibility when it comes to speaking time. Co-Chair Šuica underlined that an

agreement should be found quickly after summer in order not to spend more time on procedural questions.

Co-Chair Verhofstadt called for an agreement on the Working Groups to be found as soon as possible so that the Conference can progress. He urged for the Working Groups to start at the October Plenary, on the basis of reports from the Multilingual Digital Platform and recommendations from national citizens' panels and events, referring in this regard to the Rules of Procedure, and that Working Groups should prepare the proposals of the Plenary in written form. He urged to put trust in the Chairs of the Working Groups and leave them some flexibility in organising the work. He indicated that the Chair of each Working Groups should present its outcome to the Plenary, but immediately followed by a reaction by a representative of the European Citizens' Panels from the Working Group to provide their appreciation.

In the following discussion:

- A few participants expressed their concerns, recalling the objective of a lean structure, with citizens at the heart, insisting on the informal nature of the Working Groups and on the importance of Working Groups taking place within the time allocated to the Plenary.
- Some participants highlighted the importance of Working Groups in preparing the Plenary, by examining the proposals, and urged for Working Groups to start soon.
- The need for Working Groups meetings ahead of the October Plenary, on the basis of contributions on the Multilingual Digital Platform, was also raised.

Co-Chair Dovžan took note of all comments and concluded that discussions would continue, with the objective of an agreement in September.

Conclusion:

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the state of play of preparations of the Conference Plenary Working Groups.

4. Joint Communication Plan on the Conference on the Future of Europe: Information from the Co-Chairs

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and informed the Executive Board about the Joint Communication Plan elaborated by the Directorate-Generals for Communication of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, following the request of the Executive Board on 26 May, and welcomed possible further suggestions. He informed that the Joint Communication Plan has already shown results, with visits on the Multilingual Digital Platform having increased.

Co-Chair Verhofstadt mentioned the possibility of using famous personalities, such as sportspersons, to promote the Multilingual Digital Platform through the correspondent QR code and asked the Common Secretariat and the Directorates-General for Communications

of the three Institutions to reflect on more creative solutions. He also informed that the Co-Chairs had agreed that journalists should be able to follow the European Citizens' Panels, and that the Directorates-General for Communications of the three Institutions would act as intermediary between interested citizens and journalists.

Co-Chair Dovžan indicated that the upcoming Bled Strategic Forum would be dedicated to the Conference, and would therefore generate more interest. He invited all components of the Executive Board to engage their respective networks.

Co-Chair Šuica provided statistics on the Multilingual Digital Platform and indicated that more than 20 000 participants, 1 500 events, and approximately 5 600 ideas were registered on the platform. She also highlighted the need for more communication.

In the ensuing discussion, some participants suggested to indicate on the Platform which are the trends under each of the nine topics. Others proposed that national parliaments could also play an important role in mobilising citizens, with events in their constituencies.

Co-Chair Verhofstadt concluded that this issue would be on the agenda of the next Executive Board, in order to closely follow and evaluate the participation on the platform.

Conclusion:

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board on the Joint Communication Plan on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Next meeting:

The date next meeting of the Executive Board is to be determined.

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) closed the meeting.

Contact: Rebecca Rhlalou, member of the Common Secretariat