



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

## Summary report of the fifth meeting of the Executive Board

### of the Conference on the Future of Europe

Wednesday 26 May 2021

14.30 to 16.30, in the Council Europa Building, room S7 and remote

**Participants:** please see participants list in annex

#### **Summary and conclusions:**

*The Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe held its fifth meeting on 26 May 2021 in the Council Europa Building, room S7 (and remote).*

*The meeting was co-chaired by the Secretary of State for EU Affairs of Portugal, Ana Paula ZACARIAS, MEP Guy VERHOFSTADT and Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka ŠUICA.*

*The Executive Board endorsed the provisional Calendar of Conference Plenaries, European Citizens' Panels and European citizens' event as proposed whilst acknowledging the need for some flexibility.*

*The Executive Board endorsed the draft agenda for the inaugural Conference Plenary with some adjustments and the inclusion of a discussion on the purpose and the expectations of the Conference.*

*The Executive Board also held an exchange of views on the organisation of the Conference Plenary. The Board took note of the Co-Chairs' proposal to establish nine Plenary Working Groups mirroring the nine topics on the Multilingual Digital Platform. Eight of them will be chaired by representatives and observers of the Executive Board: two from the European Parliament, two from the Council, two from the European Commission and two from the national parliaments. One Working Group will be chaired by the President of the European Youth Forum.*

*The Co-Chairs will present a practical proposal on speaking time in Plenary reflecting the three principles of equal footing, equality of the representatives and a special role for the citizens.*

*The Executive Board took note of the preparations for a European citizens' event on 17 June 2021 in Portugal.*

*In addition, the Executive Board took note of the updated practical modalities of the European Citizens' Panels and the guidance for the organisation of national citizens' panels.*

*The Executive Board held an exchange of views on the communication strategy for the Conference. It tasked the Directorate-Generals for Communication of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission with presenting, at the next meeting of the Executive Board, a coordinated plan to promote the Conference and in particular the Multilingual Digital Platform.*

## **1. Calendar of Conference Plenaries, European Citizens' Panels and European citizens' event: endorsement**

Ana Paula ZACARIAS (Co-Chair) opened the meeting by presenting the draft calendar on Conference Plenaries, European Citizens' Panels and European citizens' event. She underlined the importance of a good interaction between the Conference Plenary and the European Citizens' Panels and of starting with a citizens' event on 17 June 2021, before the inaugural Plenary.

Guy VERHOFSTADT (Co-Chair) highlighted that both delegation meetings and caucuses of the political families are foreseen ahead of the Conference Plenary meetings. He explained that the first session of the European Citizens' Panels would take place in the premises of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the second would be virtual and the third would take place physically in four different cities.

During the ensuing discussion, participants generally agreed with the draft calendar but stressed the importance of allowing some flexibility regarding long-term planning.

In addition, a request was made to reconsider the number of social partners' representatives in the Plenary and to foresee the possibility to record dissenting opinions beyond the current rules. A similar request was made to reconsider the number of local and regional representatives.

In her concluding remarks, Ana Paula ZACARIAS (Co-Chair) stressed that the draft calendar could evolve in accordance with actual needs and that some flexibility might be necessary. On the requests mentioned above, the Co-Chair underlined that the Co-Chairs have taken good note, are considering the proposals and will return to the matter as soon as possible.

Following these remarks, the Co-Chair considered that the Executive Board could endorse the provisional calendar as proposed with the necessary flexibility.

### **Conclusion:**

***The Executive Board endorsed the provisional Calendar of Conference Plenaries, European Citizens' Panels and European citizens' event as proposed whilst acknowledging the need for some flexibility.***

## **2. Inaugural Conference Plenary on 19 June 2021 - Proposed agenda: endorsement**

Taken jointly with Point 3 of the agenda.

## **3. Conference Plenary: information from the Co-chairs**

Guy VERHOFSTADT (Co-Chair) suggested to deal with points two and three of the agenda together.

He noted that the 27 representatives from the national panels/events and the President of the European Youth Forum, who will be present at the European citizens' event in Lisbon on 17 June, will participate in the inaugural Plenary meeting on 19 June. He explained that representatives of the European Citizens' Panels will not be present given that they will not have been nominated by their respective Panels by then. The Co-Chair presented the draft agenda of the Plenary meeting on 19 June, composed of two parts. The first part would include a presentation on the European Citizens' Panels and the Platform, followed by an in depth discussion (approx. 3 hours). The second part is about practical issues, notably a presentation of the structure of the Working Groups and the provisional Conference calendar as endorsed by the Executive Board, followed by a short discussion (half an hour).

Guy VERHOFSTADT (Co-Chair) then presented the following proposals regarding the general modalities of the Conference Plenary:

- There will be nine Working Groups mirroring the topics on the Multilingual Digital Platform. Eight of them will be chaired by representatives and observers in the Executive Board: two from the European Parliament, two from the Council, two from the European Commission and two from the national Parliaments. One Working Group will be chaired by the President of the European Youth Forum.
- On speaking time, the Co-Chair recalled that a number of principles must be applied when deciding on a system: equality of the Members of the Plenary, equal footing between the four institutional components of the Plenary as well as a special role for citizens when presenting the Panels' recommendations to the Plenary;
- On the seating plan, the Co-Chairs suggest that the representatives and observers of the Executive Board sit in the first rows and that the rest of the representatives in the Plenary sit in alphabetical order.

In the ensuing discussion participants:

- Thanked the Co-Chairs for their proposal;
- Several speakers stressed that the Conference Plenary must be lively, dynamic and attractive;
- Others underlined the need for an appropriate participation of citizens in the inaugural Plenary;
- On the draft agenda, many called for a more substantial discussion (e.g. about the purpose of and expectations for the Conference, the content of the Multilingual Digital Platform, or lessons learned from the pandemic, or other topics). Some called for more time for debate;
- Several supported the proposal on the Working Groups. Some asked for more information about how the Working Groups will work;

- On speaking time, they generally agreed that there has to be a balance. Some spoke in favour of distributing speaking time in accordance with political affiliation. Others pointed out that this is not suitable for all the representatives in the Plenary and supported a system based more on the components of the Plenary.

Dubravka ŠUIČA (Co-chair) thanked the representatives and observers for their ideas and comments. She cautioned against discussing largely about the contents on the Multilingual Digital Platform at this early point (June) in order not to pre-empt discussions in this bottom up exercise. She underlined that the Co-Chairs are doing their best to have at least 80 citizens out of the 800 to be selected for the European Citizens' Panels participating online at the Lisbon event.

Ana Paula ZACARIAS (Co-Chair) agreed with the idea of having a substantial debate at the inaugural Conference Plenary, which could focus on expectations and visions for the Conference. She also suggested that the Commission could present preliminary takeaways from the Platform. She stressed the role of the Citizens' event in Lisbon on 17 June before the inaugural Plenary and the presence of the 27 representatives from national panels/events and of the President of the European Youth Forum at the Plenary meeting on 19 June.

In his concluding remarks, Guy VERHOFSTADT (Co-Chair) also noted that 27 citizens from national panels or events and the President of the European Youth Forum will participate in the inaugural Conference Plenary. He suggested for the first part of the agenda a broad, in-depth discussion of 3-4 hours on the purpose and expectations of the Conference, including the European Citizens' Panels and the Multilingual Digital Platform, whilst keeping the second part very short. He recalled the need for Working Groups composed of approximately 40 Members of the Plenary each to prepare proposals to the Plenary and stressed that all the representatives will be invited to join them. On speaking time, the Co-Chairs will come up with a proposal taking into account the comments and proposals made and based on the principles of equality of representatives, equal footing and the special role of citizens when presenting their recommendations. He finally suggested having a verbatim record from the Conference Plenary meetings.

In light of this discussion, a revised agenda will be circulated.

#### **Conclusions:**

***The Executive Board endorsed the draft agenda for the inaugural Conference Plenary with some adjustments and the inclusion of a discussion on the purpose and the expectations of the Conference.***

***The Executive Board took note of the Co-Chairs' proposal to establish nine Plenary Working Groups mirroring the nine topics on the Multilingual Digital Platform. Eight of them will be chaired by representatives and observers of the Executive Board: two from the European Parliament, two from the Council, two from the European Commission and two from the national parliaments. One Working Group will be chaired by the President of the European Youth Forum.***

***The Co-Chairs will present a practical proposal on speaking time in Plenary reflecting the three principles of equal footing, equality of representatives and a special role for the citizens.***

#### **4. Citizens' Event on 17 June 2021: information from the Co-Chairs**

Ana Paula ZACARIAS (Co-Chair) opened this agenda point by recalling the interest of Member States in the Conference and the importance of the events organised in the Member States. She noted that keeping in mind that citizens are a central part of the Conference and as a complement to the inaugural Plenary on 19 June 2021, the Co-Chairs suggest holding a European citizens' event on 17 June 2021 in Portugal. 27 representatives from national panels/events and the President of the European Youth Forum will be invited to physically attend. 80 citizens (from those being selected for the European Citizens' Panels) will attend online. Participants will have the opportunity to talk about their expectations for the Conference. The event will be transmitted online with access for all. The 27 citizens from national panels /events and the President of the European Youth Forum will participate in the inaugural Conference Plenary afterwards.

In the ensuing discussion, participants welcomed the event and underlined the importance of putting citizens at the centre of the Conference. Some asked questions on the way the citizens are selected and others underlined the importance of having a strategy on how to get citizens involved in the debate generally.

In her concluding remarks, Ana Paula ZACARIAS (Co-Chair) noted that Member States have been asked to designate the 27 representatives from the national panels/events. She invited all the representatives and observers of the Executive Board to participate in the event remotely.

Updated information will be made available.

#### **Conclusions:**

***The Executive Board took note of the proposal to hold a European citizens' event on 17 June 2021 in Portugal.***

#### **5. European Citizens' Panels**

Dubravka ŠUIČA (Co-chair) informed about the modalities for the organisation of European Citizens' Panels that have been updated following the discussion of the Executive Board on 22 April and sent to participants ahead of the meeting. Regarding topics, the Citizens' Panels will be based on topics from the Platform and will be organised in four clusters:

- (1) European democracy/values, rights, rule of law, security;
- (2) Climate change, environment/health;

- (3) Stronger economy, social justice, jobs/ education, youth, culture, sport/ digital transformation;
- (4) EU in the world/migration.

The Co-Chair highlighted that such an exercise has never been done before on such a large scale. 800 citizens will be chosen randomly for four Panels (200 in each). The selection process will be finalised around one month before the start of the Panels' sessions in mid-September. She also noted that guidance for national citizens' panels has been prepared for Member States' information. She stressed that the Common Secretariat is working on the structuring of the work of the Panels to allow citizens to prioritize topics within the large clusters, taking into account the contributions received from the Platform.

In the ensuing discussion, participants thanked the Co-Chairs for their work and noted inter alia:

- the importance of the selection process being truly random in all Member States and the need for financial compensation for citizens' participation in the European Citizens' Panels;
- possible difficulties arising from the broad topics for the Panels;
- the role and selection of experts for the Panels;
- the importance of the transparency of the work of the Panels;

In her concluding remarks, Dubravka ŠUICA (Co-chair) confirmed that experts will help to inform the debates in the European Citizens' Panels and that the contributions from the Multilingual Digital Platform will guide the discussions.

**Conclusions:**

***The Executive Board took note of the updated practical modalities of the European Citizens' Panels and the guidance for the organisation of national citizens' panels.***

## **6. Communication strategy for the Conference: exchange of views**

Dubravka ŠUICA (Co-chair) provided the Executive Board with an overview of the state of play of the Platform. She presented data on platform visits and the number of ideas proposed, as well as on current trends regarding the socio-demographic and geographical background of users. She underlined the need for a collective effort to reach further out, including to young people, women and people normally not interested in EU affairs. She noted that Conference events too will increase interest in the Platform. She stressed that everyone in the Executive Board should play an important role in spreading information about the Platform. In addition, she noted that traditional, institutional communication will not be enough, but that social media as well as collaboration with sports, cultural and other organisations needs to be further explored in order to reach more people. The Co-Chair supported the work already done by the Directorate-Generals for Communication of the three institutions and invited them to prepare a proposal for targeted communication activities supporting what has already been done.

The representatives and observers of the Executive Board suggested inter alia:

- to organise special briefings with journalists on the Conference;
- for the institutions and entities represented in the Executive Board to acts as multipliers.

Guy VERHOFSTADT (Co-Chair) called on the Common Secretariat to make a proposal on how to allow journalists to accompany and inform about the European Citizens' Panels and underlined the need for advertising on social media to attract more people to contribute on the Multilingual Digital Platform. He asked that the three Directorate-Generals for Communication present a coordinated proposal at the next Executive Board meeting on what each of them proposes to carry out as communication action.

Ana Paula ZACARIAS (Co-Chair) called on the three Directorate-Generals for Communication to make a proposal for a common narrative on what the Conference is, and on its components and participants, accompanied by visual materials. She underlined that data protection also matters to people participating in the Conference.

In her concluding remarks, Dubravka ŠUICA (Co-chair) stressed that the exchange of views on the communication strategy had been very useful and asked the three Directorate-Generals for Communication to present a plan on how to increase the information about the Platform.

**Conclusions:**

***The Executive Board tasked the Directorate-Generals for Communication of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission with presenting at the next meeting of the Executive Board a coordinated plan to promote the Conference and in particular the Multilingual Digital Platform.***

Contact: Eva-Maria Poptcheva, member of the Common Secretariat

## PARTICIPANTS LIST

CO-CHAIR	Mr Guy VERHOFSTADT (Renew Europe, BE), Member of the European Parliament
CO-CHAIR	Ms Ana Paula ZACARIAS (PT), Secretary of State for EU Affairs
CO-CHAIR	Ms Dubravka ŠUICA, Vice-President of the European Commission
MEMBER	Mr Gašper DOVŽAN (SI), Secretary of State for EU Affairs
MEMBER	Mr Clément BEAUNE (FR), Secretary of State for EU Affairs
MEMBER	Mr Manfred WEBER Member of the European Parliament (PPE, DE)
MEMBER	Ms Iratxe GARCÍA-PÉREZ, Member of the European Parliament (S&D, ES)
MEMBER	Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission
MEMBER	Ms Věra JOUROVÁ, Vice-President of the European Commission
OBSERVER	Mr Hans DAHLGREN (SE), Minister for EU Affairs
OBSERVER	Mr Juan GONZÁLEZ-BARBA PERA (ES), Secretary of State for EU Affairs
OBSERVER	Mr Gerolf ANNEMANS Member of the European Parliament (ID, BE)
OBSERVER	Mr Daniel FREUND Member of the European Parliament (Verdes/ALE, DE)
OBSERVER	Mr Zdzisław KRASNODEBSKI Member of the European Parliament (ECR, PL)
OBSERVER	Mr Helmut SCHOLZ Member of the European Parliament (The Left, DE)
OBSERVER (COSAC)	Mr Luís Capoulas SANTOS (PT) Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the Assembleia da República



<b>OBSERVER (COSAC)</b>	<b>Mr Winfried KRETSCHMANN (DE) Chairperson of the Committee on European Union Questions of the Bundesrat</b>
<b>OBSERVER (COSAC)</b>	<b>Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM (DE) Chairperson of the EU Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag</b>
<b>OBSERVER (COSAC)</b>	<b>Mr Bojan KEKEC (SI), Chairperson of the Commission for International Relations and European Affairs of the Drzavni Svet</b>
<b>OBSERVER (CoR) Invited</b>	<b>Mr Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS, President of the European Committee of the Regions</b>
<b>OBSERVER (EESC) Invited</b>	<b>Ms Christa SCHWENG, President of the European Economic and Social Committee</b>
<b>OBSERVER (BusinessEurope) Invited</b>	<b>Mr Markus BEYRER, Director General of BusinessEurope</b>
<b>OBSERVER (ETUC) Invited</b>	<b>Mr Luca VISENTINI, Secretary General of ETUC</b>
<b>CO-HEAD OF COMMON SECRETARIAT</b>	<b>Ms Marta ARPIO</b>
<b>CO-HEAD OF COMMON SECRETARIAT</b>	<b>Ms Katrin RUHRMANN</b>
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<b>COMMON SECRETARIAT</b>	<b>Ms Liis JAANSALU</b>
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