



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

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

Thursday 22 April 2021

16.00-19.00, Europa Building (room S7, hybrid meeting)

Participants: please see participants list in annex

Summary and conclusions:

The Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe held its third meeting on 22 April 2021 in the Council building (in hybrid format).

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

The Executive Board endorsed the programme and modalities of the inaugural event on 9 May.

Based on the contributions received from representatives and observers and on the discussion during the meeting, the Executive Board endorsed the draft Rules of Procedure on the Common Principles of the Conference, its Scope and on Citizens' Participation as proposed by the Co-Chairs, with a few changes.

The Executive Board discussed the draft Rules of Procedure regarding the Conference Plenary, and in particular its role and composition. In light of the exchange of views, the Executive Board tasked the Common Secretariat to prepare a draft text with a view to endorsing the Rules of Procedure in their entirety at the latest by 9 May.

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the practical modalities for the organisation of European Citizens' Panels that will be further updated and developed into a detailed handbook.

Ana Paula Zacarias (Co-Chair) opened the meeting.

1. Endorsement of the programme and modalities of the event on 9 May

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point. The Chair indicated that, as agreed at the last Executive Board meeting of 7 April, the Communication services of the three institutions submitted to the Co-Chairs a joint proposal for the inaugural event on 9 May 2021, where the main elements are as follows:

- the event will take place in a hybrid format in the European Parliament premises in Strasbourg;
- the French President will intervene as Head of State of the host country at the start of the event;
- the Presidents of the European Parliament, Council and Commission will intervene on the purpose and expectations for the Conference, ideally in conversation with citizens.
- the Co-Chairs will give short interviews on the purpose of the event and the expectations about the Conference.

The Chair indicated that all members of the Executive Board are invited to the event. Ana Paula Zacarias (Co-Chair) mentioned that representatives of Member States are invited to participate remotely.

The Chair concluded that the Board was ready to endorse the programme.

Conclusion:

The Executive Board endorsed the programme and modalities of the event on 9 May.

2. Draft Rules of Procedure for the Conference

-Citizens' Participation: endorsement

-Conference Plenary: discussion

Ana Paula Zacarias (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point. She called for a swift agreement on the rules of procedure, with the endorsement of the chapters on Common principles, the Scope and Citizens' Participation, and an exchange of views on the Chapter on the Conference Plenary, with the view of approving the rules of procedure in their entirety at the latest by 9 May.

The Chair presented the main elements of the chapters on the Common principles of the Conference, its Scope and Citizens' Participation (Multilingual Digital Platform, Conference Events, European Citizens' Panels).

Item 3 on the practical modalities regarding European Citizens' Panels was discussed together with this agenda item and was presented by Co-Chair Vice President Šuica. The questions and comments related to item 3 are indicated in part 3 below.

In the discussion that followed on Common principles, Scope and Citizens' Participation, it was agreed to include explicit references to social partners and to specify that the Co-Chairs of the Executive Board would inform in advance the Executive Board of the practical modalities for the organisation of the Conference Citizens' Panels.

Conclusion:

Based on the contributions received from representatives and observers and on the discussion during the meeting, the Executive Board endorsed the draft Rules of Procedure on the Common Principles of the Conference, its Scope and Citizens' Participation as proposed by the Co-Chairs, with a few changes.

In the following part of this agenda item related to the **Rules of Procedure of the Plenary**, Chair Zacarias explained that no common proposal had been presented to the Executive Board at this stage, given the lack of agreement amongst the Co-Chairs on some key issues. She recalled the need to respect the Joint Declaration, and stressed the two main open points, i.e. the role and the composition of the Conference Plenary.

Participants were invited to express their comments during the ensuing debate. In the discussion that followed, questions and comments were made, inter alia:

- different views were expressed on the role of the Conference Plenary, its working modalities and the process leading to the elaboration of its conclusions. Some also underlined the need to respect the interinstitutional balance and pointed to the transparency of the process.
- the size and composition of the Conference Plenary. There were several calls to ensure an appropriate representation of all participants of the Plenary. Several also recalled the Joint Declaration which provides for a lean governance structure. Many participants recalled the objective of putting citizens at the centre of the Conference.
- some observers called for a suitable representation and full membership in the Plenary.

In reply, the Chair referred to the Joint Declaration as the basis for the rules of procedure. She concluded that convergence was close on some issues, while further discussion is still needed on the role and composition of the Plenary. She also called for a pragmatic approach to enable the approval of the rules by 9 May at the latest.

Conclusion:

In light of this exchange of views, the Executive Board tasked the Common Secretariat to prepare a draft text for the Rules of Procedure on the Conference Plenary with a view to endorsing the Rules of Procedure in their entirety at the latest by 9 May.

3. Practical modalities for the organisation of European Citizens' Panels: information from Co-chairs

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and underlined that European Citizens' Panels are one of the core pillars of the Conference. The technical note distributed to the Executive Board includes, inter alia, the following elements:

- the principle of random selection of citizens on the basis of several criteria;
- the number of 200 participants per panel with one third of young people;
- the organisation of four multilingual panels in different locations across the Union with at least three deliberative sessions for each Panel;
- representatives from each Citizens' Panel will take part in the Plenary.

In the discussion that followed, the modalities were generally welcomed by the Executive Board. Questions and remarks were raised inter alia on the selection process, on the youth participation, on the financial contribution to participating citizens, on the selection of topics for the Panels, and on the involvement of civil society and social partners in bringing expertise.

In reply, the Chair and a member of the Common Secretariat underlined that the selection of participants will be done by randomly selecting citizens, with the aim of constituting "panels" representative of EU sociological diversity, which should lead to the participation of a wide range of citizens.

The technical note on the practical modalities will be updated and developed into a handbook to guide the organisation of the Panels. The Common Secretariat will regularly inform the Executive Board.

Conclusion:

The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the practical modalities for the organisation of European Citizens' Panels that will be further updated and developed into a detailed handbook.

Next meeting:

An Executive Board meeting is scheduled on 9 May.

Ana Paula Zacarias (Co-Chair) closed the meeting.

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members of the Common Secretariat