



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

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

Tuesday 5 April 2022

11:00-12:30, seat of the European Parliament (room R3.1, 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 ninth meeting on 5 April 2022 in hybrid format. The meeting was co-chaired by Member of the European Parliament, Guy VERHOFSTADT, French Secretary of State for EU Affairs, Clément BEAUNE, and Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka ŠUICA.

The Executive Board endorsed the agenda of the 8-9 April Conference Plenary.

The Executive Board endorsed the revised calendar of the Conference, including an additional Conference Plenary on 29-30 April. It also confirmed that a “feedback event” to citizens involving the European Parliament, the Council of the EU as well as the European Commission would take place in autumn 2022.

The Co-Chairs finally brought clarifications to the Executive Board on the process of the Conference, both pre-9 May (regarding the transformation of Citizens’ Panels’ recommendations into Plenary proposals, especially concerning the role of Working Groups and the way consensus would be assessed in the Plenary) and post-9 May (regarding the follow-up to be given to the final outcome of the Conference by the EU institutions, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties).

1. Endorsement of the proposed agenda for the Plenary on 8-9 April 2022

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point. She stressed that the fully physical Plenary should show a high level of engagement of decision-makers by ensuring increased presence in the chamber. Upon a request from one of the Working Group Chairs, it was clarified that more meetings of Working Groups could very exceptionally take place should such a decision be taken by the Chair and the Spokesperson.

It was announced that the sequence of the debates during the Plenary would be circulated immediately after the Executive Board meeting

Conclusion:

The Executive Board endorsed the agenda of the 8-9 April Conference Plenary.

2. Endorsement of the revised calendar of the Conference

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and indicated that the calendar now includes an additional Conference Plenary meeting on 29 and 30 April. This Plenary is meant to include meetings of the components to assess the draft proposals, and plenary meetings to assess the consensus on the proposals.

The Chair also raised the closing political event on 9 May, where the three Presidents will receive the final report of the Conference from the Co-Chairs. Mr Verhofstadt said he expected the three Presidents to come forward with a common declaration.

The Chair explained that the feedback event, where the three institutions will give feedback to the citizens on the follow-up, does not have an exact date yet, but is foreseen for fall 2022.

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) said that this feedback event had been in the calendar since the beginning and highlighted its importance and purpose i.e., informing the citizens on the follow-up to the Conference and on the Institutions' commitments in this regard. She furthermore explained that the Conference Plenary on 29 and 30 April will be important to establish the consensus on the proposals.

In the following exchange of views with the Members and Observers of the Executive Board:

- Several members remarked, some rather strongly, on the fact that no Executive Board had been held since December 2021.
- The possible program and further details for the closing event on the 9 of May were discussed.
- The importance to ensure that the Conference Plenary sessions are attractive for all Members to attend was raised. It should be clear that Members' contributions have added value, also to ensure this participation.
- The need for another Executive Board meeting between the last Conference Plenary and the closing event was stressed.
- The importance of the three Institutions giving feedback to the citizens late in the year was confirmed.
- At the request of a member of the Executive Board, it was agreed to clarify the reference to the feedback event in the calendar as a feedback to citizens by the three Institutions on the outcome of the Conference.

The Chair also confirmed that there would be two additional Executive Board meetings, i.e. before the last Conference Plenary and before the closing event on 9 May.

Clément Beaune (Co-Chair) echoed that the details of the 9 May event are currently being discussed by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council and that the Executive Board will be informed of these details later on. The product and interventions of the three Presidents on this occasion still need to be determined. He agreed to revert to the Executive Board on this matter before the closing event, and confirmed his support for a feedback event from the Institutions in the autumn.

Conclusion:

The Executive Board endorsed the revised calendar of the Conference, including an additional Conference Plenary on 29-30 April. It also confirmed that a “feedback event” to citizens involving the European Parliament, the Council of the EU as well as the European Commission would take place in autumn 2022.

3. From Citizens' Recommendations to Plenary Proposals: state of play

Clément Beaune (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point. In the light of the key methodological principles agreed by the Co-Chairs of the Conference and the related Council discussions, he recalled that Citizens' Panels' recommendations are the basis of the final proposals of the Plenary, and that Working Groups should apply a uniform methodology as they conduct their work. He then stressed that all Plenary components would be free to decide on the way they establish their position on the proposals during the 29-30 April Plenary. On its part, the Council would not engage in any sort of prioritisation of the proposals, nor express a view on the substance of the proposals, but rather focus on the main themes and feasibility of the proposals. Conversely, he emphasised that citizens could undertake a prioritisation/ranking, and would express their agreement or disagreement with the proposals.

In addition, the Chair highlighted that a clear distinction would have to be made between the pre-9 May and the post-9 May phases. It is only after 9 May that the EU Institutions would be able to effectively engage and follow-up on the proposals, in accordance with the Treaties and their own internal procedures. He finally underlined that a steady follow-up on the Conference would be needed, with a view to informing citizens of what their recommendations have become.

In the ensuing discussion:

- Doubts were raised about the role of Working Groups with regards to the transformation of citizens' recommendations into draft Plenary proposals, with concerns that their margin of manoeuvre would be too restricted;
- Clarifications were asked concerning the establishment of consensus on the proposals, in particular as to how components could express their support or opposition to any concrete proposal. Some also called for the formal consensus to

include more than the four components mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the Conference;

- Concerns were raised about the Executive Board having to take any decision on the substance of proposals, to the extent that the Plenary offers a higher degree of publicity and transparency;
- A question was raised concerning citizens' expectations as regards their influence on the institutional set-up of the EU as part of the Conference, which was described as an ultimate decision of the EU institutions.

Co-Chairs then brought clarifications on the agreed methodology and process in reply to the interventions of the members of the Executive Board.

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) recalled that the methodology proposed by the Co-Chairs responded to the request by Members and Observers of the Executive Board to have clear guidance on the final phase of the Conference and a standard framework for the Plenary and its Working Groups. She recalled that the Working Groups were not originally envisaged in the Joint Declaration, but that they were set up to facilitate the work of the Plenary, because this was not as lean in composition as was originally intended. She explained how the Common Secretariat developed the Grids as a standard tool for all Working Groups, which has allowed all Working Groups to advance and produce draft proposals in a way that ensured that the link with the citizens' recommendations remains strong. She recalled that there had been some issues at the beginning with different approaches in some of the Working Groups, but now we have far more uniformity and in fact the system works. She urged that we should not change the system now and we should let the Working Group Chairs and Spokespersons finalise their work.

Co-Chair Šuica stressed that Working Groups, while basing their work on citizens' panels' recommendations as well as the input of the Multilingual Digital Platform, may add elements to these to the extent that the Working Groups' Chairs and Spokespersons deem them consensual.

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) added that all proposals would be submitted to the Plenary of 8-9 April in order to determine whether there are any objections to them. The absence of objections by any of the four components on a particular proposal would mean that consensus has been reached on it. In case of objections, the Executive Board would subsequently address them, and revert to the last Plenary of 29-30 April in a fully transparent manner.

Furthermore, he stressed that the process of transformation from recommendation to proposal was not a 'cut and paste' process and that Article 17 of the Rules of Procedure set out that the proposal shall stem from the 'recommendations from the national and European Citizens' Panels, and the input gathered from the Multilingual Digital Platform, grouped by themes'.

Clément Beaune (Co-Chair) complemented the above, emphasising that Working Groups have a substantive role in the process, which consists in transforming citizens' recommendations into concrete and operational proposals. He noted that each Plenary

component would express its position on the proposals in the manner it deems most appropriate. As far as the Council is concerned, it would not formulate any position on the substance of the proposals, but instead not oppose any of them to the extent that they are based on the Citizens' Panels' recommendations. Overall, if a proposal is not objected by any of the four components, this proposal would form part of the final report. Finally, the Co-Chair recalled that the Conference is not a decision-making body. Decision-making will only begin after 9 May, with each EU Institution acting within its own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties.

Conclusion:

The Co-Chairs finally brought clarifications to the Executive Board on the process of the Conference, both pre-9 May (regarding the transformation of Citizens' Panels' recommendations into Plenary proposals, especially concerning the role of Working Groups and the way consensus would be assessed in the Plenary) and post-9 May (regarding the follow-up to be given to the final outcome of the Conference by the EU institutions, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties).

Next meeting:

The Executive Board agreed to reconvene ahead of the 29-30 April Conference Plenary, and again ahead of the 9 May event.

Contact: Jelmer Hofkamp, Krzysztof Nowaczek and Matteo Riceputi, members of the Common Secretariat.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

5 Avril 2022, 11:00 – 12:30, seat of the European Parliament (room R3.1, hybrid meeting)

PARTICIPANTS LIST

Yellow : confirmed physical presence

Green : confirmed remote presence

CO-CHAIR	Mr Guy VERHOFSTADT Member of the European Parliament (Renew Europe, BE)
CO-CHAIR	Mr Clément BEAUNE (FR) Secretary of State for EU Affairs
CO-CHAIR	Ms Dubravka ŠUICA Vice-President of the European Commission
MEMBER	Mr Mikuláš BEK (CZ) State Secretary for EU Affairs
MEMBER	Ms Iratxe GARCÍA-PÉREZ, Member of the European Parliament (S&D, ES)
MEMBER	Mr Manfred WEBER Member of the European Parliament (EPP, DE)
MEMBER	Ms Věra JOUROVÁ Vice-President of the European Commission
MEMBER	Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ Vice-President of the European Commission
OBSERVER	Mr Pascual NAVARRO (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 (Greens/EFA, DE)
OBSERVER	Mr Zdzisław KRASNODĘBSKI

	Member of the European Parliament (ECR, PL)
OBSERVER	Mr Helmut SCHOLZ Member of the European Parliament (The Left, DE)
OBSERVER (COSAC)	Mr Bojan KEKEC (SI) Chairperson, Commission for International Relations and European Affairs of the Drzavni Svet
OBSERVER (EESC) Invited	Ms Christa SCHWENG President, European Economic and Social Committee
OBSERVER (BusinessEurope) Invited	Mr Markus BEYRER Director General, BusinessEurope
OBSERVER (ETUC) Invited	Mr Luca VISENTINI Secretary General, ETUC
CO-HEAD OF COMMON SECRETARIAT	Ms Marta ARPIO
CO-HEAD OF COMMON SECRETARIAT	Mr Guillaume McLAUGHLIN
CO-HEAD OF COMMON SECRETARIAT	Mr Colin SCICLUNA
COMMON SECRETARIAT	Mr Matteo RICEPUTI
COMMON SECRETARIAT	Mr Jelmer HOFKAMP
COMMON SECRETARIAT	Mr Krzysztof NOWACZEK

EXCUSED

MEMBER	Mr Hans DAHLGREN (SE) Minister for EU Affairs
OBSERVER	Judit VARGA (HU) Minister of Justice
OBSERVER	Konrad SZYMAŃSKI (PL) State Secretary for EU Affairs
OBSERVER	Theodora GENTZIS (BE) Director general for EU affairs
OBSERVER COSAC	David SMOLJAK CZ Senate
OBSERVER COSAC	Ondrej BENESIK, CZ national assembly
OBSERVER COSAC	Sabine THILLAYE Assemblée nationale
OBSERVER COSAC	Jean-François RAPIN, FR Senate
OBSERVER COSAC	Marko POGACNIK SI Drzavni Zbor
OBSERVER invited	Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS President of the Committee of the Regions