



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

**Summary report of the seventh meeting of the Executive Board**

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

**Monday 20 September 2021**

**16.15 - 17.45, 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 seventh meeting on 20 September 2021 in the Council building (in hybrid format).*

*The seventh meeting was co-chaired by MEP Guy VERHOFSTADT, 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 Co-Chairs informed and exchanged views with the Executive Board on the European Citizens' Panels and in particular the positive experience of the first session of Panel 1, held on 17-19 September in Strasbourg.*

*The Co-Chairs also informed and exchanged views with the Executive Board about the Multilingual Digital Platform, including interim reports and platform moderation.*

*The Executive Board endorsed the draft agenda of the Conference Plenary meeting of 22 and 23 October, with a grouping of topics in the morning and afternoon sessions.*

*The Executive Board held an exchange of views on the inaugural Conference Plenary and the Co-Chairs will further discuss the details of the next Plenaries with these considerations in mind.*

*The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the state of discussions on Conference Plenary Working Groups and the outstanding issues and discussed these with participants.*

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) opened the meeting, expressing his satisfaction with the first session of the European Citizens' panel on stronger economy, social justice and jobs / youth, sport, culture and education / digital transformation, that took place on 17-19 September 2021.

## 1. Updated information on the European Citizens' Panels

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and gave a positive assessment of the first session of Panel 1 (stronger economy, social justice and jobs/youth, sport, culture and education/digital transformation). He stressed the engagement and positive experience of the participating citizens. The first panel was successful in identifying its five work streams, each of them including several sub-topics, for the coming two sessions of work: "working in Europe", "an economy for the future", "a just society", "learning in Europe" and "an ethical and safe digital transformation". The panel also chose its 20 representatives to the Conference Plenary. There were many media outlets present in Strasbourg, which led to media coverage of this first session.

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) equally underlined the positive start of this biggest novelty of the Conference. She recalled the powerful images of these citizens, from different Member States, backgrounds and ages, sitting in the hemicycle in Strasbourg and the need to ensure that citizens have a strong place in the Plenary. The Co-Chair noticed that the streams chosen by the citizens reflect the contributions on the digital platform. She called on all to maximise communication efforts to promote the Conference.

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) shared the positive assessment of this first panel session.

In the following exchange of views:

- Participants shared the positive assessment of the first panel session;
- Several participants asked questions about the experts that provided introductions to the panel, as well as the choice of facilitators;
- Questions on the composition of the panel were raised;
- Some participants asked for a higher number of Executive Board observers in the panels;
- Several participants raised the question how the European Citizens' Panels' work will feed into the Plenary.

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) recalled that two of the Conference Plenary sessions are dedicated to debate the recommendations from the citizens' panels, and that Panels' representatives are full members of the Plenary and its working groups, thus ensuring a clear link between the European Citizens' Panels and the Plenary. He also considered that the recommendations of the panels will need to be reflected in the final Conference outcome.

The Co-Chairs informed that the names and biographies of the experts are available on the platform and that facilitators are experienced professionals and part of the consortium of external service providers. As regards the number of observers from the Executive Board in the European Citizens' Panels, while there may be some flexibility on numbers, citizens should not be crowded out and there are practical limitations. In any case all plenary discussions of the European Citizens' Panels are web streamed on the homepage of the multilingual digital platform.

**Conclusion:**

***The Co-Chairs informed and exchanged views with the Executive Board on the European Citizens' Panels and in particular the positive experience of the first session of Panel 1, held on 17-19 September in Strasbourg.***

**2. Multilingual Digital Platform: information from the Co-Chairs and exchange of views - Interim Reports - Platform moderation**

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point and informed that communication campaigns led by the European Parliament and the Commission have delivered results, with over 3 million unique visitors on the platform, but that more needs to be done to ensure active participation. European Citizens' Panels are expected to spark interest and participation in the platform. The Co-Chair presented the first interim report, which is available on the platform in all 24 linguistic versions. The aim of the report is to give an overview of citizens' contributions on the platform, which is the main hub for citizens' contributions. The report has been prepared by a service provider working under a contract with the Commission's DG Communication. The focus of this report is on a qualitative analysis of the contributions, with mind maps helping to visualise the different clusters of ideas. The Co-Chair stressed that the interim report and the mind maps have been presented to the citizens in the first panel session. She informed that the second interim report is planned for mid-October.

In relation to platform moderation, the Co-Chair informed that so far no major problems were encountered. She stressed that the main objectives of moderation are to ensure that the Conference Charter is fully respected, that the platform is used for its intended purpose and that it remains a space where citizens from all backgrounds, walks of life and all corners of the European Union feel comfortable and welcome to contribute. The Co-Chair described that the platform is moderated by a moderation team under a contract with the European Commission, working under the supervision of the Common Secretariat on behalf of the Executive Board of the Conference. The moderation team reviews content on the platform after it has been posted, there is no prior moderation on the contents and when a contribution is hidden, the user receives a message from the moderation team explaining the reason for this action.

**In the following exchange of views:**

- Participants overall considered the report to be a good product that presents the input in a well-balanced way and underlined the usefulness of mind maps;
- Some participants expressed their concern that the platform still lacks visibility and reported on the actions they have undertaken to make it known among their networks;
- Some participants voiced concerns about particular aspects of the report, notably the reflection of certain content in the executive summary, a possible implicit ranking

through the order of topics, weighing of ideas versus events and the reference to specific Member States;

- Some participants insisted that these reports are taken up in the Plenary and its working groups;
- One participant also questioned whether the Board should be involved in this report.

The Co-Chairs took note of the issues raised and stressed that it is not and cannot be the role of the Executive Board to review these reports, as this is not a political exercise. The Co-Chairs also confirmed that the October Plenary will have an agenda point on the interim reports that will allow for a more in depth discussion.

**Conclusion:**

***The Co-Chairs also informed and exchanged views with the Executive Board about the Multilingual Digital Platform, including interim reports and platform moderation.***

**3. Plenary of the Conference on 22-23 October - Proposed agenda: endorsement - Exchange of views on the inaugural Plenary**

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) introduced the draft agenda for the Plenary. Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) suggested that the agenda should be arranged in two blocks of debates, with the morning focussing on the European Citizens' Panels, national events and panels and the European Youth Event and the afternoon focussing on the platform. The draft agenda was endorsed accordingly.

In the following discussion, participants exchanged on the Conference Plenary more broadly, drawing lessons from the inaugural Plenary on 19 June and raising the following issues:

- There was broad agreement between participants that the Plenary should be more interactive, allowing for a real debate and focusing more on substance;
- Some participants wondered how their actual input on content can fit into the process;
- The question of involvement of Western Balkan countries was raised.

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) agreed with participants that the debates at the inaugural Plenary were composed of short interventions with limited interactions between speakers. He suggested to allocate to each component, in addition to its speaking time, a certain time credit for reaction to interventions from other components, that they would use as they wish.

The Co-Chairs stressed that they will further discuss the details of the Plenary with these considerations in mind.

On the Western Balkans, the Co-Chairs recalled that the Western Balkan countries are not formally part of the Conference process, but reconfirmed their willingness to find suitable ways to involve them.

A call was repeated in relation to the Rules of Procedure, namely to modify Footnote 7 of the Rules of Procedure to include the possibility to record diverging views also for social partners and other stakeholders in the Plenary.

The Co-Chairs explained that a written reply on this matter will be sent shortly.

**Conclusion:**

***The Executive Board endorsed the draft agenda of the Conference Plenary meeting of 22 and 23 October, with a grouping of topics in the morning and afternoon sessions.***

***The Executive Board held an exchange of views on the inaugural Conference Plenary and the Co-Chairs will further discuss the details of the next Plenaries with these considerations in mind.***

#### **4. Conference Plenary Working Groups: information from the Co-Chairs**

Gašper Dovžan (Co-Chair) chaired this agenda point. He informed that progress has been made on the Council's side over the summer in relation to the Working Groups, and also between the Co-Chairs at their last meeting, and that work will continue on the last outstanding issues, i.e. how to present the work of the Working Groups to the Conference Plenary, and by whom. He considered that the Conference Plenary should remain the place for debates and considered that the outcome of the Working Groups should remain informal, highlighting his concern that written reports from the Working Groups would overshadow the work of the Conference Plenary.

Dubravka Šuica (Co-Chair) confirmed her willingness to come to an agreement on this last outstanding points and underlined the importance of having a citizen reporting back on behalf of the Working Group, together with the Chair, to the Conference Plenary.

Guy Verhofstadt (Co-Chair) called for the Working Groups' issue to be solved as soon as possible in order to start discussions on substance and stop discussing procedures. He considered that the Working Group's Chair, who represents the whole Working Group, should present the work of the working group to the Plenary, immediately followed by a reaction from a representative of the citizens' panels in the Working Group. He considered that a written summary record from the Working Groups needs to go to the whole Plenary to ensure transparency and equality of all Plenary Members.

In the ensuing discussions:

- Some stressed their opposition to any type of written report from the Working Groups, while others insisted on the need for written reports to go to Plenary;
- There was a question on the actual purpose of the Working Groups;
- Others underlined the great importance of the Working Groups and considered that these groups were an opportunity for in depth discussions in the context of the Conference;

- Several participants called for a swift agreement and for a swift start of the Working Groups.

The Co-Chairs will continue their discussions on the modalities of the Conference Plenary Working Groups.

**Conclusion:**

***The Co-Chairs informed the Executive Board of the state of discussions on Conference Plenary Working Groups and the outstanding issues and discussed these with participants.***

**Next meeting:**

***No date for a next meeting of the Executive Board was fixed.***

Contact: Susanne Höke, member of the Common Secretariat

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

**20 September 2021, 16.15-18.00, EUROPA Building room S7 and virtual access**

**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 Gašper DOVŽAN (SI) Secretary of State for EU Affairs
CO-CHAIR	Ms Dubravka ŠUICA <i>Vice-President of the European Commission</i>
MEMBER	Ms Milena HRDINKOVÁ (CZ) State Secretary for EU Affairs
MEMBER	Ms Iratxe GARCÍA-PÉREZ, Member of the European Parliament (S&D, ES)
MEMBER	Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ Vice-President of the European Commission
OBSERVER	Ms Judit VARGA Minister of Justice
OBSERVER	Mr Hans DAHLGREN (SE) Minister for EU Affairs
OBSERVER	Mr Juan GONZÁLEZ-BARBA PERA (ES) Secretary of State for EU Affairs
OBSERVER	Ms Theodora GENTZIS (BE) -Director General for European Affairs -Secretary General a.i.
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 KRASNOŁĘBSKI 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
OBSERVER (COSAC)	Mme Sabine Thillaye (FR) Chair of EU Affairs at the Assemblée Nationale
OBSERVER (COSAC)	M. Jean-François Rapin (FR) Chair of EU Affairs Committee at the Senat
OBSERVER (COSAC)	Mr Marko POGAČNIK (SI) Chairperson of the Committee for EU Affairs of the Drzavni Zbor
OBSERVER (COSAC)	Mr Bojan KEKEC (SI) Chairperson of the Commission for International Relations and European Affairs of the Drzavni Svet
OBSERVER (CoR) Invited	Mr Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS President of the European Committee of the Regions
OBSERVER (EESC) Invited	Ms Christa SCHWENG President of the European Economic and Social Committee
OBSERVER (BusinessEurope) Invited	Mr Markus BEYRER Director General of BusinessEurope
OBSERVER (ETUC) Invited	Mr Luca VISENTINI Secretary General of 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	Ms Rebecca RHLALOU

COMMON SECRETARIAT	Ms Eva-Maria POPTCHEVA
COMMON SECRETARIAT	Ms Susanne HOEKE

**EXCUSED**

MEMBER	Mr Clément BEAUNE (FR) Secretary of State for EU Affairs
MEMBER	Ms Věra JOUROVÁ Vice-President of the European Commission
MEMBER	Mr Manfred WEBER Member of the European Parliament (PPE, DE)