

Towards the European Conference on the Future of Europe

The proposal for a "European Conference on the Future of Europe" put forward by Emmanuel Macron in his "Letter to European Citizens" of 4 March 2019 is in line with the Sorbonne's speech of 26 September 2017 for "a sovereign, united and democratic Europe".

It confirms the objective of reshaping the European system by adding the need to respond to citizens' requests to participate in change by laying the foundations for a renewed consensus on the European project.

According to Emmanuel Macron, the Conference should be convened by the end of 2019, associate groups of citizens, give hearings to academics, social partners, religious and spiritual representatives and define the roadmap of the refounding of the Union.

The idea of the Conference, based on the results of the European citizens' consultations held in 2018, anticipated the results of the subsequent European elections, which expressed a clear pro-European majority.

However, it is clear that the consensus expressed by the majority of European citizens would risk evaporation if decisions on the future of Europe were not taken during the current legislature:

- *to guarantee security in all its dimensions,*
- *to respond to the challenge of new migrations,*
- *to develop a renewed partnership with the Mediterranean and Africa,*
- *to make Europe a model of sustainable development,*
- *to equip the single currency with the means to ensure growth and stability,*
- *to promote effective social solidarity,*
- *to define the foundations of a genuine European democracy.*

Thus, the Conference will be an opportunity to address the key issues of:

- *the system of government of the Union,*
- *the division of competences between the national and European levels,*
- *the creation of an autonomous fiscal capacity for EMU as part of its completion,*
- *the achievement of sustainable development objectives,*
- *combating inequalities and creating a European labour market in the digital society,*

- *respect for the rule of law,*
- *the role of the European Union in the globalised world,*
- *the relationship between federal citizenship and national identities,*
- *the method and agenda for reforming the Union, including the transition to a sovereign Europe in the event that some Member States are not ready to accept it.*

The Conference will be the European public space in which to build the necessary consensus between the dimension of representative democracy - which for the Union is identified in the central role of parliamentary systems - and the dimension of participatory democracy. The participatory democracy makes it essential to have an open, transparent and structured dialogue with civil society and citizens, with a view to strengthening the process of forming a common European identity, in the name of the principle that "sovereignty belongs to the people", which delegates it in the forms and according to the procedures defined by our constitutional systems. The Conference will have to be accompanied, together with moments of debate and discussion with representatives of civil society, by an intense work of communication that allows citizens to be informed about the progress of its work and by forms of involvement in the territories, built on the experience of the European citizens' consultations.

In this spirit we are convinced:

- *that the Conference should be convened on the basis of an interinstitutional declaration, signed by the Commission, the Parliament and the Council (acting by a majority) after consulting the ECB, the EESC and the Committee of the Regions; and assisted by a secretariat provided by the Commission and the European Parliament, and be concluded at the latest in spring 2022, at the beginning of the French Presidency of the Council;*
- *that the Conference shall not replace the role of the institutions in the development of common policies. This development will serve as a stimulus for the debate on the future of Europe, while the debate on the future of Europe will provide a fertile ground for facilitating consensus-building in the development of common policies;*
- *that the obstacles and rigidities of the rules which have characterised the procedure of the former European Convention ex art.48 must be avoided, drawing inspiration from the method which led the European Parliament, during the first European parliamentary term, to adopt the "Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union" (Spinelli Draft Treaty). This draft had been conceived as a global and coherent, new and independent Treaty intended to create a new entity; in the same way, the Conference on the future of Europe must have the objective of drafting a new Treaty which should not be conceived as a series of amendments to the existing Treaties and should therefore take into account also different adoption procedures than those provided for in the Lisbon Treaty;*
- *that the European Parliament should seize the unique opportunity of the public space for debate created by the European Conference to take on the task of promoting and bring the*

Conference to adopt a new draft Treaty. This new draft shall be shared with the national parliaments, whose comments will have to be taken into account for any changes. The new Treaty must also stipulate that the reform of the Union must not follow the unanimity rule and that, as long as a country is not prepared to accede to the new Treaty, it will remain bound by the previous rules. Any risk of weakening the framework or cohesion of the European Union must be avoided, but at the same time the most ambitious countries must be guaranteed the opportunity to move forward together along the path of global reform of the Union;

- *that, in order to prepare for cooperation with the national parliaments, it would be essential to provide for the convening of "interparliamentary assemblies on the future of Europe" as proposed by François Mitterrand to the EP on 28 October 1989 and as then carried out in Rome in November 1990 on the eve of the Intergovernmental Conferences on the Maastricht Treaty. These assemblies could be conceived as a phase of the European Conference on the Future of Europe.*

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