

DRAFT PROPOSALS OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE



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

38. [Proposal: Democracy and elections](#)

Objective: Strengthen European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in European Parliament elections, fostering transnational debate on European issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives, in particular by:

1. Ensuring the protection of EU values laid down in the treaties, including the rule of law and a strong social model,¹ which are at the core of the European democracy, **also abolishing the right of veto in the European Council established in Art.7.2 TEU.**² In its relationship with external countries, the European Union should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders. Only after achieving this, the European Union can be an ambassador of our democratic model in the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue;³
2. Conceiving a EU wide referendum, to be triggered by the European Parliament, in exceptional cases on matters particularly important to all European citizens;⁴
3. Amending EU electoral law to harmonise electoral conditions (voting age, election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their financing) for the European Parliament elections, as well as moving towards voting for Union-wide lists, or 'transnational lists',⁵ with candidates from multiple Member States, having taken⁶ into account the views expressed among citizens across the EU Member States on this issue.⁷
 - Some of the Members of the European Parliament should be elected through a European Union-wide list, the rest being elected within the Members' States;⁸

¹ Change WG 25C

² **Change WG, part of 25F**

³ ECP Recommendations 14

⁴ ECP Recommendation 18; N.B. citizens representatives explained it should be carefully implemented and used

⁵ European Commission representatives explained it should be implemented after a transition period, not to rush things through

⁶ Changes WG 28 E,G,H

⁷ ECP2 Recommendation 16, NL National Panel 20, National Panel was divided on "transnational lists"

⁸ Based on ECP2 Recommendation 16, Discussion in WG

- This reform should also aim at facilitating digital voting possibilities⁹ and guaranteeing effective voting rights for persons with disabilities,¹⁰
 - *The reform should ensure that young people are fully able to participate in the representative democracy by lowering the voting age to 16 and by harmonising the minimum age to stand for election with the voting age.*¹¹
4. Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens' desire to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments.¹² This is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged;¹³
- European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the Commission. This could be achieved either by the direct election of the Commission President¹⁴ or a lead candidate system;¹⁵
 - The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative, in order to propose¹⁶ the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations;¹⁷
 - **European Parliament should decide on the budget of the EU as it is the right of parliaments at the national level;**¹⁸
 - Political parties, civil society organisations, trade unions should be more lively and accessible in order for citizens to be more involved and engaged in European democracy.¹⁹ This would also contribute to stimulate the inclusion of EU topics in public

⁹ ECP2 Recommendation 19 and MDP

¹⁰ European Economic and Social Committee

¹¹ Change WG 31A: supported by DK representative of national events, however, ECP disagree. The matter is for further reflection.

¹² Change WG 32B

¹³ ECP2 Recommendation 36, BE and FR National Panels

¹⁴ FR National Panel ("*electing the President of the European Commission by universal suffrage*"), MDP (*Final Kantar Report: Group of contributions discusses the direct election of the Commission President by citizens*)

¹⁵ EP position: *the lead candidate of the European political party that has obtained the highest share of votes at European elections, who is able to be supported by a majority of European Parliament's Members, shall be elected President of the European Commission. In case a coalition majority cannot be reached, the task should be assigned to the next lead candidate. To this end, European political parties may nominate candidates to run for the Commission President's post. Mr Paulo Rangel: in order to reinforce the lead candidate process the positions of the European Parliament and the European Council should be reversed and this implies a treaty change: the Parliament would propose and the Council would approve the President of the Commission. MDP (Final Kantar Report: "Group of contributions discusses the election of the Commission President and appointment of commissioners, including the Spitzenkandidaten system). EYE, pag. 23: "The candidates for the President of the Commission should not be elected in backroom negotiations among winning parties. We should enforce the so-called "Spitzenkandidaten" system, where each party announces their candidate for the President of the Commission before the election campaign in the case that this party gains a majority. Through active participation in the campaign and direct interaction with the citizens, the future President could become more closely connected to the European population."*, and discussion WG

¹⁶ Change WG 34C

¹⁷ BE National Panel (3.2), FR National Panel (11),- MDP (Final Kantar Report: "*Regarding the European Parliament, contributors most often call for it to be granted real powers of legislative initiative*")

¹⁸ MDP (Final Kantar Report: "*Regarding the European Parliament, (...) There are also calls for it to be granted fiscal powers*). On April 13, 2022, the WG members of the Council component object to the contents of this recommendation in the non-paper. To be brought to the Executive Board's attention.

¹⁹ MDP (Final Kantar Report: "*According to another contribution, parties should become more accessible to people from different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds*")

debates via political parties, organised civil society and social partners, not only during European elections but ahead of national, regional and local elections as well;²⁰ Democracy is embodied in the institutions and in society at large, including in the workplace through the role of social partners.²¹

39. Proposal: EU decision making process

Objective: Improve the EU's decision-making process in order to ensure the EU's capability to act, while taking into account the interests of all Member States and guaranteeing a transparent and understandable process for the citizens, in particular by

1. Reassessing decision-making and voting rules in the EU institutions, focusing on the issue of unanimous voting, which makes it very difficult to reach agreement, while ensuring a fair calculation of voting 'weights' so that small countries' interests are protected;²²
 - All issues decided by way of unanimity should be decided by way of a qualified majority. The only exceptions should be the admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU as stated in Art. 2 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.²³
2. Ensuring transparency of decision-making by allowing independent citizens' observers to closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing broader²⁴ right of access to documents, and develop on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and the EU institutions;²⁵
 - The EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process and institutions. For instance, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament, including its votes, should be broadcasted online in the same way. This would allow interested citizens to follow EU policy-making, and hold politicians and policy-makers accountable;²⁶ the European Parliament's right of inquiry should be strengthened;²⁷
 - EU decision-making process should be further developed so that national, regional, local representatives, social partners and organised civil society are more involved.²⁸ Inter-parliamentary cooperation and dialogue should be strengthened. National parliaments should also be closer involved in the legislative procedure by the European Parliament, e.g. by way of participation in hearings.²⁹ In addition, a better involvement of the subnational level and of the Committee of the Regions helps to take better into account the experiences gained with the implementation of EU law.³⁰

²⁰ Committee of the Regions in WG

²¹ Change WG 38, compromise formulation

²² ECP2 Recommendation 20

²³ ECP4 Recommendation 21

²⁴ Change WG 43

²⁵ ECP2 Recommendation 34, NL National Panel

²⁶ Discussion in WG based ECP2 Recommendation 34, NL National Panel, MPD (Final Kantar Report: *"Increased transparency and greater involvement of the citizens is supported"*)

in EU decision-making process is also supported

²⁷ Change WG 44A. On April 13, 2022, the WG members of the Council component object to the contents of this recommendation in the non-paper. To be brought to the Executive Board's attention.

²⁸ WG discussion (presentation by National Parliaments and Committee of the Regions)

²⁹ Change WG 45C

³⁰ Change WG 46B

3. Considering changing the names of EU institutions to clarify their functions and respective role in the EU decision-making process for citizens,³¹
 - The EU decision making process should be based on a clearer and more understandable structure, resembling national systems,³² explicitly reflecting the division of competences between the European institutions and the Member States;³³
 - For example, the Council of the EU could be called the Senate of the EU and the European Commission could be called the Executive Commission of the EU.³⁴
4. Enhance the European Union's delivery capacities in key important areas;³⁵
5. Ensure proper civil and social dialogue mechanisms and processes at every step of the EU decision-making process, from impact assessment to policy design and implementation.³⁶
6. Reform the way the European Union works by better involving social partners and organised civil society. Strengthening the existing structures in order to better reflect the needs and expectations of EU citizens in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. Within this framework, enhance the institutional role of the EESC and empower it as facilitator and guarantor of participatory democracy activities like structured dialogue with civil society organisations and Citizens' panels. A lively civil society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.³⁷
7. Reopening the discussion about the constitution, where applicable, to help us align better on our values. A constitution may help to be more precise as well as involve citizens and agree on the rules of the decision-making process;³⁸

40. [Proposal: SUBSIDIARITY](#)

1. Active subsidiarity and multilevel governance are key principles and fundamental features for the EU functioning and democratic accountability;³⁹
2. The EU should review the mechanism allowing national Parliaments to assess whether new legislative proposals at the European level do not intrude on their legal competences and to be granted the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European level. Such mechanisms should also be enlarged to all regional parliaments within the EU that have legislative power;⁴⁰
3. Reform the Committee of Regions to encompass adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role⁴¹ in the institutional architecture, if matters with a territorial impact are concerned;⁴²

³¹ ECP2 Recommendation 15

³² Discussion WG based on need expressed in ECP2 15 to "clarify EU institutions functions", MDP (Final Kantar Report: "There are also (...) suggestions to deepen the bicameral legislature in the EU")

³³ Change WG 48B

³⁴ ECP2 recommendation 15

³⁵ Discussions in the WG

³⁶ Change WG 52A

³⁷ EESS, compromise formulation

³⁸ ECP Recommendation 35, FR National Panel, plus changes WG combined 51C,D

³⁹ Change WG 53D

⁴⁰ Discussion in WG, National Parliaments

⁴¹ Discussion in WG, CoR and EESC; Final Kantar Report, pag. 85

⁴² Change WG 58B

4. Systematic use of a subsidiarity definition commonly agreed by all EU institutions could help to clarify whether decisions have to be taken at European, national or regional level.⁴³
5. Social partners and organised civil society should be better included in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. A lively society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.⁴⁴

We call on European Union institutions to make the conclusions of this working group a reality and effectively implement them. This could be realised through the possibilities the Lisbon Treaty already provides and, when necessary, by triggering the request of launching a European Convention.⁴⁵

You can find all 49 proposals here: https://danielfreund.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-04-25_COFE-draft-proposals.docx

⁴³ Change WG 59B

⁴⁴ Discussion in the WG, Social partners and several other members

⁴⁵ Change WG 63A, compromise formulation