March 2020

The Conference on the Future of Europe had been expected to start on Europe Day, 9 May 2020 and run for two years. This Topical Digest offers a selection of recent publications produced by the European Parliamentary Research Service, on the Conference on Future of Europe, or on the broader topic of the future of Europe, and offers an overview of the current debates and highlights on the future process of participatory decision-making at EU level.

Parliament’s right of legislative initiative
Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, February 2020
The European Commission has a near monopoly on legislative initiative in the European Union (EU), with special initiative rights for other institutions applying only in certain specific cases. However, the European Parliament and the Council may invite the Commission to submit legislative proposals. Whilst this ‘indirect’ initiative right does not create an obligation on the Commission to propose the legislation requested, the Treaty of Lisbon codified the Commission’s obligation to provide reasons for any refusal to follow a parliamentary initiative. Most recently, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, pledged to strengthen the partnership with the Parliament, inter alia, by responding with a proposal for a legislative act whenever Parliament, acting by a majority of its members, adopts a resolution requesting that the Commission submit legislative proposals.

Preparing the Conference on the Future of Europe
Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, December 2019
The new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, pledged to establish a Conference on the Future of Europe, in an effort to give new impulse to European construction and bring Europe closer to citizens. This briefing gives an overview of the state of play on the preparation of the Conference on the Future of Europe and the main points advanced by President Ursula von der Leyen and Vice-President Dubravka Šuica to ensure that European citizens’ voices will be heard in the future process of EU policy-making.

Hearings of the Commissioners-designate: Dubravka Šuica – Vice-President: Democracy and Demography
Briefing by Monika Kiss, September 2019
This briefing was one in a set looking at the Commissioners-designate and their portfolios as put forward by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The briefing provides an overview of key issues in the portfolio area of the, now confirmed, Vice-President Dubravka Šuica, as well as Parliament’s activity in the last term in that field. It also includes a brief biography of the Commissioner.

Election of the President of the European Commission
Briefing by Laura Tilindyte, April 2019
The European Parliament has long sought to ensure that, by voting in European elections, European citizens not only elect the Parliament itself, but also have a say over who heads the EU executive – the European Commission. This briefing, published in advance of the May 2019 European elections, explained what had become known as the ‘Spitzenkandidaten process’, and gave an overview of the nominees, as well as looking more broadly at the process.

In-depth Analysis by Silvia Kotanidis and Ralf Drachenberg, May 2019

This paper aims to give an account of the debates on the Future of Europe held in plenary sessions of the European Parliament in the period from January 2018 to April 2019, and concludes a series of four briefings on the Future of Europe debates that have explained the views of the different Heads of State or Government who have spoken in the European Parliament's plenary sessions throughout that period.

European Union electoral law

Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, October 2019

The European Parliament has not always enjoyed the powers and democratic legitimacy it does now. This is clear from a quick glance at how Parliament has evolved. This briefing goes back through decades of transformation and reforms of the EU electoral process up to the current EU electoral rules, considering the various attempts and efforts made to ‘Europeanise’ and make the electoral process uniform in all Member States.

Using technology to ‘co-create’ EU policies

Briefing by Gianluca Sgueo, February 2020

What will European Union (EU) decision-making look like in the next decade and beyond? Is technological progress promoting more transparent, inclusive and participatory decision-making at EU level? This briefing highlights the importance of technology, in particular the new digital communication channels as an innovative access tool between citizens and public administrations and EU policy making. By using the technological innovation at their disposal, both citizens and decision-makers will benefit through turning it into an opportunity to shape new policies according to their needs and expectations, and making EU policy-making even more participatory.

Further reading

10 issues to watch in 2020

In-depth analysis by Étienne Bassot, January 2020

The powers of the European Parliament

Briefing by Laura Tilindyte-Humburg, November 2019

Role and election of the President of the European Commission

Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, July 2019

The Future of Europe: Contours of the current debate

Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, Angelos Delivorias, Nora Milotay, Anja Radjenovic, Joanna Apap, Elena Lazarou and Magdalena Sapala, April 2018

From Rome to Sibiu

Study by Suzana Anghel, Desmond Dinan and Ralf Drachenberg, April 2018