

Commitments made at the hearing of

DUBRAVKA ŠUICA

Vice-President-designate Democracy and Demography



The Vice-President-designate, Dubravka Šuica, appeared before the European Parliament on 03 October 2019 to answer questions put by MEPs from the Committees on Constitutional affairs and Employment and social affairs. During the hearing, she made a number of commitments which are highlighted in this document. These commitments refer to her portfolio, as described in the [mission letter](#) sent to her by Ursula von der Leyen, President-elect of the European Commission, including:

- Conference on the Future of Europe; and
- Supporting Europe through the demographic transition.

Please note that the quotes included in this document only make reference to oral commitments made during the [hearing](#). The [verbatim report](#) of the public hearing is available on the [Commissioners-designate hearings website](#). The Vice-President-designate was also sent some written questions in advance of the hearing to which she provided [written answers](#).



Conference on the Future of Europe

Agreeing on the concept, structure, timing and scope

"The President elect has set an ambitious timetable by announcing that the conference will start in 2020 and it will run for two years. This is why [...] I will work with this House, with the Council and all others involved to agree on the concept, structure, format, timing and scope of the conference. I will put forward my ideas very early in my mandate and I want to stress the importance of working together with you, Members from across this House."

Format of the conference

"[...] this advisory board will be chairing this conference. It's a conference, but in fact [...] it will be a series of conferences all over Europe. So this is what we want to do."

Advisory board

"Definitely, there would be an advisory board, which will be chaired by me but co-chaired by someone from this Parliament."

Defining the topics

"[...] I think we have to stick to these six pillars which are embedded in the political guidelines of the President elect: a European Union New Deal; climate; digitalisation; an economy that works for people; a stronger Europe in the world and European way of life. Then this one: a new push for European democracy. I think that this should be the scope of our topics, but I won't decide this. I would come here and it will be my first task within the first 100 days. So I'll come to you and we'll see how to go on. We have to do it in cooperation with the Council, of course, but I think you will be the first one involved."

Parliament's role and involvement in all stages

"Strengthening Europe's democracy cannot be done without the most important body, which is the European Parliament, the body which has active participation of our citizens. I'm fully committed to work with you and the Council in all stages of the conference."

Visits to each Member State

"[...] We have to visit each Member State in the first part of our mandate."

Involving national parliaments, NGOs and civil society

"So, national parliaments, of course, then NGOs. [...] Civil society is also very important and I won't abstain from this. Be assured that I will incorporate all of them but together with you, since we will be co-chairing this so I won't do anything without coming again and talking to you, agreeing, as I said, on the concept, on the scope, on the timing, we will do everything together."

Involving local and regional authorities

"We have to contact everyone – NGOs, local and regional authorities, national parliaments. But local and regional authorities will be the most important because this is the easiest way to reach the citizens, and we want to reach any citizen who is interested in our common future."

Citizens' participation

"[...] we don't select anyone, it will be completely open, and it will be completely inclusive. So we will talk to them, listen to them and then we will agree on the results."

Reaching citizens in rural areas

"[...] I think we have to go to rural areas to reach every citizen."

Making participation in person or online as easy and accessible as possible

"[...] We need to engage with Europeans across our Union, to listen to their hopes, expectations and their concerns, which are related to their realities: those linked to climate, economy, digital development, global transformation, demographic changes. The President elect has tasked me with finding ways to make participation in person or online and make it as easy and accessible as possible. I will make this an absolute priority."

Ensuring the follow-up on what is agreed

"[...] this conference must lead to results. Listening to citizens is essential, but is not an end in itself. Real understanding means taking real action. We need to make sure that whatever is agreed is enacted. This was an explicit commitment of the President-elect in her political guidelines and I will work with all my colleagues within the Commission, as well as with this House, and with all committees [...] interested – and all other institutions to make sure we follow up on what is agreed."

Potential treaty changes as follow-up actions

"If there is a need to change the Treaty, I will be open for further debate – not only me, but all of you. I saw that this was an idea in this committee and it is very important for Parliament to be stronger, to be more powerful, and since I'm one of you, I would be in favour of this. But you know that the Commission will be working in a collegiate way – we will be a team. So if we have a unanimous approach I will be in favour of this but let's first talk to the citizens and see if this Treaty is enough – if we have used all the possibilities it offers us. If not, then we have to start debating the changes."

AFCO reports on the Future of Europe

"Of course, I agree with these reports. I was in favour of them during plenary sessions, and I even took part in debates and, of course, I share the content of these reports."

A right of initiative for the European Parliament

"[...] the Committee for Constitutional Affairs was dealing with the right of initiative for many, many years and it is enshrined in all of your reports. [...] Madam President, if she is willing, I'm willing, too, we will be willing together to change this and to give the right of initiative if necessary. [...] I won't be against since I come from Parliament, and I want to empower Parliament and I know that this is very important for all of us and for all of you. So I will come here and talk to you and we'll see how the situation evolves."

Subsidiarity

"[...] I'm definitely in favour of subsidiarity [...], and I will keep to this. Of course, when it comes to the social pillar, of which I am in charge, I have to take care of Member States' competences. However, when we can help, why not help by providing funding or doing things that can help, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and in the less developed countries?"

Proportionality

"The principle of subsidiarity, but also proportionality, is already included. So we have always to have this in mind and take this into account. Of course, I think proportionality is also very important and we don't have to make any extra burden on anyone, especially not on local and regional authorities."

Establishing a "red card" in case a national parliament should decide that the measure is in conflict with subsidiarity

"[...] The 'yellow card' has been used three or four times so far. This means that we have to use all the possibilities, from the 'green card' up to the 'red card'. I

can't tell you, but why don't we discuss this within the scope of a conference on the future of Europe? If this will be the conclusion, I would not oppose it. We are completely open and completely inclusive. This is the spirit of the new College and the new Commission."

Rights of European citizens living in the UK and for British citizens living in the EU

"[...] Citizenship is very important, especially when we talk about Ireland and Northern Ireland, and we have to take this into consideration. Of course, generosity won't be enough. We will have to do more for those people – both for UK citizens here in Europe, and for us Europeans in the UK."

The Union's founding values

"The Union I will promote is a Union of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women prevail. I will stick to Article 2 and I will always keep to this [...]."

Lead candidate system and transnational lists

"In my mission letter and in many other mission letters, we are obliged to put this on the agenda and come to you, and it has to be finished. It will be the first topic on the conference on the future of Europe: the *Spitzenkandidaten* system and transnational lists. By the end of summer 2020 we will have to finish this debate and see how to go on."

Supporting Europe through the demographic transition

Impact of demographic change on different groups

"[...] I will look at every aspect of demographic change and how it impacts the different groups affected."

Mapping based on Eurostat data

"[...] whatever I will be doing, it will be done on the basis of mapping [...]. I will use Eurostat data and on this data, everything will be evidence-based. So we won't start this procedure and we won't start enacting any legislation without having concrete data, which will be obtained by Eurostat."

Mapping timeline

"[...] I have a duty [...] in the first six months to do mapping and see what to do. This will be my first report, in my first six months."

Long-term vision for rural areas

"I want to focus on rural areas, which are often the most deeply affected by declining population, lack of opportunities leading to a brain drain, a severe shortage in frontline services, and higher risk of poverty. I will also coordinate the work on the long term vision for rural areas in close consultation with local and regional authorities. We need to enable them to make the most of their potential and support them in facing up to their own unique set of issues."

Fighting poverty

"I will do all my best to fulfil my duties, my activities in the mission letter and to help European citizens and those in need and those in poverty and those left behind to live decent lives."

Brain drain

"I will focus on the issue of the brain drain, supporting the regions most affected, notably through the Youth Guarantee."

Green Paper on ageing

"I will put forward a Green Paper on ageing to assess what can and needs to be done, notably to foster active ageing and look at whether our social protection systems are fit for an older population. This will be done in close cooperation with this House, and of course with Member States, who have the competencies in most of these areas."

European Pillar of Social Rights

"[...] as a part of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, I will coordinate the work on better reconciling work and family life."

Reconciling work and family

"So we have to find better working hours, better infrastructure for mothers and fathers [...] why not care for families and have a family friendly policy? So I'm in favour. This is one of the key pillars of the European Social Pillar."

Protecting children's rights

"This is the decision of this Parliament, [...] the European Social Fund Plus. This Parliament asked for EUR 5.9 million to be incorporated into the next Multiannual Financial Framework for child protection and for child guarantee. I would be in favour of this. I will ask for more, if possible, but let's ask Commissioner Hahn what he thinks about it. [...] I will always take into consideration the decisions of the Parliament and of all of you [...]."

Investing more in the future of our children

"I will lead the work on investing in our children. [...] There is no more important investment we can make [...]. I will coordinate the work on a new child guarantee and present a comprehensive strategy for the rights of the child."

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