

Conference on the Future of Europe should start by September, say MEPs

- COVID-19 has brought to the surface the EU's institutional shortcomings
- Council needs to adopt a sensible position soon and commit to reforms agreed by the Conference
- Digital technologies should enable effective citizen participation

The European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee, underlines that the COVID-19 crisis has made the need for reforms more crucial than ever.

The shortcomings of the EU and its member states, especially in relation to its coordinated response in times of crisis, were highlighted by all MEPs in today's meeting. The Conference on the Future of Europe will need to be launched as soon as possible in order for effective reforms to be implemented based on its outcome, they stressed.

Most speakers pointed out the need for the Council to come up with a sensible negotiating position in the immediate future, with many asking for a commitment by the member states to implement Conference-driven reforms, potentially including treaty change. A broad majority also stressed that a joint declaration between Parliament, Council and Commission will need to be concluded before the summer in order for the Conference to be launched in September and to be at full speed by the end of the year.

Citizen participation and the need for the Conference to be a bottom-up exercise with an open agenda were reiterated as core demands by all MEPs, many of whom advocated for the use of digital technology and remote participation tools during the pandemic .

You can catch up with the recorded meeting by [clicking here](#).

Background

The Conference, to be organised by Parliament, Council and Commission, was expected to start in May 2020 and run for two years, but has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to [Parliament's position adopted in January](#), it should be built on citizen participation involving a cross-section of society, and be free to define the future shape and form of the EU.

In its [17 April resolution on the EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#), the European Parliament stressed that “the Conference needs to be convened as soon as possible [...] to bring about a profound reform of the Union”. In their [declaration of 7 May 2020](#) for the [70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration](#), President Sassoli and the European Parliament’s political group leaders reiterated this call, “in order to shape the Union in which we want to live together” and for “an agreement [...] to build the recovery of the European continent”.

Further information

[Committee webpage](#)

[EPRS briefing: Preparing the Conference on the Future of Europe](#)

[Constitutional Affairs committee Newsletters](#)

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