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| **RESOL-VII/003** |
| **138th plenary session, 11-12 February 2020** |

**RESOLUTION

on the Conference on the Future of Europe**



**Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions
on the Conference on the Future of Europe**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR)

Whereas;

# The democratic legitimacy of the European Union lies with the trust of citizens in their representatives elected at European, national, regional and local levels;

# Representative democracy is the foundation of the EU project; the increased voter turnout in the 2019 European elections has demonstrated citizens' keen interest in shaping EU affairs; all levels of government need to respond to new challenges and develop new ways of engaging citizens;

# Elections are held every year in the EU Member States at national, regional and local level, and those elections represent an opportunity to communicate to citizens how European policies affect all levels of governance, and thus help to strengthen the credibility of the EU in the eyes of the citizens;

# The crucial role of local and regional authorities is demonstrated by the fact that they are responsible for half of all public investment, one-third of public expenditure and one-quarter of tax revenue in the EU;

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR);

# Welcomes the initiative by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council to set up the Conference on the Future of Europe and looks forward to contributing to achieving concrete results and taking action with tangible benefits for EU citizens;

# Believes that the Conference is an opportunity to identify measures that the EU needs in order to increase its capacity to deliver and enhance its democratic functioning in line with the new principle of active subsidiarity;

# Underlines that the more than one million elected local and regional representatives across the Union should be involved both in shaping EU policies and in linking the EU with its citizens; to increase the visibility of the process, the CoR commits to promoting debates on EU issues in regional parliaments and municipal councils;

# Welcomes the proposed measures to reach out to citizens and underlines the importance of open and extensive thematic debates; fully supports the idea that important elements of the conference should be decentralised to directly and actively involve areas and populations beyond the European and national capitals. To this end, the CoR will provide support for its members in organising local events focusing on the Conference's themes and will develop tools to collect and communicate the results and suggestions from these debates to the Conference;

# Calls for the Europe Direct Centres to be involved in the Conference on the Future of Europe and to be considered as regional hubs of participation, given their scope and also because their main role is to bring European issues to the citizens in general. Europe Direct Centres have important experience in promoting debates, so they would be a key pillar to ensure that the Conference on the Future of Europe is broad and wide-ranging and enriched with diverse opinions;

# Stresses that pluralism and inclusiveness in the conference process must be ensured and fully supports the European Parliament's proposal for a two-pronged approach: a conference plenary at the institutional level, and a set of citizens' agoras and related decentralised activities, with a need to ensure the closest connection between the two; insists that the conference and the activities around it must reflect diversity in Europe, in order to stimulate a profound debate;

# Suggests that the Conference should integrate input from existing participatory democracy tools at local and regional level to complement representative democracy channels. This includes, for example, the citizens' dialogues and forums that have proven successful in a number of regions, involving balanced groups of randomly selected participants; a combination of citizens' forums and expert forums has also proven valuable in this connection;

# Considers that, even after the end of the Conference, the EU must continue to engage directly with its citizens, building on a wealth of experience derived from participatory models to establish a permanent structured mechanism for dialogue at grassroots level. These permanent mechanisms must be combined with dialogue on current issues – issues which may have different target groups;

# Shares the view that the Conference needs to involve and particularly focus on young people to underline the future direction of the European project and stresses that all proposals made by the Conference must be sensitive to the concerns of future generations;

# Calls for a clear focus on the key challenges facing the European Union and a bottom-up debate on the topics of the conference, including, but not limited to the environmental and climate challenges, social justice, sustainable development, the digital transformation, migration, the European community of values, the economy and jobs, territorial cohesion and the changes of the EU's policies, processes, institutions and resources, including the role of local and regional democracy and self-government, which are necessary to enable the EU to respond to citizens' needs and expectations on these issues. In order to implement the results of the Conference appropriately, possible changes to the EU Treaties should not be excluded;

# Endorses the proposal made in the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe (P9\_TA-PROV (2020)0010) that several thematic citizens' agoras reflecting the policy priorities should be held throughout the Conference process, and that they should be composed of a maximum of 200-300 citizens with a minimum of three per Member State, calculated in accordance with the principle of degressive proportionality: also shares the European Parliament's concern that the participating citizens should be selected randomly from among all EU citizens by independent institutions in Member States in accordance with the above-mentioned criteria;

# Is convinced that in order to harness citizens' support for European integration and involve them more closely in EU decision making, it is essential to put an emphasis during the conference discussions on developing further the concept of European citizenship based on individual rights in the European system of multi-level governance;

# Highlights its concerns regarding the positions expressed so far by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, which lack clarity and ambition on the scope and the process for the Conference on the Future of Europe and notably the involvement of the local and regional authorities of the European Union and the Committee of the Regions;

# Believes that the Conference must have as a clear target the formulation of concrete proposals for legislation or changes to the EU Treaties, which would then be debated during the 2024 European Parliament election campaign in view of a future Convention;

# Welcomes the proposed Conference plenary formed by members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the EU27 governments, national Parliaments and the European Committee of the Regions; calls for the CoR to be represented by at least eight members with full voting rights; also considers it necessary for the second chambers of national Parliaments to be represented on an equal footing, as in many Member States they comprise representatives of regional authorities;

# Calls for the Conference Steering Committee to ensure political and institutional balance between all levels of governance, including one member of the European Committee of the Regions who could be supported by a CoR staff member seconded to the joint secretariat;

# Welcomes the proposal to also involve local and regional representatives from the EU candidate countries in discussions on the future of Europe;

# Calls on the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to incorporate the principles outlined in this resolution into their joint declaration and indicates its intention to become a signatory to that declaration;

# Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council and the Croatian presidency of the Council.

Brussels, 12 February 2020

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| The Presidentof the European Committee of the RegionsApostolos Tzitzikostas  |  |

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