



European Economic and Social Committee

Planned activities for the Conference on the Future of Europe

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The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) welcomes the signature of the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe (Conference) and commits to actively contribute to the debates, as **institutional representative of the European organised civil society**.

The purpose of this present document is to define a framework, a timeline and a **concrete plan of activities** that will actualise the contribution of the EESC to the Conference, according to the principles set out in the Declaration and further defined by the Executive Board of the Conference, of which the EESC is an observer. The core of these activities will be based on the EESC's "**Going Local**" missions, whose nature will have to be adapted to the scope and the spirit of the Conference. The missions are meant to reach out for real-life actors, with their real-life hopes, worries and opinions, in order to strengthen the connection between the EU and its citizens.

Upon formal endorsement, this document is meant for swift implementation in order to give employers, workers, civil society at large and all other **organisations to which the EESC reaches out, a privileged channel** to contribute to the Conference on the future of Europe.

The main goals of the EESC can be defined as follows:

- Improving the ways of engaging and connecting with civil society actors, particularly interacting and activating EESC Members' constituencies on the ground;
- Upgrading and strengthening the EESC's own role and influence;
- Providing structured civil society input to EU policymaking by making relevant proposals to the Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission on how to improve the functioning of the EU and the work of the EESC into the legislative process;

with a focus on targeting organised civil society as a privileged place where citizens become active and express their interests around certain topics.

Within this framework, the EESC plans to undertake the following activities:

1. The EESC defines and formalises potentially relevant partnerships with other institutions and organisations at EU, national, regional or local level. Relevant partners vary from country to country and therefore, flexibility is needed in the choice of partnerships.

The EESC will keep a door open to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) regarding any useful cooperation.

The EESC should partner up with its network of **national and regional Economic and Social Councils (ESC)**, and/or with Civil Society Organisations such as the European Movement International (EMI) the national network of European movements, as well as the national 'Houses of Europe', National Youth Councils and similar organisations, depending on how relevant and efficient they are in each Member State for reaching out to its citizens. This is especially important in the Member States where national ESCs do not exist. Collaboration with local and regional authorities would be very useful. Additionally, the EESC should make full use of its **Liaison Group**, in order to keep an open dialogue with the European organisations and their networks on cross-cutting issues of common interest. *(May)*

The role of the partners will be to facilitate Conference events, physical gatherings or digital / hybrid debates, that will be organised at different levels, including European, transnational, national, regional and local level and that will involve civil society organisations and stakeholders in order to gather input from organised civil society to the Conference. Citizens' participation in these events should aim at mirroring Europe's diversity.

The EESC must give priority to collecting the proposal of the members of organised civil society of the Member States versus experts' testimonies.

The ad-hoc Group (AHG) on the Conference on the Future of Europe acts as a steering board.

2. The EESC will hold a kick-off conference at EU level in the beginning of June to present a new narrative for Europe and to discuss planned activities with relevant partners, including its Liaison Group, the EMI and similar organisations and EU Institutions, including the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The EESC may also consider inviting representatives from grassroots European movements and campaigns and other thought-provoking conversationalists to take part in the event. Groups have the opportunity to propose participants / speakers in May for the kick-off conference at EU level.

3. The EESC seeks **cooperation with the National Economic and Social Councils** or similar structures and with Civil Society Organisations such as the EMI and other European movements and invites their representatives to participate in the steering board as guests. Key other organisations may participate to the steering board, should it facilitate the work and its impact. *(May)*

4. The national delegations of the EESC form **national planning committees** in the Member States, with the help of the national networks of the EMI or other relevant partners, and EESC Members networks. These seek cooperation with adequate local partners and, where they exist, national and Regional Economic and Social Councils. *(May)*

5. The steering board defines the **structure of the Going Local missions** and determines, based on the available budget, how many missions can take place in each Member State. The board may also reframe the annual youth event of the EESC, "Your Europe, Your Say!", in light of these activities - i.e. "Your Europe, Your Say goes local!".

The steering board also decides on a **set of guidelines** for the dialogues with citizens, so that the results can feed into an evaluation process including on the Conference multilingual digital platform. These guidelines should respect the Conference common visual identity and the Charter for citizens and event organisers, as defined and approved by the executive board of the Conference. *(May)*

6. The steering board might set up working groups for its support. *(May)*

7. The steering board **allocates resources** to the planning committees (under central scrutiny by the administration of the EESC), which organise the Going Local missions at the national, regional or local level, with the help of the administration of the EESC and with potential other partners. *(May/June)*

8. The **Going Local Missions begin** *(July/September)* [Running time until February 2022]

9. The Going Local Missions end with a **Grand European Civil Society Conference**. The EESC may decide to organise a special Plenary session or an additional specific Conference, possibly linked to a Plenary session, dedicated to presenting the results of the missions, ahead of the relevant follow-up to be done at the level of the Conference Plenary, as per its rules of procedure (*March 2022*).

10. The Going Local Missions are designed in a way that guarantees **real dialogue** with the participants instead of traditional panels. The focus is on listening to citizens, namely civil society organisations, not presenting them with a list of pre-determined items, in order to feed their input into a new narrative for Europe and into concrete policy proposals for its future evolution. Instead of only asking what civil society thinks about EU policies, one should start by asking civil society actors for their contributions in the context of how their activities, problems and opportunities are relevant to the EU. Based on this kind of discussion, one could then draw conclusions on what policymakers should do to support and facilitate civil society actors.

Managing expectations will be key, as not many citizens are perfectly aware of the distribution of competences between the EU and Member States and that many decisions affecting them are currently taken at national level. Concrete topics should have a bigger place, in the discussions, rather than institutional issues.

11. **Short national reports** and a **compendium of the going local missions** are prepared, published and shared with the relevant EU institutions and bodies of the Conference (*March 2022*).

12. The EESC members are encouraged to participate in national debates organised by the EU institutions and other actors in their Member States as well as in European level debates.

13. An internal and external **communication action plan** needs to be conducted in parallel. In particular, the support of the EESC communication directorate will be requested in order to ensure the efficient roll-out of the activities, especially when it comes to online or hybrid debates, social media management, targeting the youth with specific relevant tools and feeding into the Conference multi-lingual online platform.