

## RESOLUTION OF THE UEF FEDERAL COMMITTEE ON A DECLARATION ON THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

*Adopted by the UEF Federal Committee in Rome on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2019.*

The European Union is faced with multiple external challenges and many internal tensions, but European elections have shown that there is a clear pro-European majority and that citizens are in favour of strengthening the European Union. During the European Citizens' consultations, as well as the Citizens Dialogues and the Eurobarometer survey, most people showed that they believe that Europeans ought to regain control of political processes and play a strong autonomous role in the world through a stronger Union. Citizens mainly ask the EU:

- To guarantee security in all its dimensions;
- To respond to the challenge of people mobility in a global context;
- To make Europe a model of sustainable development, addressing the challenge of climate change and the protection of the environment and biodiversity;
- To strengthen respect of human rights, tolerance, equality, the rule of law and democracy;
- To equip the single currency with the means to ensure growth and stability;
- To promote effective social justice and solidarity;
- To define the foundations of a genuine European democracy;

The proposal for a "European Conference on the Future of Europe" initially put forward by the French President Emmanuel Macron in his "Letter to European Citizens" of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and then taken up by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in her investiture speech and in her guidelines, represents a great opportunity in this respect, since it places the question of a re-foundation of the European Union at the heart of the new European term.

As European federalists, we think that the Conference will be an opportunity to address as outlined by the AFCO reports during the last term (Bresso-Brok 2016; Verhofstadt 2016; Boge-Beres 2017; and Jauregui 2018) the key issues of:

- The system of government of the Union, and the strengthening of the European Parliament;
- The division of competences between the national and European levels;
- The creation of an autonomous fiscal capacity for the EMU along with the other elements necessary for its completion;
- The strengthening of the European political and electoral process as a means to reinforce European democracy, including the strengthening of European political parties, the *Spitzenkandidaten* process and the establishment of transnational lists;
- The achievement of sustainable development objectives, making the EU the global leader on climate change;
- Combating inequalities and creating a European labour market ready for the digital society;
- The creation of an effective system for the defence of human rights and rule of law;

- The role of the European Union in the globalised world, including foreign, security and defence policies;
- The relationship between federal citizenship and national identities;
- The method and agenda for reforming the Union, including the transition to a sovereign Europe in the event that some Member States are not ready to accept it.

The role of the European Parliament will be decisive in ensuring that the Conference can carry out its task effectively. While it must be able to bring together the demands of citizens and local and regional bodies, the Conference must at the same time be able to translate them into a comprehensive proposal for a new Treaty that will overcome the impasses that are still weakening the European Union. The difficult historical and political moment and the support of the majority of citizens must be a stimulus for courageous and forward-looking action.

With this in mind, UEF addresses, first and foremost, the European Parliament – as the primary institution which, being composed of representatives directly elected by the citizens, has the legitimacy and responsibility to promote a political and institutional reform, including of constitutional nature, of the European Union – with the following proposals on the method and the agenda of the Conference:

- The Conference should be convened on the basis of an interinstitutional declaration, signed by the Commission, the Parliament and the Council (acting by majority) after consulting the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - or, at least, by a joint declaration of the Commission and the European Parliament. It should be assisted by a secretariat provided by the Commission and the European Parliament;
- The Conference should draw input, in the initial phase of its work, from the demands for a more effective and democratic European Union raised by European citizens in the Eurobarometer surveys, the Citizens' Dialogues and the Citizens' Consultations;
- It is clear that the current institutional setup renders the EU unfit for purpose. The concerns of citizens can only be effectively addressed through a genuine European capacity to act: a sovereign Europe, underpinned by democratic accountability. To the extent that the Conference will need to chart the way forward for Europe, its discussions and deliberations could be organised in thematic policy discussions, leading to operational conclusions. This would show concretely the need for the EU to be able to finance itself autonomously and to have effective means of government, which will likely require adjustments to the EU's legal framework, or a new framework altogether. This must constitute part of the mandate of the Conference;
- In order to play a leading role, the European Parliament should also request to be represented in the Conference, ideally by a large delegation of members of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO). In parallel, when applicable, the European Parliament could support the Conference in drafting the proposals for a Constitutional Treaty which would comprehensively include all the reforms which emerge as necessary in the course of the work of the Conference. This new Treaty would amend the legal framework of the EU, including self-determining the arrangements for its ratification and entry into force so as to overcome the obstacle of unanimity; in any case, these arrangements have to be fully compatible with the goal of ensuring the unity, effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of the European Union;
- One of the conditions that would enable the Conference to engage in a much broader and representative dialogue with the citizens of the European Union, thereby increasing the

citizens-oriented dynamic in its discussions and deliberations, would be that of including a stable presence of components of citizens and of organised civil society from across the European Union (thus reflecting innovative forms of citizens participation successfully experienced in some European countries for constitutional changes). In addition to that, the Conference should hold some of its meetings in the various Member States, involving the representatives of citizens, society and sub-national bodies closest to the territory of the State in which they meet. In addition, the Conference should recognise the expertise of civil society organisations and their role in facilitating a dialogue between institutions and citizens, while abiding by the principle of representative democracy;

- In order to achieve cooperation with the national parliaments and ensure the maximum possible consensus on the reforms that Europe needs, it is essential to provide for the convening of an “Interparliamentary Assembly on the Future of Europe” (following the example of the “Assizes” organized in Rome before the Maastricht Treaty). This would enable the Conference to bring the results achieved to the attention of the delegations of the national parliaments, gathering their comments and criticisms, and including them early on in the discussions and deliberations on the Future of Europe;
- The 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration should be exploited as appropriate within the process of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Rome, 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November 2019