



# CITIZENS TAKE OVER EUROPE

## 10 principles for a citizen-centered Conference on the Future of Europe

In July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen announced her intention to convene a two-year Conference on the Future of Europe, with the proclaimed aim to involve [“citizens, including a significant role for young people, civil society and European institutions as equal partners.”](#) We, the *Citizens Take Over Europe* coalition, welcome this proposal to “give citizens their say” by means of a structured transnational participatory process. However, it needs to be done right in order to have the intended effect. By means of the 10 principles below, we want to make our contribution to the institutional deliberations on how to shape the Conference on the Future of Europe (hereafter: the Conference).

### **1. Participatory**

EU citizens and residents, including notably young people, should have the opportunity to shape the Conference at every step of its development, starting with the decisions on the design, scope and objectives of the Conference, as well as the status of its public input into EU decision-making. The Conference should integrate at least two participatory instruments into its operation: (1) citizens’ assemblies that allow microcosms of the EU population to develop concrete proposals in relation to specific questions or themes; (2) a citizens’ initiative right that allows a certain minimum number of EU citizens and residents to make concrete proposals to the Conference Plenary. The participatory instruments should give EU citizens and residents a meaningful chance of shaping the Conference process, agenda and outcomes (i.e. the Conference resolutions).

### **2. Inclusive**

Participation in the Conference should be inclusive. All participatory channels must be open to both EU citizens and EU residents. The citizens’ assemblies must be composed by means of stratified random selection, ensuring a balanced representation of people from different ages, genders, countries of residence, socio-economic backgrounds, and with different attitudes towards the EU (ranging from very positive to very negative). Conference-related events should be organised throughout the EU, including in rural areas. The Conference should also seek to involve citizens and residents from EU candidate countries.

### **3. Open**

The Conference should have the freedom to set its own agenda and to put forward every possible proposal for the future of Europe, with all options on the table, including treaty changes, and without pre-emption of any of the outcomes of the discussion. The Conference should have the power to decide its own rules and proceedings and possible additional participatory instruments.

### **4. Deliberative**

The Conference should maximise opportunities for dialogue, deliberation and contestation among citizens, between citizens and politicians, and with other stakeholders including relevant experts. The Conference should allow for a wide variety of opinions and perspectives on

Europe's future to be expressed and recognised. For these to be taken into account, the citizens' assemblies should reflect on citizens' inputs developed at the local, regional and national level and develop concrete proposals that provide the Conference Plenary, and EU decision-makers more generally, with the necessary guidance.

#### **5. Transnational**

The Conference should maximize opportunities for interaction, deliberation and collaboration among people from different countries. All participatory instruments should be transnational.

#### **6. Transparent**

All official Conference-related meetings and events should be livestreamed, recorded and made publicly available. All official Conference-related documents should be made publicly available in at least all official EU languages on a single online platform.

#### **7. Accountable**

The Conference Plenary should be accountable to the public at large by providing citizens with clear written feedback on the input developed by means of the participatory instruments of the Conference. It should explain in an exhaustive manner which citizens' proposals were fully adopted in the Conference resolutions, which partially, and which were rejected, and provide reasons for these decisions. Additionally, it should provide room for citizens to continue the political dialogue on the basis of the written feedback. Furthermore, significant EU funds should be made available for citizens and civil society organisations to mobilise their communities around the Conference, and engage in related advocacy activities. Lastly, an independent EU Civil Society Forum should be set up in order to monitor and support the Conference, as well as its follow-up by the EU institutions.

#### **8. Effective**

Prior to the start of the Conference, the EU institutions should commit themselves to following up on the resolutions to be adopted by the Conference. National, regional and local authorities should be invited to make a similar commitment.

#### **9. Visible**

Local, regional, national and EU authorities should use all available means to publicise the Conference and Conference-related events. They should actively seek to generate media interest in the Conference. In addition to analogue communication, digital technologies should be used to multiply outreach. The Conference should have its own visual identity, and set up a single online platform that should function as the 'online hub' of the Conference.

#### **10. Attractive**

The Conference should demonstrate that politics is intrinsically connected to other spheres of life, such as arts and culture. In order to showcase this, a number of transnational festivals should be set up as part of the Conference, aimed at reaching the widest possible audience.