

# Conference on the Future of Europe: Overview of the final proposals

## SUMMARY

What should the EU look like in 2050? How do you see your life in 2050? These are just some of the questions that the European citizens taking part in the Conference on the Future of Europe were asked to answer during the inaugural session of the European citizens' panels in Strasbourg in September 2021.

Shaping a vision of Europe's future was the task of all participants in the Conference, whether they were institutional actors, representatives of civil society, social partners or randomly selected citizens called on to participate in a European democratic process. The Conference, after a delayed start and despite being held in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, was able to achieve its purpose, providing concrete, actionable, sometimes visionary, proposals that show the direction in which the EU should develop in the future.

The 49 proposals, articulated into around 326 specific measures, offer a snapshot of what citizens and institutional actors see as suitable actions for Europe to take in order to rise to the challenges of the present and the future. After a reflection period, these measures will need to be implemented if the Conference is to become a credible process and not only a display of wishes and abstract rhetoric.

The three EU institutions – the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union – have expressed their views on the possible follow-up and called for deep reforms. The current phase, following the conclusion of the Conference, is therefore a delicate, political moment. It now needs to be decided which reforms will be carried out under the current legislative framework and which will need a 'constituent phase', namely a Convention to revise the EU Treaties as provided for in Article 48 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

Be that as it may, the Conference has certainly shone a spotlight on key issues and citizens' ideas, which would be difficult for the EU institutions to ignore.



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## Introduction

Since the last wave of reforms brought about by the Lisbon Treaty (2007), the Conference on the Future of Europe (Conference or CoFoE) is the first transnational deliberative exercise engaging citizens in a serious reflection on the future of the EU. When, in July 2019, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced in her [opening statement](#) in the debate prior to her election that she intended to hold a Conference on the Future of Europe, the idea was well received by Parliament. This was not only because Parliament had a clear perception that the current way of doing policy-making in the EU should be made more inclusive, but also because it was understood that the EU should be reformed in order to be up to current challenges.

In this respect, ahead of the European elections in 2019, Parliament had already initiated a deep process of reflection with, inter alia, the [Future of Europe debates](#). Moreover, it had adopted two resolutions on 16 February 2017, a first [resolution](#) aimed at improving the functioning of the EU, building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty, and a second [resolution](#) on adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the EU. The Conference, which concluded its work on 9 May 2022, offered some insight into the future of the EU through 49 proposals consisting of around 326 specific measures that were developed at the end of this process.

The present briefing analyses the conclusions of the Conference, first by offering some quantitative reflections on the proposals, then presenting some qualitative considerations by identifying common threads across all proposed measures. The Annex indicates the type of implementing initiatives needed for each of the measures proposed by the Conference, with a distinction between i) a legislative initiative; ii) a non-legislative initiative; and iii) Treaty change.

'Legislative initiative' identifies those legal acts which are adopted by legislative procedure as mandated by Article 289(3) TFEU. The legislative procedure can be an ordinary one (Articles 289(1) and 294 TFEU) or a special one (Article 289(2) TFEU). Non-legislative initiatives are acts such as, inter alia, recommendations, acts related to the enforcement of EU law, monitoring, strategies, best practices, or measures such as those typically issued in the framework of Union competences to support and complement action by the Member States. This category comprises measures ranging from legally binding acts that are not legislative in nature to soft law measures. Lastly, the category of 'Treaty change' includes modifications to the Treaties as regulated by Article 48(1)-(6) TEU.

The measures proposed by the CoFoE are often very broad in scope and sometimes heterogeneous in content, as they include various elements which are subject to interpretation. At times, this made the analysis complex when it came to indicating possible implementing measures. A certain degree of approximation in this respect is therefore to be expected.

Due to the broadness of some measures, some of them would need a combination of two or even three types of EU initiatives for their implementation. In other cases, the proposals might be implemented not exclusively through one type of initiative. For example, a proposal could be implemented through a legislative initiative or Treaty change while some other proposals could be implemented with one type of initiative only (for example, Treaty change for those entailing a modification of the Union's competences). The approach adopted in this briefing, for the identification of implementing measures needed in cases where more than one initiative is allowed (see Annex), was to indicate the measure that could be implemented within the current constitutional (Treaty) framework, i.e. '*a traité constant*'. Where applicable, and in view of future parliamentary work, the Annex also indicates the position of Parliament for each of the measures proposed by the CoFoE.

## The Conference: Conclusion of an innovative process

The Conference reached its conclusions on [9 May 2022](#) after one year of intensive work. The outcome was the fruit of a solid and innovative process which saw the European citizens' panels emerge as a protagonist and as a new way for EU citizens to express their vision of Europe. The four

citizens' panels were composed of around 200 citizens each, randomly selected to be representative of the EU's population. After a series of three deliberative sessions held between the autumn of 2021 and January 2022, the citizens' panels developed 178 recommendations<sup>1</sup> that were conveyed and debated within the [Conference's plenary](#) between January and March 2022.

Subsequently, the work of the CoFoE focused on the debate organised in [nine plenary working groups](#), one for each of the Conference's [nine policy areas](#). The working groups included representatives of the EU institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament), the two consultative bodies (the European Economic and Social Committee, EESC, and the Committee of the Regions, CoR), representatives of national parliaments and civil society, social partners, ambassadors from European citizens' panels, and elected representatives from local and regional authorities. The nine working groups debated according to specific [terms of reference](#) and mainly decided by consensus.

The debate relied primarily on the input from the recommendations from the European and national citizens' panels and from the [Multilingual Digital Platform](#). It developed into topical [discussions](#) that led to the development of a [final report of the Conference](#) consisting of 49 proposals, with around 326 implementing measures, which were presented at the closing [event](#) on 9 May 2022 in Strasbourg in the presence of European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, President of France Emmanuel Macron, on behalf of the rotating Council Presidency, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The Conference has undoubtedly been an important phase in the EU's public life, marking a new and important development for European democracy, and has been a first, at least as far as transnational citizens' panels are concerned. In addition, the format that allowed citizens to discuss directly with decision-makers in the Conference's plenaries and working groups proved to be fruitful and inclusive. While the process was completed successfully and delivered an impressive and tangible set of proposals for the EU institutions to follow up, there have been some opinions on the CoFoE and on whether the process has functioned properly.

The [Conference Observatory](#), a joint initiative of several research institutes that closely monitored the CoFoE, highlighted some of the successes and identified some areas for improvement. The Observatory found the method of selecting 800 citizens from all Member States particularly positive, although minorities could have been better represented. Likewise, the organisational machine was considered to have worked well, including the large-scale interpreting and translation efforts in plenary meetings, working groups and citizens' panels, and the sheer logistical effort involved in accommodating so many participants. In addition, the personal motivation of participants, particularly citizens, gave a positive dynamism to the whole process.

On the critical side, the Observatory [report](#) noted that the breadth of the themes processed affected the quality of deliberations and did not always allow for fully informed decisions. Related to this was the lack of time, not only for citizens but also for the experts who were invited to present the main policy issues of the areas debated. Further critical points were the lack of proper connection between national events and the CoFoE, and uncertainty over the specific objectives of the deliberations, the role of citizens – particularly of citizens' ambassadors, who struggled at times to play their part in connecting the participatory and representative dimensions of the CoFoE – and the expectations for the whole process.

These reflections, as well as the limited visibility that the CoFoE achieved at national level, despite the [national decentralised events](#) that took place in each Member State and the enhanced communication efforts made by the EU institutions, notably the European Parliament, could be aspects to be reconsidered in the future.

## General outlook for the Conference proposals

The current stocktaking exercise allows us to draw some conclusions about the way ahead to implement the measures proposed by the CoFoE.

The Annex shows that **at least 24 measures** proposed by the CoFoE would require implementation through **amendments to the Treaties**.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, these measures concern deeper modifications to the current system, such as extending EU competences in the field of health (8(3), 10(3)), and in education – at a minimum, in citizenship education (46(1)); shifting the decision-making method for CFSP from unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV) (21(1)), or shifting to QMV in a generalised manner except for the accession of new Member States (39(1)); enhancing the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; introducing common healthcare standards (14(4) and 10(1)); introducing mandatory school training on biodiversity (6(6)) and media literacy (27(4)); and enhancing Parliament's powers by bestowing on it the right of legislative initiative (38(4)) or by increasing its budgetary powers (38(4)).

In almost all policy clusters, with the exception of 'Digital transformation' and 'Migration', some of the CoFoE's proposed measures require Treaty change. This varies from one proposal in 'Climate' and 'Education', to two in 'EU in the world' and 'Values', three in 'Health', six in 'A stronger economy' and nine in 'European Democracy'. It is, however, to be underlined that, **of the 24 measures overall that have been identified as requiring Treaty changes across all policy areas, nine belong to the policy cluster of European Democracy alone**.<sup>3</sup> European Democracy therefore stands out as the policy cluster which, according to the CoFoE, would require Treaty changes to be properly implemented, since, of the 35 measures proposed therein, around one quarter (i.e. nine) would require Treaty changes to be implemented. The reason for this is that all these measures in European Democracy concern either the powers of the institutions, rules on the decision-making process, the institutional set-up, or the introduction of a mechanism for participatory democracy that does not yet exist in the EU system. The type of measures proposed are therefore 'constitutional' in nature.

Namely, the measures propose the following: enlarge Parliament's decision-making powers in the area of budget (38(4)), confer to Parliament (38(4)b) the right of legislative initiative and to national parliaments a possibility to suggest a legislative initiative (40(2)); introduce new participatory mechanisms such as an EU-wide referendum to be triggered by Parliament (38(2)); modify the names of the institutions to better reflect their role within the institutional architecture (39(3)); enhance the role of the EESC (39(6)); reopen the discussion on an EU constitution (39(7)); modify the EU decision-making process by shifting to QMV with the exception of the accession of new members to the EU (39(1)); introduce the direct election of the President of the Commission or activate the *Spitzenkandidaten* process as a possibility for citizens to have a greater say in the election of the President of the Commission; strengthen the EU's common identity by introducing minimum levels of education on the EU, its democratic processes, the EU history and EU citizenship (37(1)), and by making Europe Day (9 May) an EU-wide public holiday.

The Annex also shows that the great majority (around 92 %) of the measures in almost all policy areas could be achieved by using a legislative or a non-legislative initiative. It could therefore be possible to put into practice most of the proposed measures within the current legislative framework or '*à traité constant*'. The possibility to implement the recommendations with current policy-making tools is most evident in the field of migration (where 75 % of the proposed measures would require a legislative initiative), values and rights, rule of law and security (58 %) and climate change and environment (56 %).

For **Migration**, the issues identified as needing a solution through legislative initiatives are: those bolstering EU policies on legal migration (e.g. access to the labour market, improving the 'blue card system', and an efficient labour migration policy); those concerning the need for common rules (common rules ensuring safety and health of migrants, financial aid for the first reception, reform of the Dublin system, minimum standards of reception, protection of vulnerable migrants such as pregnant women, children and unaccompanied minors, and the financial and human capacity of the EU agency for asylum); and measures to improve integration of migrants.

For **Values and rights, rule of law and security**, the issues that could be tackled through legislative initiatives include: the need to enhance the current mechanisms for protecting the rule of law,

including extending the 'Conditionality regulation' (25(4)); issuing a European citizenship statute, to make European values more visible and tangible for the public; improving the protection of citizens where the treatment of personal data is concerned (26(2), 26(3)); measures to combat disinformation (27(5) and enhance cybersecurity (28(2)), including strengthening the responsible EU agency (ENISA) (28(1)); improving citizens' quality of life (29(2)); fighting tax evasion (29(3)); ensuring equal treatment in the labour market (29(4)); and promoting minimum criteria for animals' well-being (30(1)).

The measures on **Climate change and the environment** that could be implemented through legislative initiatives concern: support for the green and blue economy (1(1)); the sustainable production of food and sustainable agriculture (1(3)-(5)); 1(7)-(9) on the protection of oceans, the landscape and forests (2(1), (5)-(8)); reducing dependency on oil and gas (3(3)); improving the quality and interconnectivity of electrical infrastructure (3(4)); ensuring a just transition (3(8) and environmentally sustainable energy supply (3(7) and (9)); and reducing subsidies for fossil fuels (3(10)). In addition, a number of proposals could be implemented through legislative initiatives such as those on stricter production standards and transparent labelling that take into account environmental footprint (5(1)), development of a circular economy (5(2)-(5), 5(7)-(10)), and limits on advertising of environmentally damaging products (5(12)).

While Migration, Values and Climate require the highest number of legislative initiatives to be implemented, the clusters of **Digital transformation, European Democracy** and **Education** seem to require the lowest number of legislative initiatives. This does not mean, however, that they could not be implemented using current policy instruments. As the Annex shows, these policy clusters could be implemented through non-legislative initiatives. Around 73 % of measures proposed in Digital transformation, 86 % in European Democracy and 88 % in Education could be implemented without resorting to legislative initiatives but to non-legislative initiatives. In between the policy clusters requiring most or least legislative initiatives for their implementation are the clusters on **Health** and **A stronger economy, social justice and jobs**, in which around 50 % of the measures would require implementation through legislative initiatives.

As the above shows, the majority of proposed measures in all the policy areas of the CoFoE could be implemented within the current legal framework. However, on closer inspection, this assumption does not apply to European Democracy, a very particular area of debate within the CoFoE that comprised matters of a fundamental nature for the EU.

Although the number of measures under each proposal does not necessarily reflect the relevance of the proposal, it might offer an indication of the importance of certain issues and of the breadth of EU action suggested by the CoFoE in certain areas. The proposals with the highest number of measures per policy cluster are as follows:

- for **Climate change and environment**: proposals **3** (energy security and independence, just transition and sustainable energy) and **5** (circular economy, sustainable EU products and production);
- for **Health**: proposals **8** (reinforce resilience and quality of healthcare systems) and **10** ('right to health' for all, i.e. equal, universal, affordable medical care);
- for **A stronger economy, social justice and jobs**: proposals **12** (strengthening the resilience of the EU's economy, a Social Europe, the single market, addressing strategic dependencies) and **15** (demographic transition, ageing population);
- for **EU in the world**: proposals **24** (stronger role of the EU on the world scene), **17** (strengthening the EU's autonomy in key strategic sectors) and **18** (increasing the EU's autonomy in energy production and supply);
- for **Values and rights, rule of law, security**: proposals **25** (upholding the rule of law), **27** (media independence, media pluralism and media literacy) and **29** (harmonisation of living conditions in the EU and improvement of citizens' socio-economic quality of life);



- for **Digital transformation**: proposals **35** (digitalisation measures to strengthen the single market, increase competitiveness in technology, the EU as world leader in digital transformation and human-centric digitalisation), **31** (equal access to internet and digital sovereignty of the EU's digital infrastructure) and **34** (better awareness and better implementation of data protection rules);
- for **European Democracy**: proposals **36** (increase citizens' participation and youth involvement in democracy at EU level) and **38** (strengthening European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in EU elections, fostering transnational debate of EU issues and strengthening links between citizens and elected representatives);
- for **Migration**: proposals **41** (strengthening the EU's role in legal migration), **44** (reform of the European asylum system, based on the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility) and **45** (improve integration policies);
- for **Education, culture, youth and sport**: proposals **47** (focus on young people across all policy areas to offer the best conditions for study, work, starting an independent life and engaging in the democratic life of the EU), **46** (establishment of an EU Education Area by 2025 with equal access to quality education and life-long learning) and **49** (sport as a guarantee of values, healthy lifestyle and ageing, cultural exchange and diversity of European heritage).

Finally, in terms of the **complexity of implementation**, all policy clusters seem to contain measures that need, to a greater or lesser degree, the interaction of two or even three types of implementing initiatives. For example, as the Annex shows, the policy cluster on Climate change and environment would need, in three cases, a combination of a legislative initiative and a non-legislative initiative (1(1), 2(6) and 4(6)), and in one case a combination of an EU non-legislative initiative and Treaty change (6(6)). Another example is represented by the policy cluster on Health, where a combination of two types of EU implementing actions would be needed (8(3), 8(4), 9(5), 10(1), 10(6)), and in some cases even three (10(2), 10(4)). This is because, often, the broad scope of the proposed measures requires multifaceted forms of EU action.

## Common threads

The CoFoE's 49 proposals are admittedly of an extremely broad scope. They deal with the widest spectrum of policy areas and, within those areas, they tackle each issue in a relatively deep manner.

In addition to looking at them in a granular manner, another way to look at the measures proposed by the CoFoE is to look at **minimum common denominators, in order to find common threads or overarching concerns** that emerge from them. While the [report](#) of the CoFoE mentions eight cross-cutting topics (pp. 39 and 40), as perceived by the citizen members of the panels, this publication aims to give its own interpretation of the overarching concerns that can be found in the numerous policy clusters of the CoFoE. It cannot be excluded that some of these overarching concerns will not overlap with those identified by the citizens.

## Nurturing the social dimension of the EU

The attention paid to cross-cutting social aspects is evident in **Climate**, where the request to ensure a just and green transition should also be achieved by eliminating social dumping (1(7)) and by protecting workers and ensuring strong social protection (3(8)). Social concerns are also visible in **Health**, where the CoFoE proposes to fight health poverty by supporting free dental care for children, low-income groups and other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities (10(7)).

The social aspect is definitely present in the policy cluster on **A stronger economy, social justice and jobs** (hereafter 'A stronger economy'), not least because this cluster contains a whole set of social proposals. This includes proposal 14, devoted to the fight against social exclusion and tackling poverty by reinforcing the social competences of the EU, not compromising on welfare rights,

promoting research on social matters, giving access to medical services to minors under 16 years of age and ensuring decent social housing for citizens.

The social element is, however, scattered in the **Economy** cluster beyond proposal 14 – for example, where it is suggested to ensure quality and affordable child care (15(1)), to support families with respect to parental leave rights, childbirth and childcare allowances (15(4)), and preventing old age poverty (15(7)) and guaranteeing appropriate social and health care to older persons (15(8)). The attention given to the social facet of life is clearly evident also in proposals dealing with more technically 'economic' subjects, such as when the review of EU governance and the European Semester is advised to go hand in hand with proper attention to social justice (11(2)), or when the 'competitiveness check' should take into account not only climate and environmental constraints, but also human, social and workers' rights (12(21)), or where ambitious social standards are sought in new EU trade agreements (11(9)). Moreover, it is suggested that full protection of social rights should be guaranteed if they conflict with economic freedoms, including through the introduction of a social progress protocol in the Treaties (13(5)).

In step with the above, **EU in the world** reiterates the proposal that the transition towards climate neutrality and reducing current energy dependency should take into account the necessary support for vulnerable citizens (18(3)). In the **Values and rights** cluster, it is suggested, in addition to ensuring affordable kindergartens (29(5)), to raise social standards and achieve a common EU socio-economic structure by implementing the EU Pillar of Social Rights (29(1)). On irregular **migration**, the CoFoE suggests participating actively in the social development of countries outside the EU from where high influxes of migrants come, to tackle the issue at its roots (42(1)). Lastly, in **Education** the CoFoE suggests ensuring reasonable living standards for young people, including access to social protection and housing, which should be the same for them as for other age groups (47(6)).

The great majority of the above-mentioned proposals could be implemented through non-legislative initiatives, and half of them through a legislative initiative, while Treaty change would be necessary in two situations (14(4) and 12(21)).

## Protecting the environment

The policy cluster on **Climate change and the environment** (hereafter 'Climate change') is the second largest cluster, with 57 proposed measures, after A stronger economy with 60. However, a certain degree of attention is paid to the environment in all other policy clusters. For example, proposal 11 in **A stronger economy** contains a number of measures with a particular environmental angle, ranging from the promotion of greener production processes by companies (11(1)), to the development of a more sustainable circular economy (11(2)), tackling the use of single use plastic (11(4)), promoting research into new materials (11(6)), and raising awareness of more sustainable behaviour by companies and citizens (11(8)). Moreover, proposal 12(5) suggests a strong industrial policy coupled with a forward-looking climate policy, ensuring sustainable development and demographic resilience of regions that are lagging behind (15(9)).

In **EU in the world**, it is suggested to actively support public transport and energy efficiency projects such as high-speed rail or the expansion of clean and renewable energy provision (18(2)), or to establish a link between foreign trade and climate policy measures (18(6)). The environmental element is also present in the **Digital transformation** cluster, where it is proposed to consider the environmental impact of digital infrastructure and digitalisation in order to strive for a green digital society (31(8)).

For **Migration**, participation in the social and economic development of third countries from which most migrants come should also help tackle the root causes of migration, which include climate change (42(1)). Finally, the environment comes into play where the shaping of awareness of future generations is concerned, where it is suggested that environmental sustainability, biodiversity and ecological issues in general become part of the educational curricula (46(2)).

Around seven of the above-mentioned 12 measures with an environmental angle could be implemented by means of a legislative initiative, while five would require a non-legislative initiative.

## Making the EU more autonomous with respect to external actors

Echoing the recent [debate](#) on strategic autonomy, the issue of sovereignty seems to pervade several policy areas. In **A stronger economy**, a number of proposals go in the direction of achieving autonomy by addressing the issue of energy dependence on non-EU states (11(7)), promoting autonomous, competitive industry (12(9)), addressing the crucial issue of security of supplies by diversifying the input of sources or raw materials, and increasing the manufacture of key goods in the fields of health, food, energy, defence and transport (12(12)).

In **EU in the world**, those same concerns are reiterated and articulated in seven measures contained in proposal 17, which propose to reduce dependence on foreign actors in economically strategic sectors in several ways, such as differentiating between trading partners (17(2)), fostering investment in strategic sectors (17(3)), strengthening the internal market to foster EU production (17(4)), and better cooperation between Member States to handle supply chain risks (17(7)). On strategic goods, EU in the world also includes recommendations to seek more autonomous energy production (18(1)) and pursue common energy purchases and sustainable energy partners to reduce EU energy dependencies (18(7)). Moreover, particular attention is given to strategic research and capacity in priority sectors such as space, cybersecurity, medical and environment, which measure 23(3) suggests protecting. The issue of energy autonomy appears also in **Climate**, where measure 3(3) suggests reducing dependence on oil and gas through energy efficiency projects.

Proposal (8(3)) in **Health** suggests ensuring strategic autonomy at EU level for medicines and medical devices, while in **Values and rights** stricter competition rules should prevent monopolies and ensure media pluralism and protect against foreign interference (27(2)). Finally, the **Digital** cluster is also concerned with autonomy and proposes fair and open competition as a means to prevent, inter alia, dependence on third countries in relation to infrastructure and services (31(4)).

Three quarters of the above-mentioned proposals tend to suggest that a path towards greater EU autonomy could be implemented through legislative initiatives, while for a third of them a non-legislative initiative would be sufficient. In one case, Treaty change would be required (8(3)).

## Raising awareness and fostering education on the EU

Several measures propose to raise the awareness of EU citizens. For example, in **Climate** proposal 6 suggests raising awareness about climate and sustainability (6(5)); in **Health**, proposal 7(2) suggests raising awareness of healthy habits; in **Digital**, proposal 32(6) aims to raise awareness about digital platforms that connect people to employers; and in **Values and rights**, proposal 27(4) stresses the need to increase media literacy and raise awareness about disinformation, including through mandatory school training, while proposal 26(3) advances the idea of creating EU competences on civic education about data protection.

A number of recommendations, scattered among several policy clusters, deal with the more structural issue of education. For example, in **Climate** it is proposed to extend EU competences, inter alia in the area of education (6(7)), and in **Values and rights** it is suggested to create EU competence on civic education about data protection (26(3)). In **Education**, a proposal to develop future-proof education and lifelong learning in the EU (46(2)) is accompanied by a proposal to transform EU competences in education into shared competences, at a minimum for citizenship education (46(1)).

A particular set of proposed measures focus on the issue of statutory or non-statutory education of citizens, specifically in the **field of EU integration, EU history and democratic values**. For example, in **EU in the world** it is suggested to develop educational programmes on the functioning of the EU and its values that could be integrated into national educational curricula (22(4)); in **Values and rights**, proposal 25(2) deals with awareness-raising about European values; in **European**



**Democracy**, proposal 37(1) seeks to foster a minimum level of education about the EU, its democratic processes, the history of European integration and citizenship through programmes tailored for children and schools. More accessible information on the EU (37(2)) and better contact points, hubs and 'Houses of Europe' (37(5)) are also suggested in this framework. Lastly, in Education the idea is reiterated (46(2)) of introducing, in a structured way and as a common educational model, teaching on civic education about democratic processes, EU values and the history of Europe.

The above proposals could be implemented overwhelmingly through non-legislative initiatives, while one third of them would need a legislative initiative. In three situations, Treaty change would be required (27(4), 37(1) and 46(1)).

## Creating a more inclusive decision-making process

The desire for more inclusive decision-making, where the voice of citizens and stakeholders is heard more prominently, is very visible in **European Democracy**. Proposal 36 sets out a substantial number of measures to that effect: improve existing and develop new participatory mechanisms, and monitor policy and legislative initiatives emerging from participatory mechanisms (36(1)); increase online and offline interactions between EU institutions and citizens to ensure their participation in EU policy-making (36(2)); offer digital platforms where citizens can make proposals (36(3)); improve existing mechanisms at EU, national and local level (36(4)); involve organised civil society, regional and local authorities and the EESC and CoR in the citizens' participation process (36(5)); create a system of EU Councillors (36(6)); hold citizens' assemblies, with citizens randomly selected according to representative criteria (36(7)); support civil society financially, particularly youth civil society (36(8)); introduce a 'youth check' (36(9)) or 'youth test' (47(1)) on new legislation; and strengthen cooperation between EU legislators and civil society in decision-making (36(10)).

Inclusiveness of decision-making also appears in other policy clusters – for example, in **Climate**, where it is suggested to promote dialogue and consultation between all levels involved in making the decision, particularly with young people and the local level (6(3)). In **EU in the world**, there is a recommendation for citizens' participation in international politics and the holding of events with direct participation of citizens similar to the CoFoE (22(2)). Finally, in **Education**, youth participation in democratic and decision-making process is advocated, including for very young students (10-16 years of age), for whom special citizens' panels could be organised in schools (47(1)).

The recommendations mentioned above could be implemented through non-legislative initiatives, with the exception of three of them which would require a legislative initiative.

## Enhancing the international role of the EU

It is clear that some of the CoFoE's proposals in different policy clusters suggest a stronger role for the EU in international dealings, though remaining within the current international legal framework. It is suggested, therefore, that the EU take up a stronger role beyond the geographical confines of the Union – for example, in **Climate**, where stronger EU leadership and a more decisive role is suggested to promote, inter alia, climate action and the just transition, while the UN remains at the centre (3(11)); in **Health**, it is advised that the EU consider the international dimension of health, and that medicines should be universally available (10(8)).

In **EU in the world**, a significant number of proposals are made to enhance the EU's international role, including: that the EU play a leading role in building the world security order after the war in Ukraine, based on the Strategic Compass (23(2)); and that the EU use its influence to engage, in forums such as the G7 and G20, international partners to attain more ambitious climate change objectives (18(5)). It is also proposed to strengthen the role of the High Representative to ensure that the EU speaks with one voice (21(3)); achieve more unity internationally by making greater use of its collective political and economic weight and overcoming divisions (24(1)); and, with a view to becoming a global player, measure 21(1) proposes that CFSP issues currently decided by unanimity be decided by QMV. Finally, in parallel with the EU concluding major international cooperation

agreements (24(4)), there is a wish for the EU to reform its trade and investment policy to relaunch global multilateralism with the aim of creating decent jobs, protecting human rights, and preserving the environment and biodiversity (24(5)).

These recommendations can all be implemented through non-legislative initiatives, except 21(1) and 21(3), which require Treaty change either because they entail a modification of the EU's decision-making method or a modification of the High Representative's institutional role.

## Building a more humane society

Attention to the human aspect of life is also present in several policy clusters. This feature might display aspects akin to those present in social policies or the protection of human rights, but what is meant here is attention to the dignifying aspects of life, and to well-being and empathetic aspects of human and non-human life. These aspects might include a social policy or human rights element, but are not limited to them. For example, in **EU in the world** the call is made for decent working standards along the global value chain and for imports to comply with ethical standards (19(2)), or for market restrictions for products made using forced and child labour (19(3)); in the same vein, a reform of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences should promote respect for human rights (19(5)). A relaunch of multilateralism should aim to create decent jobs and protect fundamental human rights (24(5)), the fight against human trafficking should be included in cooperation agreements (24(6)), and policies should be developed against autocratic and hybrid regimes (24(8)).

In **Values and rights**, the aim for a more humane society takes the form of criteria ensuring better animal well-being (30(1)). A particular issue is that of ensuring a proper digital transformation of society, while protecting the human dimension. This is quite visible in the **Digital** cluster, where a number of proposals go in that direction: suggesting legislative measures to reinforce human-centric 'smart working' (33(1)); ensuring human oversight in decision-making processes that involve artificial intelligence and transparency of algorithms (35(3)); using artificial intelligence to check the trustworthiness of information on social media, with humans remaining in control of algorithms used for that purpose (33(5)); and guaranteeing an appropriate work/life balance for citizens (29(2)).

The attention given to humane **migration** policies is evident in suggestions that EU legislation address human smuggling, human trafficking or sexual exploitation connected to irregular migration (42(2)). Protecting vulnerable migrants (i.e. pregnant women, unaccompanied minors or vulnerable people more generally) is mentioned in two recommendations (43(1) and 44(4)). Respect for human dignity should permeate migration procedures (44(1)) and minimum standards for the reception of asylum-seekers should be enhanced (44(3)). **Education** also plays an active role in achieving a more respectful society – for example, recommendation 46(2) suggests future-proof education to help combat bullying and racism, while sport could be a vehicle for values, gender equality and inclusiveness (49(1)). In **A stronger economy**, competitiveness that does not undermine human rights (12(21)), a minimum wage that ensures a decent and similar quality of life in the EU (13(1)), and regulating 'smart working' in a way that also ensures the right to disconnect (13(3)) are mentioned.

Two thirds of the objectives to achieve a more humane society would require legislative initiatives, and half of them non-legislative initiatives. No Treaty changes would be necessary.

## Reactions of the three institutions and the way forward

With the CoFoE's [conclusion](#) on 9 May 2022, the new phase of translating the proposed measures into reality began, as the three institutions had committed to from the start in their [joint declaration](#).

### Parliament

Parliament has, since the [very beginning](#), been open to deeper reforms, including changes to the Treaties where needed. Parliament confirmed this on [4 May 2022](#), when it adopted a [resolution on the follow-up to the Conference, calling for a Convention](#) to activate the procedure for the revision of the Treaties that is provided for in [Article 48 TEU](#).

The resolution also praised the innovative participation of citizens in the Conference, stressed that an increased role in EU decision-making requires more transparent, accountable and democratic institutions, and noted that the current challenges necessitate a European response.

After the Conference closed, with its resolution of [9 June 2022](#) Parliament [activated the process](#) to change the EU Treaties by **calling for a Convention on the revision of the Treaties** under Article 48 TEU. In the same resolution, Parliament made specific proposals for [Treaty change](#) that can be summarised as follows: the Council to decide by QMV on the adoption of sanctions, use of *passerelle* clauses, and in the event of an emergency; adaptation of EU competences in the area of cross-border health threats, in the completion of the energy union, and in defence, social and economic policies; and awarding Parliament full co-decision rights on EU budgetary issues and the right of legislative initiative.

Both resolutions contain instructions to the effect that the President of the European Parliament transmits the proposed Treaty changes to the Council and forwards them to the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States. Article 48(2) TEU, containing the provisions regulating the [ordinary revision procedure](#) (48(1)-(5) TEU), provides that proposals for amendments to the Treaties must be submitted to the European Council by the Council, and that national parliaments must be informed. In parallel, the [Constitutional Affairs Committee](#) (AFCO) is preparing an own-initiative legislative report on 'Proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties'. Six rapporteurs have been appointed for this report, while eleven committees will give an opinion.

## Council of the European Union

In its first [preliminary technical assessment](#), issued on 10 June 2022, the **Council** identified the need to implement the recommendations with Treaty changes in 18 areas affecting 26 measures. Indeed, the Council [noted](#) that: i) a significant number of proposals are already dealt with by the co-legislators, particularly in the fields of Digital transformation, Climate change and Health; ii) where this is not the case, the large majority of recommendations could be implemented within the current Treaty framework – for example, by amending current legislation, strengthening existing tools or mechanisms (e.g. the European Semester) or issuing new legislation (e.g. on values and rights, or the circular economy); iii) existing flexibilities could be explored, such as *passerelle* clauses. In the meantime, while it started [discussing](#) selected topics such as the proposals on Health, in September 2022 the Council made an [assessment](#) of 17 proposals where it could already act on its own.

On 14 September, the Czech Presidency circulated a questionnaire to delegations asking for [feedback](#) on, inter alia, their position on Article 48(2) TEU (i.e. convening a Convention); a large majority of delegations considered that priority should be given to the proposals that could be implemented under the current Treaties. On 20 September, the Czech Minister for European Affairs, Mikuláš Bek, announced that the Czech Presidency would organise 'a political discussion' in the General Affairs Council (GAC). This discussion took place on [18 October](#); many ministers noted that the majority of proposals could be implemented under the current Treaty framework, while some suggested, in the light of current geopolitical challenges, to focus on practical solutions for citizens.

Discussions also focused on the timing for submitting Parliament's proposals for Treaty changes to the European Council. Ministers considered that, to avoid duplication of procedures, it would be appropriate to wait for Parliament to conclude its work within the AFCO committee to identify detailed proposals for amending the Treaties. This latter approach has, however, been criticised by Parliament, as there should be no further delay in transmitting Parliament's request to trigger the ordinary revision procedure to the European Council, as mandated by Article 48 TEU.

## Commission

The **European Commission** performed a more general assessment in its 17 June 2022 [communication](#), in which it identified four main categories of proposals: i) those on which the

Commission has already acted, such as the European Climate Law or the Digital Services Act; ii) those where the Commission has recently made a proposal which is being discussed by the co-legislators; iii) those for which the Commission plans to make proposals; and iv) those that are partly or wholly new. The Commission made it known that its approach is pragmatic and relies on the current Treaty framework, and that it would like to exploit the untapped potential of the Treaties, such as *passerelle* clauses. It said it is in favour of reforms, including through Treaty change, where necessary (e.g. on health or defence), that introduce brand new ideas. The Commission also said it is willing to enable forms of participatory democracy that had proven to be successful within the CoFoE.

In her [State of the Union address](#) of 14 September 2022, President von der Leyen declared that 'the moment has arrived for a European Convention' and announced that the citizens' panels would now become a regular feature of our democratic life. In her [letter of intent](#) to President Metsola and the Czech Prime Minister, Petr Fiala, she specified that the Commission would include citizens' panels in its policy-making toolbox, so that they can make recommendations on certain key policy proposals, starting with the upcoming work on food waste. Building on the success of the European Year of Youth, one third of participants would be young people.

Among the new policy objectives contained in its work programme for 2023, published on 18 October 2022, the Commission [reports](#) 43 new initiatives that follow up, either directly or indirectly, the proposals of the CoFoE. Finally, as also [supported](#) by the European Council, and anticipated by the Commission in its June assessment, a follow-up to the CoFoE conclusions will be communicated to citizens during a feedback event that is due to take place on 2 December.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For an analysis of the 178 recommendations of the European citizens' panels, see: [European democracy/ Values and rights, rule of law, security – Citizens' recommendations and the EU context: Panel 2 of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#), EPRS with DGs IPOL and EXPO, European Parliament, February 2022; [Climate change, environment and health – Citizens' recommendations and the EU context: Panel 3 of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#), EPRS with DGs IPOL and EXPO, European Parliament, February 2022; [EU in the world/Migration – Citizens' recommendations and the EU context: Panel 4 of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#), EPRS with DGs EXPO and IPOL, European Parliament, March 2022; [Stronger economy, social justice, jobs, education, culture, sport, digital transformation – Citizens' recommendations and the EU context: Panel 1 of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#), DG IPOL, European Parliament, March 2022.
- <sup>2</sup> The number of measures requiring Treaty change is higher than nine, as measure 38(4) contains four sub-measures, three of which require Treaty change (see Annex). For the purpose of this assessment, it has been decided to maintain the original numbering of the Conference's final report, including where one measure contains several distinct sub-measures (see, for example, 39(2)).
- <sup>3</sup> See endnote 2.

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