Questionnaire for the 34ᵗʰ Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Parliament/Chamber and contact details

Please enter the name of your Parliament/Chamber and your contact details.

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Chapter I: Conference on the Future of Europe

In her July 2019 Political Guidelines, Commission President Ursula von der LEYEN announced a Conference on the Future of Europe, beginning in 2020 and running for a two-year period, with a view to providing new impetus for strengthening and continuing to develop Europe, while at the same time opening up an opportunity to enter into a close dialogue with EU citizens. Following this announcement, on 22 January 2020, the Commission presented a Communication on the organisation of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The launch of this Conference, originally scheduled for May 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After the Council adopted a position on the Conference on the Future of Europe on 24 June 2020, the three institutions involved (European Commission, Council of the European Union, European Parliament) must now agree on the definitive concept, structure, agenda setting and timetable for the Conference. This decision will be set out in a Joint Declaration. The Conference is expected to start in autumn 2020. COSAC has already discussed the project of the Conference on several occasions and has clearly called for appropriate involvement of national Parliaments in the Conference and its various fora, including the Steering Group, and reached out to the European Institutions vis-à-vis this matter.

Concept for the Conference

1.1. The question of the future of the European Union has been previously addressed through various forms of citizen participation. The former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude JUNCKER, initiated the discussion, which was taken up by the French President Emmanuel MACRON. At his suggestion, dialogues with citizens or other forms of participation have already been held in a large number of Member States.

a) Through which formats, if any, for citizen participation has the question on the EU's future been addressed? [max. 500 characters]

b) What kind of experiences did your Parliament/Chamber have with these formats and which results emerged at the end of the discussions? [max. 500 characters]

c) Have these results been put into practice in your country e.g. in the form of a legislative measure, a communication strategy or in some other way. [Yes/No]

If yes, how has this been done? [max. 500 characters]

1.2 a) In the opinion of your Parliament/ Chamber, which further stakeholders, in addition to the EU institutions, national Parliaments and citizens, should be involved in the Conference on the Future of Europe (multiple answers possible)?

- COSAC

- Regional Parliaments

- Other EU bodies, (e.g. the Committee of the Regions or the European Economic and Social Committee)

- Representatives of civil society (e.g. NGOs, creative artists, associations)

- Representatives of academia

- Other (please specify)

b) In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, should decentralised events or activities in the Member States/regions of the Member States take place in the context of the Conference? [Yes/No]

If yes, to what extent shall the outcome be fed into the Conference? [max. 500 characters]

c) In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, what forms should events in the Members States take (e.g. town hall meetings, videoconferences, online questionnaires, moderated discussion rounds involving political representatives)?

Agenda-setting

The Conference needs to be recalibrated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Against the backdrop of the consequences arising from the crisis, the topics addressed by the conference must also be redefined and new priorities set.

1.3. In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, which topics should be addressed during the Conference? Please list three topics that are important to you. [max. 500 characters]

1.4 In their respective positions on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EU institutions are expressing ideas on concrete topics that the Conference should take up. The EU institutions are currently negotiating a Joint Declaration which will, inter alia, define the thematic framework of the Conference. From the point of view of your Parliament/Chamber, should

the Conference also be able to put other topics on the agenda, for example by a decision of the Steering Group or the plenary? [Yes/No]

1.5. a) From the perspective of your Parliament/Chamber, should the conference also address institutional issues? [Yes/No]

    If yes, which ones? [max. 500 characters]

  b) Should debates be constrained by the existing treaties, thus excluding the option of amendments to the Treaties? [Yes/No]

    If Treaty changes would be considered, in which areas does your Parliament/Chamber see a particular need for action or amendments? [max. 500 characters]

1.6. Democracy and the rule of law are cornerstones of the European Union. They are interdependent and any violation of these fundamental values also has an impact on Europe's citizens. In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, respect for the Union's values has been repeatedly emphasised. Parallel to the process of reflection on the future of the EU, safeguarding democracy and the rule of law is therefore an essential prerequisite for trust between the Member States and citizens' acceptance of European integration. In autumn 2020, the Commission will present reports on the rule-of-law situation in the various Member States for the first time.

  a) How does your Parliament/Chamber intend to deal with the Rule of Law Reports Through [multiple answers possible]

    - public hearings;

    - Expert discussions;

    - Monitoring;

    - Opinion procedures;

    - Debate in committee;

    - Debate in plenary

    - Other, please specify [max. 500 characters]:

  b) Does your Parliament/Chamber think it would be helpful for national Parliaments to have an exchange of views on these reports? [Yes/No]

  c) Which other aspects does your Parliament/Chamber wish to share with other national Parliaments/Chambers in this context?

1.7 If you wish to add any aspects on the Conference on the Future of Europe, please do so below: [max. 500 characters]

Chapter II: Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic poses enormous challenges for the European Union and its Member States. The consequences of the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis will continue to influence the thematic focus and discourse at European level for a long time to come. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the EU and its Member States have taken numerous measures to counteract the further spread of the virus, increase resilience and mitigate the economic and social consequences. It will be important to learn from the experience of recent months and to ensure the EU is better equipped to handle similar crises in future.

Health

The Health Security Committee, organised under the aegis of the European Commission with an advisory and coordinating role, invited representatives from the health ministries of all Member States to talks at the start of the coronavirus crisis. However, efforts to achieve a centrally coordinated approach were not successful, as health policy is primarily a national competence. This raises the question of how coordination at European level - possibly accompanied by a transfer of competences to the EU - could be improved.

2.1.   In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, should the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) be granted extended competences - comparable to developments in the case of FRONTEX? [Yes/No/No opinion]

2.2.   In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, which could be the way forward for reducing the EU's dependence on third countries for procurement of protective equipment, medicaments and pharmaceutical precursors (multiple answers possible)?

    - By relocating production processes to the EU

    - Through stockholding coordinated at European level

    - Through stockholding coordinated at national level

    - Other:

2.3.   Initial responses to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic included border closures and uncoordinated national measures. In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, what form could a coordinated approach take in order to more effectively contain the spread of disease in a pandemic situation? [max. 500 characters]

Research and Innovation

Research and innovation play a key role in long-term containment of the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus. In order to facilitate rapid development of a vaccine and effective medicaments for COVID-19, the Commission has taken or proposed numerous coordinating and cross-cutting actions. In addition to financial and legal measures, this includes measures that promote networking and exchange of data between Member States.

2.4.   The Commission's "Next Generation EU" proposal envisaged additional funding for the Horizon Europe research programme. Does your Parliament/Chamber consider the funding level for the programme proposed by the EUCO on 21 July 2020 to be sufficient? [Yes/No/No opinion]

2.5.   a) To accelerate the production of a vaccine against COVID-19, the Commission presented its vaccine strategy (COM(2020) 245 final) on 17h June 2020. In addition to Advance Purchase Agreements for manufacturers, this strategy envisages accelerating the authorisation procedure for vaccines by using existing flexibility options and individual waivers from specific EU legal provisions. Has your Parliament/Chamber already examined this strategy? [Yes/No]

   If yes, what was the outcome of this examination? [max. 500 characters]

   b) Do you consider it advisable to adapt the legal framework for future crisis scenarios arising from an outbreak of a infectious disease or from other comparable serious crisis situations? [Yes/No]

   If yes, which specific proposals does your Parliament/Chamber have on this point? [max. 500 characters]

2.6.   Is your Parliament/Chamber considering how Member States can network more effectively in the field of research and innovation and ensure improved data exchange in the health sector (e.g. through shared databases such as the European COVID-19 Data Platform or the European Open Science Cloud)? [Yes/No]

   If yes, please elaborate [max. 500 characters]:

Reinvigorating the Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a massive decline in economic activity in the Member States, to which they have responded with a range of different measures. Aid packages have been adopted at the European level, intended both to support economic recovery and to accelerate structural change, moving towards greater climate protection and increased digitisation. EU aid is directed to public budgets, companies and employees in the Member States. The measures aim to overcome the crisis in a spirit of solidarity, to build up resilience and ensure the EU is fit for the future, while also defining its role in a rapidly changing world. EU support for economic recovery complements national efforts.

2.7.   Many Member States have adopted economic stimulus packages.

   If this was the case in your Member State, which areas were addressed (e.g. liquidity support, SMEs, employment)? Was the focus on increasing expenditure or reducing tax burdens and was the support/relief general or focused on specific sectors, branches or projects? (If the latter, which sectors/industries?) [max. 500 characters]

2.8.   In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, which other economic or social policy measures to mitigate the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have proved particularly effective? [max. 500 characters]

2.9.   Which of the European measures to support national measures (e.g. SURE - COM(2020) 139 final) do you consider to be particularly effective?

2.10. a)   Which priorities and focuses should, in the opinion of your Parliament/Chamber, be established at EU level when designing the package of measures to deal with the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic? [max. 500 characters]

b)   To what extent does your Parliament/Chamber consider that climate protection and sustainability aspects should be taken into account in designing the package of support measures, alongside the issue of digitisation (see separate set of questions below)?

2.11. Does your Parliament/Chamber consider it appropriate to link the allocation of EU-funds to compliance with CO_2 emission thresholds? [Yes/No/No Opinion]

2.12. a)   Should the EU introduce new own resources in addition to the one based on non-recycled plastic waste? [Yes/No]

b)   If yes, should these take the form of: [multiple answers possible]

- A national contribution based on the common consolidated corporate tax base

- Revenue from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme

- Digital tax

- A border compensation mechanism for CO_2 costs incurred

- Other

2.13. European Union citizens expect that the funds made available from the EU budget and the recovery plan to assist the Member States will be managed in accordance with the rule of law.

a)   How does your Parliament/Chamber view the idea to withhold a substantial proportion of EU funds, e.g. from the Cohesion Fund, if there is a clear risk of serious infringements concerning the rule of law that jeopardise the EU's financial interests? [max. 500 characters]

b)   In the view of your Parliament/Chamber, what is the appropriate procedure to activate the mechanism in the event of a clear risk of serious infringements concerning the rule of law that jeopardise the EU's financial interests?

- Unanimity in the Council

- Qualified majority in the Council

- Reverse qualified majority in the Council (the mechanism is activated, e.g. on a proposal

from the Commission, unless the Council opposes it by qualified majority)

- Other (please specify)

Digital Future of Europe and Secure Communication

Measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have often been associated with restrictions on freedom of movement. Digital technologies have become increasingly important for the economy, the state and citizens. At the same time, weaknesses, e.g. in infrastructure and equipment, have become apparent.

2.14. The Commission has set out its vision for shaping Europe's digital future in its White Paper on Artificial Intelligence - A European approach to excellence and trust (COM(2020) 65 final), in its Communication entitled A European strategy for data (COM(2020) 66 final), in its Communication on Shaping Europe's digital future (COM(2020) 67 final), in its Communication entitled An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe (COM(2020) 103 final) and in the public consultation on the Digital Services Act. Against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, what potential or areas of application does your Parliament/Chamber see in this area? Please list up to three aspects. [max. 500 characters]

2.15. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated certain developments, for example in the online economy. Does your Parliament/Chamber view the creation of a digital single market through harmonisation of provisions for technology and online companies as constituting an opportunity for economic recovery by generating growth and creating jobs? [Yes/No]

2.16. Communication and exchange of information via digital media are also topics in inter-parliamentary cooperation. How does your Parliament/Chamber assess the use and potential for example of video conference systems for inter-parliamentary exchanges, e.g. in the form of ad hoc formats? [max. 500 characters]

2.17. The Conference of Speakers of Parliaments is revising the guidelines for inter-parliamentary cooperation. In this context, in November 2019 a working group noted the existence of video telephony communication tools that are suitable for everyday use and that could be used by parliaments. At present, the idea of developing a uniform European conference tool for data-protection-compliant communication between the institutions and parliaments via video telephony (including interpretation) is once again being proposed. Are you in favour of the development of such a conference tool to enhance the digital sovereignty of the EU? [Yes/No/No opinion]

If yes, do you have concrete proposals for implementation and funding? [max.500 characters]

Whiteboard

2.18. a) With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, which responses - at national as well as at European level - have proved successful from the point of view of your Parliament/Chamber? Please list up to three aspects.

b) With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, which measures - at national as well as at European level -should be avoided in the future from the point of view of your Parliament/Chamber? Please list up to three aspects.