



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ursula von der Leyen
The President

Brussels, 23. 12. 2020
Ares (2020) 7282972

Dear Chairmen,
Dear Mr Krichbaum, Dear Mr Wolf,

Following you and your co-signatories recent letter, I would like to thank you for your commitment to support the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe and the strong and continued interest of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) in playing a major role therein.

As I underlined during the COSAC Plenary meeting of 1 December 2020, I would like to reassure you that the Conference is and remains a priority for this Commission – even more so in the wake of the pandemic – and that national Parliaments will be instrumental in making it a success.

The Conference's ultimate purpose is to bring European citizens closer to EU affairs by enabling them to help shape Europe's future. I want as many Europeans as possible to contribute, whoever and wherever they are. It is vital that we engage citizens in European policymaking, allow them to make their voices heard in topical debates and, crucially, act upon their proposals, as I pledged in my Political Guidelines.

National Parliaments and their members, as the backbones of representative democracy, embody a direct link to citizens and will therefore have a decisive role to play in the Conference. The Commission made this clear in its Communication on the Conference of 22 January 2020¹.

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/commissions-contribution-shaping-conference-future-europe_en

Mr Gunther Krichbaum, MdB
Chairman of the Committee on European Union Affairs
German Bundestag
Mr Guido Wolf
Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions
German Bundesrat

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I can assure you that the early involvement of COSAC and of some national Parliaments has already shaped this process, notably during the negotiations of the Joint Declaration on the scope, objectives, principles and structure of the Conference.

As I stressed during our last exchange, national Parliaments should indeed be represented in the Conference's governance structures. If there is a plenary agreed upon in the final design, of course members of national Parliaments should be included in this plenary. I am sure that we will find with the other institutions a solution on how to integrate national Parliaments in the other bodies of the Conference. I also encourage national parliamentarians to be equally active on the ground, in their home constituencies where they are close to citizens, since most of the Conference's events will take place in a decentralised fashion, as you supported. This is an ideal opportunity to debate and engage with citizens about EU affairs. The Commission relies on your support and enthusiasm, in cooperation with civil society and local, regional and national authorities to achieve that.

The Commission has been developing a first-of-its-kind multilingual digital platform, which will allow for virtual contributions and for online events to be organised, as face-to-face meetings will be difficult during the pandemic. All proposals made by citizens and the outcome of debates – virtual or not – should be uploaded onto the platform, which, once launched, will be a critical element of the Conference's feedback and follow-up mechanism. One of the platform's key strengths is the possibility it gives to organise transnational events, thus helping to spark a truly European and lively debate. In this vein, I strongly encourage national Parliaments, authorities and politicians to use and promote the platform.

On the topics for discussion during the Conference, I would like to stress the openness of the initiative. It is crucial that citizens will be entitled to debate on any subject that matters to them and ideally identify core issues, which will feed into future EU policies.

The Commission remains ready to launch the Conference as swiftly as possible, once negotiations on the Joint Declaration with the European Parliament and the Council have been successfully concluded.

I look forward to working together on this exciting initiative and rely on your support to make the Conference the success it deserves to be.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ursula von der Leyen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ursula von der Leyen