



## Presidency Note

### Conference on the Future of Europe - Questionnaire

On 15 July, at the occasion of the informal meeting of the members of the General Affairs Council, there was a first informal debate on the follow-up on the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Presidency would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their initial exchange of opinions, which will serve to guide the Presidency in the upcoming months. As previously indicated, the Presidency would like to take this opportunity to distribute a questionnaire that would allow delegations to expand on their interventions in writing, addressing also concrete measures. The intent of this questionnaire is to address questions and measures of an institutional nature, those spanning beyond the remit of a single Presidency as well as addressing the potential of greater participation of European citizens. An additional question on measures where the Council can act autonomously will be distributed after the summer.

The delegations are therefore invited to submit their written responses on the following topics **by 19 August 2022 EOB**.

#### Treaty Change

*What is your opinion on following up to the Conference by means of convening a Convention according to Art. 48 (2) TEU during the current Presidency term?*

As confirmed by the analyses of the General Secretariat of the Council and the Communication of the European Commission the vast majority of the many measures included in the Final Report of the Conference is achievable within the framework of the current Treaties. In light of these findings, the Presidency invites delegations to indicate whether they see a need for changing the Treaties by convening a Convention according to Art. 48 (2) TEU during the current Presidency term.

#### Response NL

In the past year, citizens have committed time and energy to define what they expect from the EU and how to improve it. It is now up to us to deliver on the recommendations that citizens put forward. While the Commission is working on the follow up through its working programme of 2023 and the EP has put forward a resolution, the Council should also define what measures to follow up on. The analysis of the Council Secretariat lays a solid foundation for this exercise and shows that the vast majority of the proposed measures is achievable within the framework of the current Treaties. The Netherlands stresses the importance of an orderly process within the Council and looks forward to the further discussion and examination of institutional proposals in the GAC. Regarding the implementation, the Netherlands supports the prioritization of the proposals that can be implemented in the short term or that have a large impact, in order to quickly show concrete results

## Council Working Party on General Affairs (GAG)

### Relations with the European Parliament

to citizens. For the longer term, we remain in principle open to necessary treaty changes that are jointly defined. However, treaty change should not be an end in itself.

#### **Use of *passerelles* clauses to switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council**

*For which legal bases identified in Annex of this questionnaire could you envisage using the *passerelle* clauses to switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council?*

Greater efficiency of the decision-making process is one of the recurring threads of the Final Report of the Conference. The Presidency therefore invites delegations to reflect in writing their position as regards the legal bases for which it could be envisaged to activate the *passerelle* clauses to switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council. To this end the General Secretariat of the Council has prepared an overview of areas where such a change could be considered (please see the Annex of this Questionnaire, contents previously published as Annex I of WK 9771/2022 INIT).

The Presidency would welcome delegations to indicate their position on each area identified in the Annex.

#### **Response NL**

*In order for the EU to be a geopolitical actor, the EU has to be able to respond in a swift and decisive manner to developments in the world. The Netherlands is convinced the EU can take more decisive action and, as a result, enhance effectiveness of its action, by more frequent use of QMV in decision making on matters of Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Netherlands sees room for the use of QMV in particular with regards to sanctions, human rights declarations in multilateral context and civilian missions.*

#### **Broadening involvement of Citizens**

*How could opportunities for the involvement of Citizens be broadened?*

The Final Report of the Conference makes numerous references to greater participation of European citizens in the decision-making of the European Union following the formal end of the Conference. Following the announcement of the European Commission's intention to continue in the practice of organizing Citizen's Panels, the Presidency invites delegations to consider various options to integrate citizen participation in the EU decision-making process, inspired by the Conference on the Future of Europe and reflecting the Council's character as an institution consisting of representatives of each Member State at ministerial level and the Council's role in the decision-making of the European Union.

#### **Response NL**

The Conference has been an unique exercise to increase citizens' involvement in the EU. An exercise like this is valuable for the discussion about the future of the Union and for its democratic legitimacy. Increasing citizens' involvement and finding lasting ways to interact with citizens, was also one of the main outcomes of the Dutch citizen consultations 'Visions of Europe'.

## Council Working Party on General Affairs (GAG)

### Relations with the European Parliament

Therefore, NL welcomes the discussion on broadening the opportunities for participatory democracy. To improve the EU's engagement with its citizens, we should engage in dialogue with citizens more often, and preferably on an ongoing basis.

We should also take into account that citizens in general find the EU very complicated to understand. If we want to engage with citizens, we should also consider simplifying the EU's official channels to make it more understandable for citizens. Here, transparency also plays a key role.