

EU Launches Conference on the Future of Europe



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News

Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen*, European Parliament President *David Sassoli* and Portuguese Prime Minister *Antonio Costa* (whose country holds the Council of the EU's rotating presidency) signed the [Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe](#) at a ceremony on 10 March 2021. Since the Treaty of Lisbon, there have been hardly any steps in the EU to further develop the integration process and initiate new reforms. The "Conference on the Future of Europe" will create a new forum for ideas on the future with a hybrid format of inter-institutional negotiations and citizen participation.

The Joint Declaration sets out the scope, structure, objectives and principles of the Conference. According to the Declaration, "(t)he Conference on the Future of Europe is a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise for Europeans to have their say on what they expect from the European Union. It will give citizens a greater role in shaping the Union's future policies and ambitions, improving its resilience. It will do so through a multitude of Conference-events and debates organised across the Union, as well as through an interactive multilingual digital platform."

The EU-wide conference will start on 9 May 2021, Europe Day, and will give citizens the opportunity to express their expectations of European policies until spring 2022. It will address issues included in the Commission's policy priorities and the European Council's strategic agenda. These include tackling climate change, Europe's digital transformation and promoting European values. It is also open to citizens to raise additional relevant issues. There will also be physical events in all EU countries as soon as the pandemic situation allows again. The conference will be co-chaired by the three institutions. An Executive Board will oversee the work of the Conference and prepare its plenary sessions. The national parliaments will be given observer status.

Ahead of the Joint Declaration a [Special Eurobarometer Survey](#) was released. The Survey (carried out between 22 October and 20 November 2020 in the 27 EU Member States) reveals that the vast majority of Europeans back the Conference on the Future of Europe. Three-quarters of Europeans consider that the Conference will have a positive impact on democracy within the EU. Six in ten Europeans agree that the coronavirus crisis has made them reflect on the future of the European Union. Terrorism is ranked second after climate change as the main global challenge affecting the future of the EU.

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