

Prof. Danuta Hübner,

**“Safeguarding an effective and continuous interaction
among all parties involved in the Conference”**

**AFCO Committee meeting - Comments to the “Working
document on citizens’ and civil society’s participation in
the Conference on the Future of Europe”
European Parliament, Brussels 27 January 2021 (online)**

Nobody can doubt today that citizens, in particular the young ones, want to be engaged in shaping their own future.

Europe is part of it. They know it. They have already identified the most important issues for their future, which happens to be as well the future of our planet. They care, they can and they want to be engaged in a practical way.

I know that we can trust them when it comes to protecting democracy. What they lack is a meaningful space where they could express themselves. And this is a weakness of European framework and democracy and your report is exactly about it.

This new version shows that you have listened with great attention to the comments made during the first presentation of the report. You have integrated many of the suggestions made by the colleagues.

This new version is more streamlined and definitely much shorter than the previous one, which means that you have reduced many of your good ideas to the essential.

Thank you for taking on board my recommendation that citizens from Western Balkans as prospective members of the Union should be included in the participation processes, as well as citizens of the EEA states, the United Kingdom and EU's closest Eastern and Southern Neighbours, such as Ukraine. If the EU is serious about the European perspective of the Balkan region, how could it justify excluding political leaders and citizens from this region from a Conference which is potentially decisive for its future.

I also agree that as this Conference is all about the interaction between citizens, civil society, national, regional and local authorities, politicians and all the institutions involved, especially during the decision-making phase, we have to ensure a process that is designed in a manner that guarantee effective interactions. I strongly agree that from the very outset, citizens must be able to understand and assess whether

and how exactly their involvement and input will finally feed into political decision-making.

We must be clear regarding the follow-up, managing of the responses and feedback from political decision makers to the citizens about their proposals as well as the creation of a permanent mechanism on dialogue on Europe on which I have talked since the day one of our debates and that you have well highlighted in your report.

This Conference is a chance to look anew at European decision making process. The Treaties were written in different era when Europe was for citizens but not so much by citizens.

In my view you have presented an ambitious roadmap for the participation of the citizens and youth agoras in the Conference on the Future of Europe, and this remains a valuable contribution for the Parliament in the preparation of the Conference.