

**Prof. Danuta Hübner**

**„Unanimity voting hinders the project of European integration”**

**Debate on the Community method and intergovernmentalism.**

**Meeting of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs**

**European Parliament**

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**(online)**

First of all my thanks to Domenèc Ruiz Devesa for choosing this topic for the AFCO reflection and the good work done.

I would like to join you in hoping that the Conference on the Future of Europe will bring about significant changes to the policies and institutional architecture of the EU, building on the evolution and achievements of the community method, and thus reinvigorating it.

It is true that Covid-19 hit the Conference both in terms of timing and working method. But it actually made the need to have it even more pressing, pointing to the demand for increasing the powers of the Union to act in certain areas.

As we have seen in the study presented by professor Federico Fabbrini, the EU governance system suffers from a number of severe shortcomings, which have been greatly exposed during the last years and which compel EU reforms. I cannot agree more.

It is true that in case of Brexit negotiations, the EU Member States managed successfully to maintain their political unity. But we all know many examples of crises that have profoundly challenged the unity of the EU, thus questioning the adequacy of the current EU power structure, competence arrangements and the weight of intergovernmentalism. While the institutional interplay of the community method allows for a search for the general European interest, including protection of minority interests.

As you clearly explain in your working document, the Community method is not static, and it has been adjusted and renewed over time, and one of the gains was

the extension of qualified majority voting. In today's modern and integrated EU, replacing European solutions with compromises built on purely national approaches no longer works and unanimity is neither a practical nor an effective way of decision-making.

We know only too well that unanimity often leads to policy failure which entails blockages in the Council and, subsequently, a proliferation of co-operation between Member States outside of the EU framework, which has important implications for the single market.

It is certainly worth noting in this context that for years globalization and digitalisation have been adding to common challenges that require common solutions.

To conclude, I would like to highlight that whether the Conference on the Future of Europe can become a fully exploited opportunity to relaunch the project of European integration still remains to be seen. Decisions that we will take will have to be bold and forward looking. But I fully share the view that some of the ambitious objectives coping with structural deficiencies of the Union can be reached only through Treaty change.