

**Professor Danuta Hübner**

**“The Conference on the Future of Europe and the role of the European  
Parliament”**

**Constitutional Affairs Committee Meeting**

**Brussels (online), 28 February 2022**

I hope we all remember in this House, but in AFCO in particular, that from the day one of the history of the Conference on the future of Europe the European Parliament was the main driver and mobilizer for bringing the Conference into fruition. I imagine that we continue to see it as our responsibility to make the conference deliver not only on the expected outcome but also on the value of the process of the Conference itself.

I believe that those of us who have participated in many debates with citizens across Europe could experience the strength of citizens' engagement in the whole process. Yesterday's event in Ireland delivered one more proof of it. I must say that during all my meetings I could easily identify in the citizens our partners in the European project.

It is absolutely clear that for citizens the Union is not a faraway dream or an abstract and cold idea, but a part of their everyday life.

They care about Europe in a personal way. My understanding is that they expect from us, European Parliamentarians, help in making their engagement in shaping the future of Europe valuable, useful and effective. Now, it is up to us to respond to their commitment and hope adequately. We must accompany them on their way toward ensuring their recommendations will not get lost on the way toward final report.

We must also engage actively not only with national parliaments but also with the Council and the Commission making it clear how we see the outcome of the

Conference and that we see the Conference as the beginning of a process that would lead to a true Union of Citizens.

In our resolution, we should commit to keeping the Conference's torch alive, against all the naysayers and the sceptics that predict that its spirit will vanish the day it officially ends.

It is true that we share with the national parliaments the responsibility for protecting the citizens' preeminent role in the European integration. We also know that our relation does not always work smoothly. I still hope that the Conference, and the joint meetings between the European and national parliaments, will prove conducive to this natural alliance. This should be facilitated by the clear message I take from all my meetings with citizens which is that for them the EU is not a simple sum of national interests. They see the Union as a common good and they find their hyphenated identity natural and obvious. On this, the European citizens are well ahead of national politicians.

Let me finish by saying that we may soon face the fact that some member states would not be ready to accept the results of the Conference. And it will be up to us to fight for them. We just have to mobilize and act. I trust we will not fail at this task. Today we have our discussion in a world different from the one a week ago. And I support the idea to use the momentum Putin generated and find a way to add to recommendations ideas that would take into account the new reality. Europe must grow.