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“Conference on the Future of Europe: what next?”
Constitutional Affairs Committee meeting
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Conference on the Future of Europe was a one-of-a-kind experience. It generated a lot of ideas, fresh perspectives, new motivation but also huge responsibility for all involved. During the last months of the Conference, we were all underlining how important it is to follow-up on citizens' ideas. Now almost four months have passed since the closing event of the Conference. There is an ongoing reflection in some European institutions. It was expected to have a follow up event in autumn. I understand that the European Commission is working toward an early 2 December event. There is the promise to raise the issue during the State of the Union speech of the Commission President. There is a list of issues already implemented by the Commission or the European Parliament.

It seems to me that waiting until December for a dialogue with citizens on the follow up to the Conference or making references to our commitments through the work program or speeches is not enough. There is a need to communicate directly with citizens. They were rather well organized during the Conference, they had their own structures, had their representatives, ambassadors who spoke on their behalf. There is the Digital Platform active from April 2021, which can be used, maybe slightly modified. It passed the test as a communication vehicle during the Conference. It should remain active and useful.

There is of course the big issue of the treaty change. During the discussions on the follow-up to the Conference, the opponents of the Convention used the argument of the failed referendum in the Netherlands and France on EU Constitution 17 years ago. However, Eurobarometer done 3 months after the referenda on EU Constitution showed that only 38% of European citizens were aware of the Convention. The whole process was conducted mainly behind the closed doors and only a single day

was set aside for civil society representatives to present their suggestions. This time around, the process was way more transparent. The citizens clearly voiced their vision of the Union during the Conference on the Future of Europe and asked for Convention and treaty change. The institutions must spare no effort to give effect to the Conference conclusions.

I trust we learnt from this Conference how to build the future of Europe in the most participatory way possible. We bear the responsibility to keep directly engaging with citizens. During the Conference there were different ideas to continue the dialogue with the citizens: keeping the digital platform running as a forum of exchange between citizens and the EU, a permanent mechanism, either in the form of periodical Citizens Assemblies or in the form of European Citizens Agora that has been proposed and endorsed by the AFCO in June 2021. Whatever the format, the dialogue with the citizens developed during the Conference must be upheld.

We all know that the preparation of the Lisbon Treaty started with the Constitutional Convention twenty years ago. The world was different, the Union was different. The European democracy is not the same. Europeans deserve a new Treaty. Citizens were not silent on the treaty change during the Conference. Many of their proposals require changes to the Treaties.

The European Parliament has already taken the floor on the follow up to the Conference. It adopted two Resolutions, triggered the article 48 procedure. We expect from the European Commission an active approach.