European Parliament
2019-2024

Delegation to the Conference on the Future of Europe

DCFE_PV(2022)0429_1

MINUTES

of the meeting of 29 April 2022, 15.00-16.00

Strasbourg

Room WEISS N1.4

The meeting opened at 15.08 on Friday, 29 April 2022, with Guy VERHOFSTADT (Chair) presiding.

(Webstreaming)

1. Adoption of agenda Draft Agenda (2022) 2904_1_EN

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

2. Chair's announcements

The Chair announced a change in the composition of the European Parliament delegation: As of 31 March, Mr François ALFONSI (Greens/EFA) replaced Ms Salima YENBOU.

Furthermore, the Chair informed Members that a meeting of the Executive Board took place on 26 April and a meeting of the EP Members and Observers in the Executive Board took place today, 29 April.

The Chair also provided information on the closing event of the Conference on 9 May.

3. Preparation of the Conference Plenary on 29-30 April 2022

The Chair opened the point. He thanked the European Parliament Working Group Chairs and Coordinators for their work and informed Members about the Working Group proposals submitted to the Conference Plenary for endorsement.

He reported that at the meeting of the European Parliament Members of the Executive Board that morning there was majority support to endorse the proposals.

He informed Members that any minority positions with dissenting opinion on the proposals may be the subject of a written declaration, not exceeding 200 words, and will be annexed to the minutes and published on the website of the European Parliament delegation to the Conference.

The Chair gave the floor to the European Parliament Members and Observers of the Executive Board, to present the positions of their Political Groups on the proposals for the Conference Plenary, followed by a round of speakers from the political groups and the NI.

The following Members took the floor: Mr Manfred Weber; Ms Iratxe García Pérez; Mr Pascal Durand; Mr Daniel Freund; Mr Gunnar Beck; Mr Michiel Hoogeveen; Mr Helmut Scholz; Mr Paulo Rangel; Ms Gabriele Bischoff; Ms Nicola Beer; Mr Damian Boeselager; Mr Pernando Barrena.

The Chair concluded that, in view of the favourable positions expressed by five Political Groups, representing a large majority, he could express the support of the European Parliament delegation for the proposals at the Conference Plenary. This was approved by acclamation.

Written declarations expressing minority positions have been submitted by Sandra Pereira, by Zdzisław Krasnodębski on behalf of the ECR, by Carles Puigdemont as well as by Christine Anderson, Gerolf Annemans, Gunnar Beck, Mara Bizzotto, Susanna Ceccardi, Roman Haider, Laura Huhtasaari, Peter Kofod, Hélène Laporte, Jaak Madison, Thierry Mariani, Philippe Olivier, Alessandro Panza on behalf of the ID.

4. Any other business

None

5. Next meeting

TBC

The meeting ended at 16.02h.

MINORITY POSITION

By Sandra Pereira

As we said at the outset and as we can now see, the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe were predetermined long ago, as they essentially push for a direction, a political line and measures long advocated by the EU.

Examples include the insistence on the myth that democracy will be strengthened if we abolish the rule of unanimity in the Council, when, if truth be told, this rule safeguards equality among the States and ensures that no decision is imposed against their interests; or the transnational lists for elections to the European Parliament, which would not only exacerbate existing imbalances and distortions, but also be an artificial construct, out of step with reality in Europe, with the public interest.

What we are seeing is yet another manoeuvre (with obvious conclusions) to deepen neoliberalism, federalism and militarism, which are responsible for promoting a backsliding in social and labour rights, worsening inequalities, monopolistic concentration, and a lack of respect for sovereignty and peace.

The Europe we stand for demands a different course, one of cooperation among sovereign nations with equal rights, social progress and peace.

We therefore reject these conclusions and proposals outright.

MINORITY POSITION

By Zdzisław Krasnodębski on behalf of the ECR

The ECR Group participated in good faith, hoping the conference would be a genuine public consultation about the future of the increasingly out of touch European Union. www.ecrthefuture.eu

Sadly, the conference failed.

The federalist caucus simply enlarged the Brussels bubble into a conference bubble, working with centralising NGO allies to steer the process.

The over-representation of young people (three times their fair share), the self-selection bias in recruiting participants, handpicked friendly experts, and setting a centralist agenda, all undermined the credibility of the process.

The citizens' recommendations and online platform comments were replaced by documents prepared in new 'working groups' where federalist MEPs took control. They screened the citizens' proposals and cherry-picked ideas with which they already agreed.

Two of the four components – those representing our national democracies in the Council and the national parliamentarians – did not endorse the conclusions, reserving their positions and simply forwarding on the proposals. The Parliament did not consent to the conclusions unanimously either.

There was no widespread public debate or public awareness it was taking place.

We therefore reject the conclusions and believe its key proposals and measures should now be thoroughly tested by means of independent opinion polls in each Member State.

MINORITY POSITION

By Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó

Besides congratulating all those involved in the Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE) from its inception, I would like to point out that it has fallen short of true grassroots participation. The proposal for Catalan to be an official language of the EU, “10 million voices, make Catalan an official EU language”, endorsed by 915 votes in the Multilingual Digital Platform (MDP), and the most endorsed in the category Values and Rights, Rule of Law and Security, was not even debated in the Working Group of the same name. Same happened with the proposal “No double standards in the defence of democracy and the rule of law”, the second most endorsed in that same category (626 votes). Yet the most striking has been the proposal “For a clarity mechanism on the right to self-determination”, the most voted of the whole COFE (1002 votes in the MDP), and in the European Democracy category.

The fact that these three proposals were not even debated or taken into consideration by their respective Working Groups poses many questions as to who stirred the COFE's wheels. Therefore, it is difficult for me to totally agree with the COFE’s procedure and outcome.

MINORITY POSITION

By Christine Anderson, Gerolf Annemans, Gunnar Beck, Mara Bizzotto, Susanna Ceccardi, Roman Haider, Laura Huhtasaari, Peter Kofod, Hélène Laporte, Jaak Madison, Thierry Mariani, Philippe Olivier, Alessandro Panza on behalf of the ID

The ID-Group opposes the conclusions of the Conference. The conclusions reflect controversial issues on which Parliament's view is not unanimous. There was no citizen participation because the number of participating citizens compared to the population of the EU Member States was only 0.00001 %.

A deeper European integration is not the answer to face better challenges of the future. The final report should have been an open document including all various submissions. The final papers do not include all opinions on an equal footing but focus on views previously agreed within the federalist caucus. Views that differ from those advocating deeper European integration and the establishment of a federal union between Member States were not adequately represented and mysteriously disappeared from the Conference conclusions, as was the case of contributions on the Multilingual Platform, which also included sceptical views on the EU but which never formed part of the discussions or conclusions.

The Conference was neither democratic, legitimate or transparent. We denounce its conclusions as pre-written and politically oriented, transmuting the widely carped "Brussels bubble" into a "Conference bubble", as, i.e., the abolition of the unanimity principle in the Council and the call for a Treaty Convention.

ATTENDANCE LIST

PHYSICALLY PRESENT IN THE ROOM

ANGEL, BARRENA ARZA, BECK, BEER, BENIFEI, BENTELE, BISCHOFF, BOESELAGER, CASTALDO, CHARANZOVÁ, CLUNE, DORFMANN, DURAND, FARRENG, FIDANZA, FREUND, GAMON, GARCÍA PÉREZ, GLAVAK, GOZI, HOMS GINEL, HOOGEVEEN, KUBILIUS, MITUŢA, NEGRESCU, PAGAZAURTUNDÚA, PEREIRA, PETIKÄINEN, RANGEL, RUIZ DEVESA, SCHOLZ, SILVA PEREIRA, TOIA, VERHOFSTADT, WISELER-LIMA