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Canadian Edition

Published by the World Federalist Movement - Canada, a non-governmental organization that advocates more just and effective global governance through the application of the principles of democratic federalism to world affairs.

VOL. 4, ISSUE 2
SPRING 2021

The Future of the Conference on the Future of Europe

By Monique Cuillerier

The Conference on the Future of Europe was proposed jointly by the European Commission and the European Parliament in late 2019. The Conference is intended to consider the future of the EU and possible reforms. Citizens, including particular groups such as youth, along with civil society and European institutions, are to be included within the process.

The Conference was originally planned to begin in 2020 and last for two years. This timeline has been delayed, in part, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There has also been disagreement over who should take a leadership role. An early proposal was that the Conference would be led by an “eminent European personality.” This resulted in disagreements over who that should be and a failure of more than one frontrunner to gain sufficient support across countries.

A more recent compromise suggestion is that the Conference be led by a small group — the respective heads of the European Commission, the European Council, and the European Parliament.

This proposal would also add an executive board which would include officials from the European Commission and European Council along with MEPs from each political group.

The general outline has already been agreed upon and the delays in starting the Conference are considered by many to have reached a critical point.

In a statement, Brando Benifei, a Member of the European Parliament who is also a member of the Spinelli Group, an initiative intended to reinvigorate federalism within the EU, expressed concern that the current plans for the Conference do not include sufficient possibilities for participation and that the possibility of Treaty change should not be excluded from the outset.

The Union of European Federalists (UEF) has produced an “Appeal to the European Institutions and Governments of the Member States” that presents wide-ranging recommendations intended to strengthen the European community, including a European migration policy, the development of autonomous European defence, and completing the Economic and Monetary Union. The Appeal is also concerned with defining the foundations of a “genuine European democracy.”

The UEF sees the Conference as “an historical opportunity towards a sovereign, democratic and federal Europe” that should address key issues regarding the EU’s system of government. They would like to see a new Treaty result, one that would overcome current problems.

Further detail about the Conference and UEF’s proposals can be found at <https://www.federalists.eu/>

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