



POLICY POSITION

After the Conference on the Future of Europe: Reform to Deliver on the Citizens' Recommendations

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The EU needs to turn the outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe into reality;
- The EU needs to convene a European Convention to allow for an improvement in the democratic functioning of the Union and to equip it with the proper tools to effectively address current and future challenges;
- Overcoming unanimity is long overdue. One of the main objectives for Treaty change is to amend the way the EU makes decisions by shifting from unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council to allow the EU to respond to emerging challenges and for those policy areas to which competences have been conferred by the Treaties to the EU;
- EU decision-making needs to shift from unanimity to QMV in the Council for the enforcement of the rule of law framework;
- Member States must support citizens' call to overcome unanimity and switch to QMV in the areas of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
- It is time to establish a fully-fledged European Defence Union (EDU). A more integrated institutional embedding would enable the EU to play a stronger role in the international arena, especially at a moment in which Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues;
- Treaty reform is a necessary precondition for a credible enlargement perspective that can enhance the EU's capacity to act more vigorously in the international arena and enhance democratic legitimacy. Therefore, overcoming unanimity is a crucial step in the right direction for an enlarged Union by 2030;
- Treaty reform needs to go hand in hand with strengthening citizen participation and deliberative democracy. National and transnational citizens' assemblies need to represent a permanent feature of the EU's democratic life

INTRODUCTION

The Conference on the Future of Europe (Conference) has provided European citizens with the opportunity to take part in the decision-making process and express their views on the European Union (EU) and how it should be improved. This innovative process demonstrated that our democracy can only be strengthened by fusing the work of elected representatives with the contributions of citizens, organised civil society at large and social partners.

As the final recommendations from the Conference show, citizens see that only a truly common European response can solve the challenges they are facing and that they want to play an active role in shaping the decisions that affect them. For this reason, the EU needs to deliver on the issues that lie at the heart of citizens' proposals and turn the conclusions of the Conference into reality.

Building on the work carried out during the Conference and echoing our key proposals and policy positions crafted together with our member organisations, the European Movement International has put forward a set of

thematic recommendations to ensure a meaningful, citizen-oriented follow-up to the Conference.

Moreover, we believe that constitutional reform can improve democracy in our Union and equip it with the proper tools to effectively address current and future challenges. For this reason, we call for the following.

A EUROPEAN CONVENTION IS NEEDED TO REFORM THE EU TREATIES

As several of the recommendations from the Conference require a change of EU Treaties to be implemented, the European institutions need to convene a European Convention, which is enshrined in Article 48 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), to better the functioning of the EU.

The Convention needs to be a participatory and inclusive process that puts citizens' recommendations at the centre of the debate and includes organised civil society, social partners, as well as local and regional governments. Changes in the

institutional processes should allow for an improvement in the democratic functioning of the EU, such as a shift from unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council of the European Union (Council).

OVERCOMING UNANIMITY

One of the main objectives for Treaty change is to amend the way the EU makes decisions by shifting from unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council to allow the EU to respond to emerging challenges and for those policy areas to which competences have been conferred by the Treaties to the EU. Unanimity allows a single Member State of the Council to block the EU's ability to deliver in those areas where competence has been conferred upon the EU. For that reason, there can be no further postponement of urgently needed reforms of the way the EU makes decisions. It is time to move away from unanimity to a qualified majority voting (QMV) in matters of foreign and security policy, as well as for those policy areas to which competences have been conferred by the Treaties to the EU.

PROTECTING THE RULE OF LAW

An area that would benefit from switching to QMV is the protection of

the rule of law. The rule of law framework enshrined in [Article 7 TEU](#) enables the EU to suspend certain membership rights if it can be established that there has been “a serious and persistent breach” of the European values listed in [Article 2 TEU](#) by a Member State. As the mechanism requires unanimity in the Council to be triggered, effective action is rendered unattainable due to Member States' vetoes, a serious hindrance that undermines the rule of law when individual Member States dilute, delay, and veto decisions which benefit the EU as a whole.

For this reason, building on the recommendations from the Conference, EU decision-making needs to shift from unanimity to QMV in the Council for the [enforcement of the rule of law framework](#). Shifting from unanimity to QMV in the Council would ensure not only the improvement of the democratic functioning of the EU but it will also help address more effectively violations of the rule of law in Member States.

Moreover, we support the citizens' recommendation to organise annual conferences on the rule of law following the publication of the annual Rule of Law Report and we recommend institutionalising the rule of law dialogue.

ESTABLISHING A FULLY-FLEDGED EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION (EDU)

The ongoing war in Ukraine and the necessity to swiftly react in support for the war effort have shown that the EU needs a fully-fledged European Defence Union. For that to be possible, changes are needed in the decision-making process. As a central recommendation stemming from the outcome of the Conference, Member States must support citizens' call to overcome unanimity and switch to QMV in the areas of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

A more integrated institutional embedding would enable the EU to play a stronger role in the international arena, especially at a moment in which Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues and while China becomes increasingly assertive in their neighbourhood and on the world stage.

A fully-fledged European Defence Union, funded by the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) including through European own resources, should feature integrated armed forces overseen by the European Parliament and the Council and capable of

conducting peacekeeping, humanitarian, and peacebuilding operations globally.

All actions in the area of foreign affairs and security and defence should be co-decided by the European Parliament and the Council by effectively overcoming the veto powers of single Member States.

ENSURING A CREDIBLE ENLARGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as possible future enlargements of the EU are pushing the EU to accelerate this process and put in place institutional reform. Treaty reform is a necessary precondition for a credible enlargement perspective that can enhance the EU's capacity to act more vigorously in the international arena and enhance democratic legitimacy.

Giving the veto power to a larger and larger number of Member States would potentially further hinder decision-making and paralyse progress. For this reason, overcoming unanimity is a crucial step in the right direction for an

enlarged Union by 2030 capable of strategically countering destructive external influences in Europe.

FORMALISING DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Treaty reform needs to go hand in hand with strengthening citizen participation and deliberative democracy. To be active shareholders of the body politic, citizens must feel engaged beyond the ballot box and should be able to participate and influence decision-making and improve democracy. The Conference's transnational citizens' panels not only increased the quality of political decisions but also represented a constructive tool for engagement and the development of a closer dialogue between citizens and political institutions.

We welcome the European Commission's decision to formalise national and European citizens' panels to integrate participatory and deliberative processes as a permanent feature of the EU's democratic life. These panels play a crucial role in improving the democratic functioning of the EU, as well as enhancing legitimacy, trust and accountability of the democratic process. Furthermore, organised civil society should be involved in these deliberative tools as

the main voice promoting civil dialogue, as well as citizens and key stakeholders from candidate countries.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Only by working together can we provide common solutions to the challenges Europe faces and ensure that Europeans' ambitions mirror the future work of the European Union. By bringing our member organisations together in our Political Committees, we continuously develop new policy positions and put existing ones to good use. Please visit our website www.europeanmovement.eu to take a look at our main policy positions that guide our current work and get in touch if you would like to join us or support our work.



**European
Movement
International**

European Movement International

www.europeanmovement.eu

Place du Luxembourg 2

B-1050 Brussels, Belgium

secretariat@europeanmovement.eu



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