



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**Commission for
Citizenship, Governance,
Institutional and External Affairs**

CIVEX

The territorial dimension of the Conference on the Future of Europe and its follow-ups



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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT IDEAS.....	7
2.1 Citizens' information, participation, and youth (proposals 36 and 37).....	9
2.2 Democracy and elections (proposal 38).....	15
2.3 EU decision-making process (proposal 39).....	18
2.4 Subsidiarity (proposal 40).....	20
3. LEGAL AND POLITICAL ASSESSMENT.....	25
3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Legal and political assessment of the proposals.....	30
4. CONCLUSIONS.....	47
5. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51
6. REFERENCES.....	53

1.Introduction

This final report was prepared as part of the project *The territorial dimension of the Conference on the Future of Europe and its follow-ups* commissioned by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) under the specific contract No CDR.13594 implementing multiple framework contract for studies in the fields of constitutional affairs, multilevel governance, and devolution No CDR/TL1/66/2020/1. The main aim of the contract is the preparation of a study presenting the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) which are of relevance for the CoR aligned with three specific objectives set for its participation in the CoFoE (as described in the Terms of Reference of this study), particularly in the framework of strengthening the role of local and regional authorities in European democracy and the functioning of the European Union:

- 1. CoR representatives shall promote the role of European representative democracy at the local and regional level in order to increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU as well as the sense of identity and ownership of the European project for its citizens. CoR representatives will also fight for a strengthening of participative democracy, based on the best practices for permanent consultation mechanisms experienced at the local and regional level (O1);*
- 2. CoR representatives shall promote multilevel governance in the EU: the CoFoE should also lead to increased EU delivery capacity through active subsidiarity and a better involvement of regional and local authorities in the elaboration and implementation of EU legislation and policy processes (O2);*
- 3. CoR representatives should make concrete proposals to address the territorial dimension of European policies in the achievement of the EU's overall cohesion objective (O3).*

This study will also be of use to support the CoR's follow-up to the CoFoE's recommendations concerning European democracy and institutional issues, providing a knowledge-based backup to its legislative and political work, in line with

the recently published Report of the High Level Group on European Democracy¹, a resolution on the contribution of the local and regional authorities to the Conference on the Future of Europe (RESOL-VII/019)², and the Marseille Manifesto of local and regional leaders: “Europe starts in its regions, cities and villages”³. It will also facilitate the gathering and development of the ideas put forward in the CoFoE which might be relevant for cities and regions as well as provide an overview of potential CoR partners and allies.

Hence, the objective of the study is not only to analyse CoFoE outcomes, but also to:

1. Support the CoR’s follow-up to the CoFoE’s recommendations concerning European Democracy and institutional issues, providing a knowledge-based backup to its legislative and political work, and
2. Facilitate the gathering and development of the ideas put forward in the CoFoE that might be relevant for cities and regions and for the CoR as well as provide an overview of potential CoR partners and allies.

The project team kicked off the project by conducting a literature review on topics relevant for this study. The results of this work can be found in the References section. Next, the team mapped and analysed all resources available on the CoFoE website, including the declaration, charter, reporting information, infographics, and audio-visual materials. Finally, the team analysed the 49 proposals adopted, which included 328 concrete measures across 9 themes. The proposals and related measures were based on 178 recommendations from the European Citizens’ Panels (ECPs), input from national panels and events, and 43,734 contributions on 16,274 ideas recorded on the multilingual digital platform⁴. The analysis was primarily focused on the ideas related to European democracy and institutional issues, but where

¹ CoR, *Report of the High-Level Group on European Democracy*, Brussels, 31 January 2022.

² CoR, *Resolution on the contribution of the local and regional authorities to the Conference on the Future of Europe (RESOL-VII/019)*, 148th plenary session, 26-27 January 2022.

³ CoR, *The Marseille Manifesto of local and regional leaders: “Europe starts in its regions, cities and villages”*, 4 March 2022.

⁴ EP, *Treaty review necessary to implement Conference proposals, Parliament declares*, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220429IPR28227/treaty-review-necessary-to-implement-conference-proposals-parliament-declares>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

synergies were identified, ideas related to other themes – i.e., social protection or environmental policies – were also studied.

The CoFoE itself is a long-awaited bottom-up democratic exercise which kicked off on 9 May 2021 after a year-long delay resulting from changing priorities, the inability to organise such a mass-scale procedure during the COVID-19 outbreak, and prolonged inter-institutional disputes⁵. Although the CoFoE is a joint project of the European Parliament (EP), the Council, and the European Commission (EC)⁶, the idea for this process was presented in 2019 by the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and then formally introduced by Ursula von der Leyen in the political guidelines for her mandate as President of the EC⁷. Eventually, on 10 March 2021, the Joint Declaration on the CoFoE was signed by the former EP President David Sassoli, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa on behalf of the Presidency of the EU Council, and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen⁸.

The CoFoE consisted of four components:

1. European Citizens' Panels (ECPs)⁹, where 800 randomly selected citizens representing different genders, ages, views, and socio-economic backgrounds from across the EU discussed different topics and came up with concrete recommendations. There were four ECPs, each meeting three times between September 2021 and February 2022. ECP1 focused on a stronger economy, social justice, jobs, education, culture, sport, and the digital transformation; ECP2 tackled EU democracy, values, rights, rule of law, and security;

⁵ EC Audio-visual Service, *Conference on the Future of Europe*, <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-006565>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

⁶ EC Press corner, *Factsheet - Conference Roll-out*, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_21_1822, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

⁷ Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019-2024, *A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe by candidate for President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

⁸ Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe, *Engaging With Citizens For Democracy – Building A More Resilient Europe*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/en_-_joint_declaration_on_the_conference_on_the_future_of_europe.pdf, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

⁹ CoFoE, *European Citizens' Panels*, <https://futureu.europa.eu/assemblies/citizens-panels>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

ECP3 focused on climate change, the environment, and health; and ECP4 discussed the EU in the world and migration. As this study focuses on European democracy, ECP2 recommendations are of the utmost importance;

2. Conference plenaries, where recommendations from the above-mentioned ECPs and national panels and events were debated, among others, by representatives of the EP, Council, and EC, representatives from national parliaments, 80 representatives from the ECPs, 27 representatives from National Citizens' Panels and conference events (one per Member State), and the President of the European Youth Forum. Additionally, representatives from the CoR, the Economic and Social Committee, local and regional authorities, social partners, and civil society activists took part in these debates¹⁰. Nine thematic working groups were created to prepare inputs to the debates, thus giving voice to ideas others than those mentioned by citizens at the ECPs “within the parameters of the Joint Declaration and the Rules of Procedures”¹¹;
3. A multilingual digital platform serving as a hub and knowledge centre for the entire process. The platform allowed citizens to share ideas and comment on submissions. Each input was translated into all EU languages¹²;
4. National Citizens' Panels and other decentralised events, which took place in-person, online, or in a hybrid manner. These were typically held by civil society organisations as well as national, regional, and local authorities¹³.

¹⁰ CoFoE, *Conference Plenary*, <https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/plenary>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

¹¹ CoFoE, *Working Groups*, <https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/working-groups>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

¹² CoFoE, *What is the Conference on the Future of Europe?*, <https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/about>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

The digital platform as well as the European, national, regional, and local events provided an opportunity for European citizens to share ideas that could be implemented not only by EU and Member State bodies and institutions, but also by local and regional authorities (LRAs) in a bottom-up and inclusive manner. In particular, the ideas addressing European democracy were carefully selected and are synthesised in *Chapter 2*. *Chapter 3* evaluates how the proposals and measures presented in *Chapter 2* could be incorporated into the EU *acquis* and daily decision-making processes as well as if their inclusion would entail treaty changes and if there is the political will for citizen-recommended reforms. *Chapter 4* presents conclusions concerning the CoFoE and the proposals adopted on European democracy. Finally, *Chapter 5* suggests recommendations for follow-up actions for the CoR.

2. Review of relevant ideas

As described in the introductory remarks, this section is inspired by 178 recommendations from the ECPs – especially ECP2, inputs from the national panels and accompanying decentralised workshops, conferences, and seminars, as well as 43,734 contributions on 16,274 ideas recorded on the CoFoE’s multilingual platform¹⁴. These inputs were also important for the actions undertaken by the working group on European democracy, chaired by MEP Manfred Weber (DE/EPP), whose role was to analyse and assess them in relation to the current institutional setup and its eventual reform and then, before the final CoFoE Plenary, prepare concrete proposals and measures to be put to vote. Effectively, this working group’s actions were also analysed while preparing this final report (some working group meetings were recorded and are available on the CoFoE website). It is worth noting that the CoR, represented by four delegates in this working group, had a major role in steering certain discussions – for example, it took the lead on the discussion related to (active) subsidiarity.

Overall, the aim of this section is to present thematically grouped ideas on European democracy developed during the previous year under the umbrella of the CoFoE. This thematic grouping evolved together with the ideas of the CoFoE and now reflects the relevant sections of the adopted proposals. This chapter is broadly divided into four subsections focusing on:

1. Citizens’ information, participation, and youth;
2. Democracy and elections;
3. EU decision-making process;
4. Subsidiarity.

Yet, in some cases, synergies with proposals not directly linked to democracy have been found when analysing the overall outcomes of the CoFoE. Those that tackle issues relevant for LRAs have also been mentioned where needed to showcase the diversity of proposals on which the CoR and the cities and regions from across the EU can build on. The numbering of respective ideas analysed below – numbers in

¹⁴ EP, *Future of Europe: Conference Plenary ambitious proposals point to Treaty review*, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220429IPR28218/future-of-europe-conference-plenary-ambitious-proposals-point-to-treaty-review>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

parentheses – corresponds to the numbering of objectives (proposals) and measures from the CoFoE final report¹⁵.

Concerning the methodology for the preparation of this report, the project team analysed relevant inputs from each of the groups (ECPs, national panels and events, the digital platform, and working group proceedings) and assessed whether they are of relevance for the CoR or LRAs from across the EU. This also facilitated the identification of the proponents of the ideas and objectives set by the CoR for its participation in the CoFoE. Most of all, the concrete measures adopted by the Conference Plenary to strengthen European democracy – measures that build on the above-mentioned inputs from the platform, panels, and different events – are described here as they serve as a starting point for the legal and political assessment presented in the following section.

A thorough quantitative (with regard to the number of ideas addressing democracy) and qualitative analysis of this massive input proved that European democracy is the topic that received the most contributions from citizens active on the CoFoE digital platform and was heavily discussed during the ECP meetings. Concerning the recommendations from the National Citizens' Panels and events, one might conclude that democracy was a strong interest for citizens in only a few EU Member States. A detailed examination of all the reports, memos, and audio visual materials summarising the effects and discoveries of the national endeavours available on the CoFoE website¹⁶ proves that especially Belgian, Danish, Dutch, French, and Italian citizens have strong ideas on how to improve the EU democratic deficit and backsliding. This might result from the fact that in each of these countries, the CoFoE's national dimension was significant, with a well-planned vision for a broad and inclusive national debate where LRAs, civil society, and other non-governmental actors play a central role. Furthermore, the role of LRAs was oftentimes mentioned in the proceedings of the ECPs and by platform users, which is reflected in the final outcomes published on 9 May 2022 tackling a wide array of issues including: agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, and pollution (proposal 2); climate change, energy, and transport (proposal 3); sustainable growth and innovation (proposal 11); enhancing the EU's competitiveness and further deepening the Single Market (proposal 12); inclusive labour markets (proposal 14); transparency of the EU and its relations with the citizens (proposal 22); safe and trustworthy digital society – cyber security and disinformation (proposal 33);

¹⁵ CoFoE, *Report on the Final Outcome*, May 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf>

¹⁶ CoFoE, *National Panels and events*, <https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/ms-section>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

irregular migration (proposal 43 bis); asylum and integration (proposal 45 bis); education (proposal 46); European youth issues (proposal 47); culture and exchanges (proposal 48); and sport (proposal 49).

2.1 Citizens’ information, participation, and youth (proposals 36 and 37)

Most recommendations on strengthening EU democracy focused on access to information and an independent media, ensuring higher rates of participation in EU decision-making and the educational tools and practices that would push European youth toward being more informed and engaged. Such recommendations were popular among digital platform users as well as the participants of the National and European Citizens’ Panels. Depending on the objective agreed upon (see below), some measures approved by the Conference Plenary are more of a ready-made solution that EU bodies can quickly use in the CoFoE follow-up. The measures presented below meet two objectives:

1. They are linked to European democracy, and
2. They are relevant for the CoR and LRAs given the three objectives set at the beginning of the CoFoE (see Introduction and Chapter 3).

The objective of proposal 36 (“*increase citizens’ participation and youth involvement in democracy at the EU level to develop a ‘full civic experience’ for Europeans, ensure that their voice is heard also in between elections, and that the participation is effective*”) – has been backed by numerous inputs, especially from the CoFoE multilingual platform where citizens from across the continent emphasised the need to develop [innovative means to ensure political participation](#). A few individual contributors as well as some institutional users, including [Eurocities](#), [Europa-Union Deutschland](#), and [EZA - European Centre for Workers’ Questions](#), introduced ideas spanning from launching a “direct settlement between the Commission and the municipalities of EU funding” to introducing a new format of political and cultural set-up aimed at empowering citizens. In late April 2021, the [EUMANS Movement](#) came up with a concrete measure on how to ensure the steady flow of information developed under the umbrella of the CoFoE by directly targeting each and every European through direct mail as well as by identifying possibilities to involve advocates of the European Citizens’ Initiatives in Citizen Panels and other citizen-centred initiatives related to the CoFoE; inviting the municipalities and regions of Europe to create information points (online and offline) with reference to the right of citizens to sign the ongoing European Citizens’ Initiatives; and inviting

Member States to create information points (online and offline) with reference to the right of citizens to sign the ongoing European Citizens' Initiatives. Others – such as [Citizens Takeover Europe](#) and [Fondazione Antonio Megalizzi](#) – went even further and introduced measures that, along these lines, could either help in fostering European identity or protect the fundamental rights of a free press and access to information by developing a common European Democracy Reporting Service.

Building on these examples, the members of the Conference Plenary agreed on eight specific measures aimed at increasing citizens' participation and youth involvement:

1. *Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens' participation mechanisms, in line with EU acquis, by better informing on them. Ideally, all the information about the participatory spaces should be summarised in an integrated official website with different features. A mechanism should be devised to monitor policy and legislative initiatives which have emerged from participatory democracy processes; Participatory mechanisms should be inclusive and their communication able to reach a diverse public. Attention should be paid to content material, topics, and moderators' skills. They should include an analysis on the impact of the policies discussed on, inter alia, women and vulnerable persons (36.1).* Although this specific measure was discussed heavily during working group meetings with CoR representatives, and is generally in line with its objectives, the CoR's proposal to add "place-based" to the participation mechanism was not taken up, which makes this idea's territorial impact slightly weaker than it could have been. Measures 36.4 and 36.5 partly balance this discrepancy.
2. *Increasing the frequency of online and offline interactions between EU institutions and its citizens through different means of interaction in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policymaking process to voice their opinions and to get feedback and creating a charter for EU officials on citizens' participation (36.2).* This measure is inspired by ECP2 Recommendation 29 to: "1) to increase the frequency of online and offline interactions between the EU and its citizens (i.e., by asking citizens directly about EU matters

and by creating a user-friendly platform to ensure that every citizen can interact with EU institutions and EU officials) and 2) in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policymaking process, to voice their opinions and to get feedback, we recommend to create a charter or a code of conduct or guidelines for EU officials. Different means of interactions should exist so that every citizen can participate”. Although there are no KPIs with regard to the expected frequency of such interactions, the measure seems to satisfy all parties involved as no disputes have been recorded during the process of drafting.

3. *Improving and streamlining existing mechanisms at the European, national, and local level to make them more secure, accessible, visible, and inclusive (36.4).* This measure builds on an idea from the Belgian National Panel suggesting “places where citizens can express their opinions, in the form of ‘Europe Houses’ that can help spread citizens’ views at the European level, should exist at different locations across the EU”. The slightly more radical proposal of Belgian citizens recommending that “local authorities or libraries, which are independent of government, could be involved in the dissemination of initiatives and the collection of signatures, both electronically and on paper. The EU should draw up an inventory of this network per country and make it available to the citizens starting the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)” was not considered in detail by the working group and was omitted in the final proposal.
4. *Include organised civil society and regional and local authorities and existing structures, such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the CoR, in the citizens’ participation process (36.5).* This is another measure directly stemming from the Belgian National Panel which, as described above, partially balances the lack of reference to the territorial dimension in 36.1.
5. *Create a system of local EU Councillors as a way to reduce the distance between EU institutions and European citizens (36.6).* This

measure might have been drawn from a recommendation from the Final Kantar Report (p. 85), but most importantly it builds on the CoR initiative of a network of EU Councillors¹⁷ and respective, supporting idea published by the CoR itself on the platform in late December 2021.

6. *Holding citizens' assemblies periodically on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be incentivised. If needed, there will be the support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the institutions, this should be duly justified. Participation and the prior involvement of citizens and civil society is an important basis for political decisions to be taken by elected representatives. The EU is founded on representative democracy: with European elections, citizens give a clear mandate to their representatives and indirectly express themselves on EU policies (36.7).* This measure has been in fact inspired by both the Belgian National Panel as well as ECP2 Recommendation 39, which was even more far-reaching than the adopted measure. The latter gave a timeframe of “every 12-18 months” and opted for making such assemblies legally binding; hence, one might expect that there was an opposition making such deadlines mandatory.

7. *Provide enhanced structural support, financial and otherwise, for civil society, especially for youth civil society, and support local authorities in setting up local youth councils; this could be achieved through a specific pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan for involvement of civil society and social partners and a dedicated civil society strategy (36.8).* This measure reflects the goals of the

¹⁷ CoR, *European Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors*, <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/Network-of-Regional-and-Local-EU-Councillors.aspx>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

CoR's Young Elected Politicians Programme¹⁸ as well as recommendations from the Danish National Panel.

8. *Introduce a “youth-check” of legislation, including both an impact assessment and a consultation mechanism with representatives of young people, when legislation is deemed to have an impact on young people (36.9).* As in the case of the previous measure, this one reflects the ideas of the Danish citizens participating in the national events. Furthermore, it can also be linked with youth-specific measures related to proposal 47, especially:

- *Offer young people more possibilities and champion existing programmes for participation and representation in the democratic and decision-making processes at all levels, including by also organising citizens’ panels with children (e.g., 10-16 years old) in schools. European representatives could meet schoolchildren in their schools in order to strengthen citizens’ closeness to and understanding of Europe from an early age. To ensure that all policymaking at the EU level is seen through a youth lens, an EU ‘Youth Test’ should be developed so that all new legislation and policy is subject to a youth-focused impact assessment, including a consultation with young people (47.1).* This measure, although greatly discussed during working group meetings, directly reflects Belgian (recommendation 6.1) and French NCPs;
- *More significant EU financing under NextGenerationEU should also be devoted to the implementation of the reinforced European Youth Guarantee, including more commitment, better outreach, and improvements in the quality of the offer, funding, and action by all Member States and the relevant levels of authorities involved. Given youth organisations’ expertise in the needs of*

¹⁸ CoR, *Young Elected Politicians Programme*, <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/Yeps.aspx>, accessed online on 8 June 2022.

young people, national governments should collaborate in close dialogue with these organisations to ensure the most effective delivery of the Guarantee (47.4).

The second proposal (37) that refers to citizen information and stronger participation is focused on “making the European Union more understandable and accessible” and “strengthening a common European identity”. Two specific measures have been proposed to achieve this objective:

9. *Guaranteeing a minimum level of education in the EU and especially its democratic processes, including the history of European integration and European citizenship. People of all ages should be able to benefit from such programmes, which should be designed in an engaging and age-appropriate manner, for instance through the development of specific programmes and educational material for children and schools and civil society organisations active in the field of non-formal education (37.1).* This measure once again builds on Belgian citizen recommendations from their National Panels, but it also stems from ECP2 Recommendations 24, 36, and 38. Although the latter might be considered more far-reaching as they predicted the introduction of some certifiable standards for EU integration curricula, the overall sense and meaning of the adopted measure has remained the same;

10. *Bringing Europe closer to citizens by improving contact points and dedicated hubs, or “Houses of Europe”, at the local level to provide resources, information, and advice to citizens on EU matters, as well as listen to their concerns and engage in debates with associations to help spread citizens’ views at the European level (37.5).* This last measure focusing on stronger participation reflects the recommendations from Belgian and French National Panels as well as the CoR’s own postulates expressed, among others, via the publication of a relevant idea on the platform in [early March 2022](#).

2.2 Democracy and elections (proposal 38)

While discussing democracy and elections, the working group members agreed that it is necessary to strengthen European democracy among others “by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in EP elections, fostering transnational debate on European issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives”. Yet, some changes in the actual solution were introduced to strengthen “links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens’ desire to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments”. The CoR had hoped for the introduction of a proposal stating that the composition of the “EP should respect the principle of territorial representation and electoral topics should touch on the regional and local dimension of EU policies” which did not attract consensus among other working group members. Effectively, this subchapter might not directly mention the CoR or LRAs; however, given their invaluable role in the promotion and organisation of elections, they could not be omitted here. Especially given the number (four) of sub-measures introduced to ensure a stronger democratic uptake in the first of two concrete measures related to this proposal. As in the previous case, these two measures have been selected as they are both linked to European democracy and are of special interest for the CoR and/or cities and regions.

1. *Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens’ desires to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments. This is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged (38.4).* Concerning this measure, ECP2 Recommendation 36 is a direct inspiration, and so are the National Panels from Belgium and France. Yet, the ideas on how to achieve this measure varied significantly during the working group discussions. The exact four sub-measures that emerged thereof are the following:
 - *European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the Commission. This could be achieved either by the direct election of the Commission President or a lead candidate*

system (38.4a). This sub-measure, directly stemming from the conclusions of the French National Panel, has proved to be a controversial one. As a result, the EP decided to add a note in the document with all the proposals and measures stating that “the lead candidate of the European political party that has obtained the highest share of votes at European elections, who is able to be supported by a majority of European Parliament’s Members, shall be elected President of the European Commission. In case a coalition majority cannot be reached, the task should be assigned to the next lead candidate. To this end, European political parties may nominate candidates to run for the Commission President’s post”. Yet, one should remember, that the topic gained a lot of attention on the CoFoE Platform, too. [Individual contributors](#) as well as one institution ([LYMEC](#)) proposed some concrete ideas related to a direct – by a majority in the EP and with approval from the Council – election of the EC President, but they might have been too far-reaching to ensure a consensus during working group meetings.

- *The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative in order to propose the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations (38.4b)*. This is another sub-measure stemming from the conclusions of the Belgian National Panel as well as some inputs from the platform, especially with regard to the introduction of a true European federation – “the EP should become the primary legislative chamber of the EU representing European citizens, enjoying full law-making and budgetary powers in all areas along with the right to propose new legislation and fully elect the European Commission’s head” by a [single EU citizen](#).
- *European Parliament should decide on the budget of the EU as it is the right of parliaments at the national level (38.4c)*. This sub-measure also builds on recommendations published on the platform, especially the one tackling “A more democratic & effective EU:

Stronger European Parliament” prepared by [a European citizen](#) and mentioned also with regard to measure 38.4b. Yet, the adopted version is not as far-reaching as the original proposal from the platform under which the EP would become “the primary legislative chamber of the EU representing European citizens, enjoying full law-making and budgetary powers in all areas”. And most importantly, it would also have the right “to fully elect the European Commission’s head”.

- *Political parties, civil society organisations, and trade unions should be livelier and more accessible in order for citizens to be more involved and engaged in European democracy. This would also contribute to stimulate the inclusion of EU topics in public debates via political parties, organised civil society, and social partners, not only during European elections but ahead of national, regional, and local elections as well (38.4d).* This is a sub-measure for which the CoR strongly advocated and managed to attract enough interest to get this idea approved.
2. *Democracy is embodied in institutions and in society at large, including in the workplace through the role of social partners (38.5).* This second measure related to democracy and elections proved to be a very controversial one during working group discussions. Yet, a consensus was eventually reached and the measure was approved by the Conference Plenary on 30 April.

2.3 EU decision-making process (proposal 39)

Decision-making processes relevant from the perspective of the CoR and LRAs have also attracted significant attention from all citizens engaged in the formulation of ideas turned into concrete proposals and measures. The overall objective of the debaters in this respect was to: “improve the EU’s decision-making process and ensure the EU’s capability to act, while taking into account the interests of all MS and guaranteeing a transparent and understandable process for the citizens”. The working group focused on European democracy also agreed that:

1. *Ensuring the transparency of decision-making by allowing independent citizen observers to closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing the broader right of access to documents, and developing on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and EU institutions (39.2).* However, the original idea that served as a starting point (ECP2 Recommendation 34) was even more ambitious as it introduced a “permanent body of citizen representatives in order to carry out the function of broadcasting relevant and important information to all EU citizens (...)”.

Two sub-measures to make the EU decision-making process more efficient were identified:

- *The EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process and institutions. For instance, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament, including its votes, should be broadcasted online in the same way. This would allow interested citizens to follow EU policymaking and hold politicians and policymakers accountable; the European Parliament’s right of inquiry should be strengthened (39.2a).* This sub-measure reflects the conclusions from the Dutch National Citizens’ Panel summary report. It also introduces what was agreed as part of the already discussed ECP2 Recommendation 34, but again, in a less specific and less advanced way, as instead of the provision of new permanent bodies, it only introduces the need for the systematic broadcasting of debates and voting procedures.

- *The EU decision-making process should be further developed so that national, regional, and local representatives; social partners; and organised civil society are more involved. Inter-parliamentary cooperation and dialogue should be strengthened. National parliaments should also be closer involved in the legislative procedure by the EP, e.g., by way of participation in hearings. In addition, a better involvement of the sub-national level and of the CoR helps to take better into account the experiences gained with the implementation of EU law (39.2b). This sub-measure was developed thanks to the CoR's strong engagement as leader of the debate. Furthermore, in its advocacy endeavours, the CoR was supported by representatives from national parliaments. Similar calls to action were also identified in other proposals, including 3.1; 6.3; 10.2; and 11.3, among others.*

2.4 Subsidiarity (proposal 40)

Subsidiarity – one of the key EU principles regulating the exercise of powers – was not discussed during the ECPs or national panels. Yet, this EU-specific rule aiming to set actions taken by various institutions within specified bounds proved important for platform users. Some individual contributors, especially from Italy, France, and Sweden raised preliminary solutions on how subsidiarity could be ensured. For example, a [proposal](#) to “strengthen the role of the EP, as guarantor of the principle, by organising, through local surveys conducted by parliamentarians, a regular audit of the relevance of legislation in the most sensitive areas such as the environment or transport” was suggested to “increase the EU’s legislative capacity in case of blocking by a minority by facilitating decision-making in the context of variable geometry (enhanced cooperation). To increase the role of the social partners by allowing social agreements (...)”. Although it has not been directly reflected in the working group proposal, a strong focus on the role of parliaments was identified and agreed upon in the final version of the document put to vote. Similarly, in their inputs on the CoFoE Platform, some organisations emphasised the importance of subsidiarity – [RLEG](#) – a network of governments of regions and autonomies with legislative powers from across the EU, [ZEI Center for European Integration Studies](#), and [LYMEC](#) were among them. The input from LYMEC – an international organisation of liberal youth movements – is especially worth showcasing as it proves that EU youth have a stance on the intra-EU exercise of powers. LYMEC members suggested that “subsidiarity and the proximity to citizens should be central in all EU decisions. This means that decisions should be made as close to citizens as possible, and decisions should be made at the lowest possible political level. However, this must be balanced with the responsibility the MS owe to each other as members of the same union” and although not directly, this suggestion was incorporated in the actual proposal put to vote.

The CoR itself has also made significant efforts to ensure due consideration to the principle of subsidiarity in the final proposal voted on during the Conference Plenary. First, the CoR published a selection of its recommendations including justifications on the CoFoE multilingual platform to attract a larger audience. Furthermore, in late January 2022, the CoR adopted a resolution on the contribution of local and regional authorities to the Conference on the Future of Europe (RESOL-VII/019)¹⁹, which clearly emphasises that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are necessary to ensure effective and efficient decision-making reflecting the real needs

¹⁹ CoR, *Resolution on the contribution of the local and regional authorities to the Conference on the Future of Europe (RESOL-VII/019)*, 148th plenary session, 26-27 January 2022.

of EU citizens. Some other suggestions and recommendations from the resolution include, among other:

- The CoR's gradual upgrade from an advisory body to a co-deciding body of the European Union on key policies areas with territorial impact and ensuring access to trilogues and related documents, provided that it has delivered an opinion on the proposal in question under Article 307 TFEU; and
- Demands that the CoR is given the ability to propose compromises to the co-legislators.

Together with suggestions from the resolution, during the 9th European Summit of Regions and Cities in Marseille on 3-4 March, the CoR presented its final contributions to the CoFoE. The document approved there – the Marseille Manifesto of local and regional leaders: “Europe starts in its regions, cities and villages” – once again underlined the need for reinforcement of the principle of subsidiarity²⁰.

In the end, building on the CoR's practical experiences as well as on its inputs to the platform and working group discussions, six specific measures related to the principle of subsidiarity were adopted. All six of them are of relevance for the CoR and LRAs across the EU and hence are described below:

- 1. Active subsidiarity and multilevel governance are key principles and fundamental features of EU functioning and democratic accountability (40.1).*
- 2. The EU should review the mechanism allowing national Parliaments to assess whether new legislative proposals at the European level do not intrude on their legal competences. Parliaments should be granted the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European level. Such mechanisms should also be enlarged to all regional parliaments within the EU that have legislative power (40.2).*

²⁰ CoR, *The Marseille Manifesto of local and regional leaders: “Europe starts in its regions, cities and villages”*, 4 March 2022.

3. *Reform the CoR to encompass adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role in the institutional architecture if matters with a territorial impact are concerned (40.3).*
4. *The systematic use of a subsidiarity definition commonly agreed by all EU institutions could help to clarify whether decisions have to be taken at a European, national, or regional level (40.4).*
5. *Social partners and organised civil society should be better included in the decision-making process given their importance in European democratic life. A lively society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union (40.5).* This measure proved important to social partners and several other members participating in the working group on democracy, but similar calls to action were also expressed in other measures, for example:
 - *With regard to equal access to health for all: *Recognising the need to take full account of the principle of subsidiarity and the key role of local, regional, and national players in health matters [NL3], ensure there is the ability to act at the EU level when the right to health is best addressed there. To allow faster and stronger decision-making on key subjects and to improve the effectiveness of European governance towards the development of the European Health Union (such as, for example, in the event of a pandemic or for rare diseases) [#49, FR wish11, Digital Platform] (10.2);**
 - *With regard to inclusive labour markets (proposal 13):
Objective: We propose to improve the functioning of labour markets so that they ensure fairer working conditions and promote gender equality, employment, including that of young people and vulnerable groups. The EU, Member States, and social partners need to work to end in-work poverty, address the rights of platform workers, ban un-paid internships, and ensure fair labour mobility in the EU. We must promote social dialogue*

and collective bargaining. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at the EU, national, regional, and local level in the areas of “equal opportunities and access to the labour market” and “fair working conditions”, while respecting competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. While doing so, there should be respect for national traditions and the autonomy of social partners as well as cooperation with civil society; and

- Additionally with regard to inclusive labour markets (proposal 14):

-

Objective: We propose to reduce inequalities, fight social exclusion, and tackle poverty. We need to put in place a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy that could include, among others, a reinforced Child Guarantee and Youth Guarantee, the introduction of minimum wages, a common EU framework for minimum income schemes. and decent social housing. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at the EU, national, regional, and local level in the area of “social protection and inclusion” with due regard for respective competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties.

6. *We call on European Union institutions to make the conclusions of this working group a reality and effectively implement them. This could be realised through the possibilities the Lisbon Treaty already provides and, when necessary, by triggering the request of launching a European Convention (40.6).*

The adopted measures tackling European democracy cover multiple angles of the EU decision-making process and organisational setup as a whole and they clearly show citizens' interest in the topic. While they should not be considered ready-made solutions to the EU's democratic deficit and backsliding, they identify the priorities of the citizens that should quickly be analysed and developed further. Their success or failure will depend on how and when they will be translated into actionable proposals by the local, regional, national, and EU authorities.

3. Legal and political assessment

3.1 Introduction

Although the timing of the proposal to organise the CoFoE, made in late 2019, seemed favourable – at the time, the EU had managed to stabilise the economic situation after the financial crisis and an agreement with Turkey allowed the influx of migrants to the continent to be stemmed – a new important challenge emerged: the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic²¹. This resulted in the EU moving toward common debt, increased financial transfers, and loosened fiscal rules, among other factors influencing the Union’s economic outlook²². In addition to this, a new external challenge emerged in the final period of the CoFoE – on 24 February 2022, Russia launched an unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, beginning a war against this country.

Consequently, when the CoFoE ended on 9 May 2022, a war was being fought at the gates of the EU. The attention of EU leaders and the leaders of its Member States was directed to the EU’s eastern neighbourhood, primarily towards supporting Ukraine and weakening Russia. Since Russia’s recognition on 21 February 2022 of rebel-controlled areas in Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions and since its aggression against Ukraine commenced on 24 February 2022, the EU has imposed a series of sanctions against Russia (five sanction packages through the end of the CoFoE, precisely)²³. These circumstances have prompted some moves toward common energy procurement in the EU and a more security-oriented Union.

This trend, coupled with the current economic problems faced by EU countries after the coronavirus pandemic, may weaken the political will to implement the solutions developed during the CoFoE. As security-related issues are traditionally prerogatives of central governments, calls by the leaders of the EU and its Member States for unity

²¹ L. Cooper, R. Dunin-Wąsowicz, M. Kaldor, N. Milanese, I. Rangelov, *The Rise of Insurgent Europeanism. Mapping Civil Society Visions of Europe 2018-2020*, LSE Ideas, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/114525/1/Cooper_the_rise_of_insurgent_europeanism_published.pdf; M. Szczepanik, J. Szymańska, *Czy UE potrzebuje zmiany traktatów?*, „Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny”, 81/2020, p. 85–94.

²² R. Youngs, *EU Democracy after the Conference on the Future of Europe*, May 12, 2022, Carnegie Europe, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/05/12/eu-democracy-after-conference-on-future-of-europe-pub-87110>.

²³ For more information on sanctions, please visit: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/eu-solidarity-ukraine/eu-sanctions-against-russia-following-invasion-ukraine_en.

towards Russia²⁴ might affect the willingness of some EU Member States (where the central government has been seeking to consolidate more power at the top level of governance, e.g., in Poland or Hungary) to share or delegate more powers to LRAs. Moreover, the changed security situation in the EU's immediate neighbourhood may weaken the importance the CoFoE process for setting long-term goals and scenarios for the Union. On 9 May 2022, during the closing ceremony of the CoFoE at the European Parliament, EC President Ursula von der Leyen put her support behind efforts to re-think the practice of needing a unanimous vote to pass measures in the EU²⁵, sending a strong signal of supporting the EU treaty change and strengthening EU institutions. At the same time, French President Emmanuel Macron called for setting up a "European political community" which would entail such features as: political coordination, elements of collective security, elements of energy cooperation, better infrastructural integration of the regions which form the "European political community", and the movement of persons²⁶. The treaty change idea, however, was immediately pushed back by thirteen EU Member States, calling it "unconsidered and premature"²⁷. On the opposite side, another group of EU Member States²⁸ published a non-paper on implementing the CoFoE proposals in which they confirmed their openness to necessary treaty changes jointly defined during the CoFoE process. The follow-up to the CoFoE might thus be (again) hampered by countering interests and opinions of EU politicians and EU Member States' heads on the vision of the future of the Union.

The CoFoE has, however, developed certain recommendations directly and indirectly relating to LRAs and their role in EU decision- and policymaking. The analysis presented in this report confirms that the CoFoE highlighted the old divisions between supporters and sceptics of deeper EU integration in specific areas,

²⁴ See for example: M. Rasad, *Europe signals unity against Russian gas payment demands*, Reuters, April 1, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/gas-still-flows-europe-buyers-navigate-putins-rouble-order-2022-04-01/>; F. Simon, *Von der Leyen defies Russia's gas 'blackmail', vows EU unity with Poland and Bulgaria*, EURACTIV, April 28, 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/von-der-leyen-defies-russias-gas-blackmail-vows-eu-unity-with-poland-and-bulgaria/>; D. Tilles, *International donors' conference in Warsaw raises €7 billion for Ukraine*, Notes from Poland, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/05/05/international-donors-conference-in-warsaw-raises-e7-billion-for-ukraine/>.

²⁵ *EU leaders tell Ukraine: 'Future of Europe is also your future'*, DW, May 9, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-leaders-tell-ukraine-future-of-europe-is-also-your-future/a-61730465>.

²⁶ For more on President Macron's understanding of the "European political community" notion, please see: <https://uk.ambafrance.org/President-Macron-explains-proposal-for-a-European-political-community>.

²⁷ Ibidem. The EU Member States opposing the idea of treaty revision were: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Sweden. Their non-paper was published on 9 May, 2022.

²⁸ Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain. The non-paper was published on 13 May, 2022.

including the role of LRAs. Those in favour of deeper integration advocated reforms aimed at simplifying the EU institutional system, increasing its efficiency, and ensuring a wider impact of citizens on EU decisions. This includes proposals such as, *inter alia*: increasing the frequency of interactions between EU institutions and its citizens or holding periodic citizen assemblies. Sceptics of deeper EU integration, on the other hand, have put forward ideas which would have the effect of weakening the power of EU institutions, including those related to increasing the competences of national parliaments and strengthening the intergovernmental dimension of the EU in general; the focus was put rather on the top level of governance. This division is naturally related to the issue of the vertical and horizontal division of powers within the EU and their interrelations²⁹. It also relates to the EU's long-standing "democratic malaise" of the democratic deficit and its weak connection to citizens³⁰. According to many EU scholars, observers, and politicians, in order to treat this "democratic malaise", the Union must institutionalise supranational, participative, and deliberative democratic channels to complement representative democracy³¹. This is also called for by some of the proposals analysed within this project, involving the level of LRAs who would act as bearers of citizens' voices. Proposals involving LRAs and CoR representatives in the EU decision-making process or making active subsidiarity and multilevel governance key principles and fundamental features of EU functioning and democratic accountability are in line with this notion. At the same time, they advocate for more control over EU institutions and more power for the local and regional levels of governance.

Delegating more power to local and regional levels, in turn, directs the attention again to the issue of (de)centralisation. The optimal degree of decentralisation and centralisation in decision-making is often associated with the principle of subsidiarity, which is regarded as a cornerstone of the functioning of the EU. Introduced in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty and currently enshrined in Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), it was intended to support the creation of the Single Market, to democratise competences between EU institutions and Member States, and to ensure that decisions are taken as closely to citizens as possible. Nowadays, however, subsidiarity is rather associated with issues concerning the

²⁹ A. Benz, *Federal democracy, distributive justice and the future of Europe*, "European Law Journal", 2021, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/eulj.12390>.

³⁰ A. Alemanno, *Unboxing the Conference on the Future of Europe and its democratic raison d'être*, "European Law Journal", 2020, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/eulj.12413?casa_token=aZymZDX1JB4AAAAA:n7IYAdOhBy5OoFP5IHMiGQDyAuOv32HFFAcFHAQ9TX1gvTfOXYZQDWuHiYQMz1_fja7kluLoIRtpLA.

³¹ See for example: A. Benz, *ibidem*.

deepening of European integration and growing doubts about the democratic legitimacy and understanding of centralisation in the EU³².

After two decades of discussions on the notion of subsidiarity – conducted also within the Task force on subsidiarity, proportionality, and doing less more efficiently established in 2017³³ – the concept of “active subsidiarity” emerged, meaning a continuous multilevel engagement throughout the entire policy cycle; a process of “due diligence” whereby subsidiarity meets multilevel governance³⁴. The CoFoE proposals call for active subsidiarity to become “one of key principles and fundamental features for the EU functioning and democratic accountability”. In addition to that, they call for the “systematic use of a subsidiarity definition commonly agreed by all EU institutions” which would help to clarify on what level of governance decisions should take place. Efforts to develop and use a commonly agreed definition of subsidiarity are worth undertaking as such a definition would add more clarity in communication and enhance a common understanding between EU institutions. However, it must be taken into account that in practice a common definition might be difficult to apply. This is due to the fact that local and regional communities have different roles and powers in the administrative systems in their countries. The question is how to reconcile potential particularisms arising from the specificities of the Member States. On the one hand, there are strong sub-national actors (e.g., in federal states), which have considerable competences not only in national but also in EU politics (e.g., in Germany, Austria, or Belgium), and on the other hand, there are sub-national actors which do not have much weight in national politics and even less in European politics (especially unitary states, e.g., France and Greece). This would have to be considered when working on the operationalisation of ideas voiced during the CoFoE. The CoR might play an important role here as a valuable source of information on local and regional competences as exercised in EU Member States (in terms of both law and practice) and should be actively involved in the process of the development of a common subsidiary definition. Its role should not be limited to an information provider or a consultant; the CoR may also be involved in feasibility checks to adequately address the above-mentioned issue of the differing roles and powers in local and regional communities.

³² K. Tomaszewski, *Solidarność i subsydiarność – wartości ustrojowe UE. W poszukiwaniu remedium na współczesny kryzys procesu integracji europejskiej*, “Przegląd Sejmowy”, nr 1(156)/2020, p. 171-184.

³³ For more information on the task force please visit: https://ec.europa.eu/info/better-regulation/task-force-subsidiarity-proportionality-and-doing-less-more-efficiently_en.

³⁴ M. Schneider, *Europe must deliver the level closest to the citizens. Subsidiarity: Past, present and future*, “European View”, Vol. 18, issue 1, p. 16-25, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1781685819844466>.

Further, the CoFoE proposals that are interesting from the perspective of this study also relate to the issue of direct democracy and civil society building. In the current legal state of affairs in the functioning of the EU political system, the following forms of applying the principles of direct democracy can be distinguished: referendums on the EU held in Member States and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)³⁵. The practical application of the provisions relating to the ECI shows the ineffectiveness of this instrument, with the reasons for the failure of most initiatives being systemic in nature. The efficient use of the instruments of direct democracy depends, to a large extent, on the existence of civil society. The question of whether there is a Europe-wide civil society is still open. However, the proposed initiatives which involve citizens at the local level can be seen as valuable in the context of building such a society as they promote citizens' activity and the ability to self-organise and act independently of state institutions. LRAs, as the institutions closest to citizens, have an important role to play here as they might provide support to civil society at the lowest possible level of governance and communicate with citizens without intermediaries.

The European Parliament, Commission, and Council are now key players in deciding how to follow up on the CoFoE recommendations. The Parliament has already announced in a resolution on 2nd May 2022 its request to activate a treaty revision procedure, possibly including institutional reforms and the extension of the EU's competences in issues such as health care and external and fiscal policy. The EC's president Ursula von der Leyen announced the presentation of new initiatives implementing citizens' proposals at the annual State of the Union address (September 2022).

The CoFoE conclusions were supported by five political groups in the EP (i.e., the European People's Party [Christian Democrats], the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, Renew Europe, the Greens/European Free Alliance, and the Left in the European Parliament – GUE/NGL) which control three-quarters of the seats. The conclusions were rejected by Identity and Democracy (who argued that the CoFoE final proposals did not reflect public opinion in the EU) and the European Conservatives and Reformists (who eventually left the conference)³⁶.

³⁵ More on the ECI can be found here: <https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/en>.

³⁶ M. Szczepanik, Conference on the Future of Europe: Conclusions and Prospects for Implementation, 26.05.2022, PISM, <https://pism.pl/publications/conference-on-the-future-of-europe-conclusions-and-prospects-for-implementation>.

3.2 Legal and political assessment of the proposals

The proposals analysed entail, to varying degrees, the need for changes in the legal system of the European Union and in particular in the Treaties and the Protocol (No 2) on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality. In the following sub-section, these proposals are individually evaluated in terms of required legal changes and political feasibility³⁷. In addition, the proposals have been assessed against three objectives of the Committee of the Regions, namely:

- 1. CoR representatives shall promote the role of the European representative democracy at the local and regional level in order to increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU as well as the sense of identity and ownership of the European project for its citizens. CoR representatives will also fight for a strengthening of participative democracy based on the best practices for permanent consultation mechanisms experienced at the local and regional level (O1);**
- 2. CoR representatives shall promote multilevel governance in the EU: the CoFoE should also lead to increased EU delivery capacity through active subsidiarity and a better involvement of local and regional authorities in the elaboration and implementation of EU legislation and policy processes (O2);**
- 3. CoR representatives should make concrete proposals to address the territorial dimension of European policies in the achievement of the EU's overall cohesion objective (O3).**

A summary of the legal assessment of the proposed developments is provided in the table below. The structure of the table was prepared by the Committee of the Regions and includes three different aspects of the territorial dimension of European democracy/the role of the CoR distinguished by the CoR as well as the context of the different extents of EU Treaties' changes.

The latter is assessed based on (1) the significance of the institution in question whose treaty regulation must change, (2) the significance of the competences being

³⁷ Four considerations were taken into account while assessing political feasibility: 1) political will from other actors; 2) financial constrains; 3) logistical and human constrains; 4) strategic and approach considerations.

changed/added, and (3) the legal nature of the changes (e.g., whether they would be amendments, i.e., changes in a provision already present in a treaty or additions, i.e., adding new provisions without the need to change existing ones).

Since the proposals are general and vague in nature, the assessment often considers different possible scenarios concerning the implementation of the proposals which entail greater or lesser legal (or political) consequences (which is also reflected in the table).

Table 1. Aspects of the territorial dimension of European democracy/the role of the CoR and possible reforms happening in the context of different extents of EU Treaties' changes

	No Treaty Change	Minor Treaty Change	Major Treaty Change
Ensuring vibrant democratisation and citizens' engagement	<p>Improving the transparency and reach of the citizens and communicating and consulting better with them (22, relevant for CoR O1)</p> <p>Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens' participation mechanisms (36.1, relevant for CoR O1) <i>(or minor)</i></p> <p>Increasing the frequency of interactions between EU institutions and its citizens (36.2,</p>	<p>Holding citizens' assemblies periodically (36.7, relevant for CoR O1) <i>(or major)</i></p> <p>Introducing a youth check of legislation (36.9, relevant for CoR O1)</p>	<p>Guaranteeing a minimum level of education in the EU and its democratic processes (37.1, relevant for CoR O1) <i>(or no)</i></p> <p>Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives (38.4, relevant for CoR O1)</p>

	No Treaty Change	Minor Treaty Change	Major Treaty Change
	<p>relevant for CoR O1)</p> <p>Improving existing democratic mechanisms (36.4, relevant for CoR O1) (<i>or minor</i>)</p> <p>Creating a system of local EU Councillors (36.6, relevant for CoR O2)</p> <p>Providing support for civil society (36.8, relevant for CoR O1)</p> <p>Setting up local youth councils (36.8, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or minor</i>)</p> <p>Bringing Europe closer to citizens (37.5, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or minor</i>)</p>		
Developing the policy influence of LRAs in the EU agenda	<p>Increasing the involvement of national, regional, and local representatives, social partners,</p>	<p>Adopting active subsidiarity and multilevel governance as key principles</p>	

	No Treaty Change	Minor Treaty Change	Major Treaty Change
	and organised civil society in the EU decision-making process (39.2, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or minor</i>)	(40.1, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or no</i>) Reviewing the subsidiarity mechanism (40.2, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or no</i>) Agreeing on the definition of subsidiarity (40.4, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or no</i>)	
Improving CoR impact in the EU decision-making process	Including organised civil society, regional and local authorities, and existing structures in the citizens' participation process (36.5, relevant for CoR O1 and O2) (<i>or minor</i>)	Establishing adequate channels of dialogue for regions, cities, and municipalities (40.3, relevant for CoR O2) (<i>or major</i>)	

Source: own elaboration

No Treaty Change

Increasing the frequency of interactions between EU institutions and its citizens (36.2); Improving the transparency and reach of the citizens and communicating and consulting better with them (22)

Full title of proposals and their content: (36.2). Increasing the frequency of online and offline interactions between EU institutions and its citizens through different means of interaction in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policymaking process to voice their opinions and to get feedback and creating a charter for EU officials on citizens' participation. (22). The EU, in particular at the international level, should improve its accessibility for citizens through better information, education, citizen participation, and transparency of its action notably by strengthening links with citizens and local institutions to improve transparency and the reach of the citizens and communicate and consult better with them about concrete EU institutions at the regional and international level.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Minor Treaty Change: Like several other proposals examined in this report, this one largely requires diverting resources or increasing funding as well as some changes in the internal organisation of certain EU bodies. As citizens are to be given at most an advisory role in this proposal, it would only require an ordinary legislative – and not treaty – change. Again, Articles 10 TEU and 11 TEU, among others, already have provisions that can serve as a basis for such measures.

However, it's unclear whether the proposal's request for a higher frequency of interactions will be enough to achieve the expectations, as the EU institutions and their informal rules regarding who is heard and who has influence may also limit citizens' abilities to express their interests. Therefore, an amendment to Article 15 TFEU concerning transparency and access to information may be necessary to strengthen the openness of EU processes and institutions.

Political assessment and feasibility: These proposals respond to the CoR's O1. Like in the case of the previous set of proposals, the CoR can have an active role in communicating and consulting with citizens on a local and regional level. This could be done with the use of the existing infrastructure, with the necessary financial and human support.

Citizens' information, participation, and youth – Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens' participation mechanisms (36.1); Improving existing democratic mechanisms (36.4)

Full title of proposals and their content: (36.1). Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens' participation mechanisms, in line with the EU acquis, by better informing on them. Ideally, all information about participatory spaces should be summarised in an integrated official website with different features. A mechanism should be devised to monitor policy and legislative initiatives which have emerged from participatory democracy processes. Participatory mechanisms should be inclusive and their communication able to reach a diverse public. Attention should be paid to content material, topics, and moderators' skills. They should include an analysis on the impact of the policies discussed on, *inter alia*, women and vulnerable persons. (36.4). Improving and streamlining existing mechanisms at the European, national, and local level to make them more secure, accessible, visible, and inclusive.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Minor Treaty Change: As these proposals focus on existing mechanisms, they will require minor or no changes to the treaties. However, since giving them appropriate prominence and visibility is listed as one of the goals of this proposal, anchoring the current non-treaty mechanisms in the treaties may allow them to be more effectively achieved. If these existing mechanisms were to be reformed, it might be necessary to amend Article 10 TEU concerning representative democracy as a cornerstone of the EU or other provisions present in the treaties that concern those mechanisms – e.g., Articles 11 TEU and 24 TFEU concerning the European Citizens' Initiative, Article 15 TFEU concerning transparency and access to information, Article 227 TFEU concerning right to petition, and Article 228 TFEU concerning Ombudsman.

Political assessment and feasibility: The implementation of this proposal would support the CoR's O1. It is, however, quite vague – if more precise and concrete, it likely would have a chance to be implemented. The CoR could seek ways to collaborate with other institutional partners – such as the European Ombudsman – to deliver a clear vision of the ways, modes, and measures to improve existing democratic mechanisms.

Bringing Europe closer to citizens (37.5); Creating a system of local EU Councillors (36.6); Setting up local youth councils (36.8)

Full title of proposals and their content: (37.5). Bringing Europe closer to citizens by improving contact points and dedicated hubs, or “Houses of Europe”, at the local level to provide resources, information, and advice to citizens on EU matters, as well as listen to their concerns and engage in debates with associations to help spread citizens’ views at the European level. (36.6) Create a system of local EU Councillors as a way to reduce the distance between EU institutions and European citizens. (36.8) Provide enhanced structural support, financial and otherwise, for civil society, especially for youth civil society, and support local authorities in setting up local youth councils; this could be achieved through a specific pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan for the involvement of civil society and social partners and a dedicated civil society strategy.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Minor Treaty Change: The idea of creating local EU hubs or contact points (whether these will be Houses of Europe, EU Councillors, Youth Councils, or others) is achievable without a treaty change, as they would not be given significant legal rights (e.g., vetoes, legislative powers, among others) and would serve mostly as an instrument of soft law and information sharing. The European Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors, facilitated by the Committee of the Regions, is a good example of this type of initiative. Such actions are currently anchored in the treaties – Article 10 TEU and Article 11 TEU, among others – and they could be achieved through a specific pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan. The CoR may support local authorities in setting up local youth councils within existing legal framework.

However, if these hubs or contact points were to be anchored in the treaties, increasing their prominence and visibility, then it would require the addition of extra treaty provisions (most likely in TFEU Part Six Title II Chapter 3 on the Union’s advisory bodies), rather than amendments, therefore requiring minor treaty changes only (provided that their scope of competence remains as indicated above).

Political assessment and feasibility: These proposals respond to the CoR’s O2. The CoR – as a community and dialogue builder and the creator of a platform for citizen information and engagement – can play a significant role in the implementation of these proposals. As they would entail no treaty change or a minor treaty change, the crucial question would be financing and creating new local infrastructure to make local EU hubs or contact points functional. Using the CoR’s existing networks as a

point of departure for creating such hubs and contact points would to some extent respond to this challenge.

Citizens' information, participation, and youth – Providing support for civil society (36.8)

Full title of proposal and its content: (36.8) Provide enhanced structural support, financial and otherwise, for civil society, especially for youth civil society and support local authorities in setting up local youth councils; this could be achieved through a specific pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan for the involvement of civil society and social partners and a dedicated civil society strategy.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change: Enhanced structural and financial support for civil society is a proposition based mostly on diverting resources or increasing funding and also potentially on changes in the internal organisation of some EU bodies, none of which require changes to the treaties, but at most to ordinary EU legislation. Moreover, support for civil society, as well as its participation in the EU decision-making process, is largely anchored in Article 11 TEU, but also in other treaty provisions (e.g., Article 15 TFEU on transparency, Articles 300-304 TFEU on The European Economic and Social Committee). However, it is worth considering whether, in view of the scale of the support provided by the European Union to civil society at the local level (e.g., EUR 1.5 billion for the period 2021-2027 through The Global Europe Civil Society Organisations programme), it would not be more appropriate to focus on increasing the visibility and dissemination of the results of these activities. This can also be done without changes to the treaties.

Political assessment and feasibility: This proposal is linked with the CoR's O1. The proposal has great chances to be implemented – supporting civil society is not a subject of a political dispute (in other words, there is broad consensus that civil society should be supported) and the needed infrastructure and funding are already provided. The proposal does not entail treaty Change as well.

EU decision-making process. Increasing the involvement of national, regional, and local representatives, social partners, and organised civil society in the EU decision-making process (39.2)

Full title of proposal and its content: (39.2) The EU decision-making process should be further developed so that national, regional, and local representatives, social partners, and organised civil society are more involved. Inter-parliamentary cooperation and dialogue should be strengthened. National parliaments should also be closer involved in the legislative procedure by the EP, e.g., by way of participation in hearings. In addition, better involvement at the sub-national level and from the CoR helps to take into account the experiences gained with the implementation of EU law.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Minor Treaty Change: The extent of legal changes and interference in the treaties depends on the extent to which the engagement of the actors concerned would be strengthened.

As currently presented – aiming at allowing independent citizens’ observers to closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing broader right of access to documents, and developing on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and the EU institutions – this proposal mostly entails soft measures such as awareness raising and agenda setting, as well as some changes to the internal rules of certain EU bodies. Therefore, there are no legal implications as pertains to EU Treaties. On the contrary, this proposition is already firmly anchored in the current wording of the treaties – see Article 15 TFEU.

However, making some minor changes to the treaties could allow for more effective achievement of the stated goals. This could be done, e.g., by adding a reference to both the local dimension and transparency to the provisions regarding some EU decision-making processes (the legislative procedure – Articles 289 and 294; the budget procedure – Article 314; and the process of setting up the EU’s five-year strategic agenda, among others).

Political assessment and feasibility: The implementation of this proposal would lead to an enhanced multilevel governance in the EU and would contribute to the CoR’s O2. As this proposal might also entail a No Treaty Change scenario, which increases its chances for implementation, the CoR might seek avenues to promote and further develop it, possibly together with other institutional partners such as the European Economic and Social Policy Committee (EESC).

Including organised civil society, regional and local authorities, and existing structures in the citizens' participation process (36.5)

Full title of proposal and its content: (36.5). Include organised civil society and regional and local authorities and existing structures such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the CoR in the citizens' participation process.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Minor Treaty Change: As this proposal relates to existing structures and existing processes of citizen participation on the part of the Committee of the Regions, it would primarily require diverting resources and changes in the internal organisation of the Committee. It would most likely not entail any changes in the treaties.

The involvement of the Committee of the Regions (both the CoR as an institution and LRA representatives within the CoR) and other EU bodies, as well as regional and local authorities and organised civil society, within participatory mechanisms (such as, e.g., the European Citizens Initiative [ECI] or petitions committees within the European Network of Ombudsmen [ENO]) can be enhanced within the existing legal framework or with changes to secondary legislation only depending on the institution and to what extent it would be involved.

However, if strengthening the CoR's position in this process were to be significant, it may be necessary to amend the relevant provisions in the treaties (Article 300 TFEU, in particular).

Similar to the proposal aimed at improving existing democratic mechanisms, the provisions from the treaties to be considered in this context are, in particular: Article 10 TEU concerning representative democracy as a cornerstone of the EU and other provisions that concern the EU's participatory mechanisms – e.g., Articles 11 TEU and 24 TFEU concerning the European Citizens' Initiative, Article 15 TFEU concerning transparency and access to information, Article 227 TFEU concerning the right to petition, and Article 228 TFEU concerning the Ombudsman.

Political assessment and feasibility: This proposal responds to the postulate of promoting multilevel governance in the EU and strengthening participative democracy and relates to the CoR's O1 and O2. As it would entail no treaty change or a minor treaty change, the likelihood of its implementation – once the proposal is more developed – could be relatively high. The proposal should not require substantial additional funding or human resource investments.

Minor Treaty Change

Holding citizens' assemblies periodically (36.7)

Full title of proposal and its content: (36.7). Holding citizens' assemblies periodically, on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be incentivised. If needed, there will be the support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the institutions, this should be duly justified. Participation and the prior involvement of citizens and civil society is an important basis for political decisions to be taken by elected representatives. The EU is founded on representative democracy: with European elections, citizens give a clear mandate to their representatives and indirectly express themselves on EU policies.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – Minor Treaty Change or Major Treaty Change: As citizens' assemblies are to be given not only an advisory role in this proposal but are also a sort of legislative initiative tied with the reporting responsibility of adequate EU bodies, this proposal would most probably require a change in the treaties.

However, in order to estimate the degree of treaty change required, this concept must be further developed. It is crucial to decide: whether such a body should be a centralised single assembly or decentralised to the Member State level; whether it should convene on a regular basis or only when specific issues arise; and, last but not least, whether its recommendations should be consultative or elicit a binding response, such as initiating the legislative process.

If these assemblies were to be given the right to initiate legislation, the changes required would have to be more significant (primarily to Article 17 TEU). On the other hand, if they would have only an advisory vote based on citizen lobbying and deliberation – which could, however, call into question the possibility of accomplishing the intended goals by their means – then they could exercise their powers through existing provisions such as the right to petition (Articles 20, 24, 227 TFEU). Alternately, it could require the addition of extra treaty provisions (most likely in TFEU Part Six Title II Chapter 3 on the Union's advisory bodies) but not amendments, therefore minor treaty changes only.

Political assessment and feasibility: The implementation of this proposal would support the CoR's O1. From the infrastructural point of view, organising citizens'

assemblies would require providing the necessary set-up and ensuring financial and human resources. Citizen's assemblies would contribute to the development of the European *demos*, but the question of representativeness and the selection of their members would have to be taken with all due gravity.

Introducing a “youth-check” of legislation (36.9)

Full title of proposal and its content: (36.9). Introduce a “youth-check” of legislation, including both an impact assessment and a consultation mechanism with representatives of young people, when legislation is deemed to have an impact on young people.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Minor Treaty Change: As with proposals 36.6, 36.8, 37.5, and similar initiatives, which called for the creation of participatory bodies with informational and advisory functions, this proposal is also achievable without a treaty change if the “youth-check” procedure will not significantly interfere with the existing legislative process (e.g., through veto or legislative initiative rights).

If it is mainly a soft law instrument of an informative, advisory, and, very importantly for young people, educational nature, then it may be introduced by means of ordinary legislation on the basis of such articles of the treaties as Article 10 TEU and Article 11 TEU, among others.

Again, similar to what was mentioned about youth councils and EU Councillors, if this procedure was to be anchored in the treaties, increasing its prominence and visibility, then it would require the addition of extra treaty provisions (most likely in TFEU Part Six Title II Chapter 3 on the Union's advisory bodies) rather than amendments, therefore minor treaty changes only (provided that their scope of competence remains as indicated above).

Political assessment and feasibility: This proposal does not relate to any of the CoR's objectives directly. It does, however, relate indirectly to the CoR's O1 as it promotes a sense of identity and ownership of the European project for young EU citizens. With a No Treaty Change scenario, the CoR could take up an active role in mobilising and engaging at the local and regional levels for the proposed “youth-check” and with the use of existing resources, including networks.

Subsidiarity - Adopting active subsidiarity and multilevel governance as key principles (40.1); Agreeing on the subsidiarity definition (40.4); Reviewing the subsidiarity mechanism (40.2)

Full title of proposals and their content: (40.1). Active subsidiarity and multilevel governance are key principles and fundamental features for the EU functioning and democratic accountability. (40.2). The EU should review the mechanism allowing national parliaments to assess whether new legislative proposals at the European level do not intrude on their legal competences and to be granted the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European level. Such mechanisms should also be enlarged to all regional parliaments within the EU that have legislative power. (40.4). The systematic use of a subsidiarity definition commonly agreed by all EU institutions could help to clarify whether decisions have to be taken at the European, national, or regional level.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – Minor Treaty Change or No Treaty Change: These three proposals are bound by a common area of impact, namely the subsidiarity mechanism. Despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaty reinforced the subsidiarity principle by bringing national parliaments closer to EU-level legislative processes, some perceive the existing situation as overly complicated and ineffective (Bruter, Harrison, Sorace, Vives 2021). To date, subsidiarity has never been legally enforced by the European Court of Justice (Panara 2019). Furthermore, as drafted, the concept is unenforceable in policy areas where the EU has exclusive competence, despite the fact that such areas may have significant local implications (Moens and Trone 2014). Hence, these proposals seek to improve this. Depending on the degree of institutionalisation required and the measures applied, the need for changes to the treaties will vary.

In case soft measures would be used, such as awareness raising and agenda setting, internal lobbying, and exercising political influence, no treaty change will be required. A common definition of subsidiarity can be established through internal cooperation between the EU bodies concerned, as can the adoption of subsidiarity as an important principle guiding EU actions. Another approach which doesn't necessarily require a treaty change is to enhance CoR involvement in pre-legislative stages, such as the release of impact assessments, white papers, and roadmaps as well as in the stages of implementation and evaluation (Bruter, Harrison, Sorace, Vives 2021).

However, if these solutions were to find a foothold in binding law, changes to the treaties seem inevitable. Introducing mandatory consultation in certain matters,

enforcing consultation and information by EU institutions, or strengthening the position of national parliaments would require a change in the subsidiarity article (Article 5(3) TEU) and Protocol (No 2) or adding specific procedures that the EU-level needs to respect in the subsidiarity assessment process. The same is true for granting additional competences to national and regional parliaments in the area of legislative initiative or the right to assess the degree of interference of EU law in national orders (which may entail treaty changes, notably in Article 12 TEU, as well as changes in Protocol (No 2), especially in Articles 4, 6, and 7).

Political assessment and feasibility: These proposals respond to the CoR's O2 and refer to it directly. In the case of the CoR, active subsidiarity means being active throughout the policy cycle and as such goes beyond the current consultative role of the CoR. Given that these proposals entail some degree of treaty change and some restriction of power of the main institutional players responsible for the follow-up to the CoFoE, their introduction is currently being challenged.

Subsidiarity - Establishing adequate channels of dialogue for regions, cities, and municipalities (40.3)

Full title of proposal and its content: (40.3). Reform the CoR to encompass adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role in the institutional architecture, if matters with a territorial impact are concerned.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – Minor Treaty Change or Major Treaty Change: Several scenarios can also be imagined that would involve varying degrees of amendment to the treaties.

First, this proposal might entail changes in the internal organisation of the Committee of the Regions. This may comprise mainly soft measures concerning networking and lobbying, as well as diverting resources or increasing funding. At most, it may involve potential changes to EU ordinary legislation or even secondary law – relatively easier to amend than treaties.

However, including details of the Committee of the Regions' new organisation in the treaties (and therefore amending Articles 300 and 305-307 TFEU) would raise the profile of the changes being made and give them greater visibility and impact – this would entail a minor treaty change.

If the reform of the Committee of the Regions would include an expansion of its competencies, these changes could be referred to as a major treaty change – an

enhanced role for the Committee of the Regions could be introduced through mandatory consultation in those policy areas that have a territorial aspect and are not yet covered by this mechanism (e.g. Articles 78-79 TFEU on migration and asylum; Article 43 TFEU on the common agricultural policy, Article 114 TFEU on the single market, Article 195 TFEU on tourism, and others) or increased involvement of the Committee in the “subsidiarity procedure” (which may entail amendments of Protocol (No 2) on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality, especially Articles 4 and 6).

Political assessment and feasibility: This proposal is fully in line with the COR’s O2. It would, however, entail some degree of treaty change and thus is not likely to happen in the nearest future. Providing adequate funding and securing the human resources needed to implement this proposal are also crucial in this context.

Major Treaty Change

Citizens' information, participation, and youth – Guaranteeing a minimum level of education in the EU and its democratic processes (37.1)

Full title of proposal and its content: (37.1). Guaranteeing a minimum level of education in the EU and especially its democratic processes, including the history of European integration and European citizenship. People of all ages should be able to benefit from such programmes, which should be designed in an engaging and age-appropriate manner, for instance through the development of specific programmes and educational material for children and schools and civil society organisations active in the field of non-formal education.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – No Treaty Change or Major Treaty Change: According to Articles 165 and 166 TFEU, education remains the exclusive competence of the Member States. The Treaty grants the EU only soft competences in these areas, mainly focusing on coordinating, complementing, and supporting Member States' actions. The Treaty provides that the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (ministers of education) shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States. Cooperation in these areas takes place mainly through the open method of coordination (OMC).

Therefore, the legal introduction of a common European curriculum mandatory for Member States would have to involve far-reaching amendments to the treaties. A solution worth considering is to try to achieve the effects of this proposal through soft law instruments – e.g., awareness raising and agenda setting, internal lobbying, and exercising political influence – or incentive measures and creating opportunities – e.g., earmarked funds directed to LRAs managing the education system at its primary level.

Political assessment and feasibility: The implementation of this proposal would contribute to the CoR's O1. It is, however, unlikely to be implemented in its more strongly worded version (a common European curriculum) due to the fact that it entails some degree of treaty change.

Democracy and elections - Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives (38.4)

Full title of proposal and its content: (38.4). Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens' desires to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments. This is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged.

Assessment of necessary legal changes – Major Treaty Change: Possible and proposed CoFoE measures to increase links between citizens and their elected representatives would, on the one hand, increase the powers of the EU's publicly elected bodies and, on the other, democratise the procedure for the selection of those bodies whose legitimacy is questioned.

This means, for example, the introduction of the direct election of the Commission President or a lead candidate system, which would have to involve amending Article 17 of the TEU, notably paragraph 7.

Another example might be granting the European Parliament legislative initiative – which would entail changes primarily to Article 17 TEU and could make Article 225 TFEU (the EU Parliament's right to ask the Commission for legislative changes) redundant – and control over the European Union's budget, which would have to involve several amendments in TFEU Part Six Title II that includes financial provisions (especially Articles: 310, 311, 314).

A more radical idea would be changes introducing – or coming close to introducing – an imperative mandate for, say, Members of the European Parliament. Although this would strongly strengthen the territorial aspect of their representation, it would require changes to many treaty provisions (most notably Article 14 TEU), the introduction of new provisions, and far-reaching political will.

All these proposals listed above would legally entail major and numerous treaty provision amendments which would affect both the status of various EU institutions and their competences.

Political assessment and feasibility: The implementation of this proposal would lead to an increase in the democratic legitimacy of the EU and its ownership for the citizens, and as such it would indirectly contribute to the CoR's O1. However, given the current political climate in the EU and a “no” from a considerable part of EU MS, the treaty change needed to implement this proposal is unlikely.

4. Conclusions

1. The CoFoE held firm against an ever-challenging environment, delivering on its initial promises to reflect on the medium- to long-term future of the EU and what reforms are needed. The final CoFoE Plenary took place on 29 and 30 April at the EP headquarter in Strasbourg, reaching a consensus on all draft proposals put to vote: a total of 328 measures to achieve 49 proposals identified across 9 themes; these measures and objectives were based on 178 recommendations from ECPs, input from the national panels and events, and 43,734 contributions on 16,274 ideas gathered on the multilingual digital platform.
2. In general, 49 proposals with 328 corresponding measures are coherent with each another and identify the priorities of the citizens that should quickly be analysed and developed further. Their success or failure will depend on how and when they will be translated into actionable proposals by the local, regional, national, and EU authorities. Perhaps more strikingly, the recommendations make sense even in highly complex and sensitive areas like changes in the EU decision-making process, where citizen points of view are typically divergent.
3. A thorough quantitative (with regard to the number of inputs addressing democracy) and qualitative analysis of this massive input proved that European democracy is the topic that has received the most contributions from citizens active on the CoFoE platform and was heavily discussed during the ECP meetings. When it comes to recommendations of the National Citizens' Panels and events, one might conclude that democracy was a strong interest for citizens in only a few EU Member States. A detailed examination of all the reports, memos, and audio-visual materials summarising the effects and discoveries of national endeavours available on the CoFoE website proves that especially Belgian, Danish, Dutch, French, and Italian citizens have strong ideas on how to improve the EU democratic deficit and backsliding. This might result from the fact that in each of these

countries, the CoFoE national dimension was significant, with a well-planned vision for a broad and inclusive national debate where LRAs, civil society, and other non-governmental actors play a central role.

4. Most of the proposals outlined can be achieved in a variety of ways, from the use of soft law measures, lobbying, and political influence, to far-reaching treaty changes. Therefore, each scenario should be evaluated in terms of its costs and potential benefits before it is implemented.
5. Some ideas are worth introducing without the difficult-to-implement change in the treaties. Others – such as the idea of creating local EU institutions of soft law and information sharing (e.g., Houses of Europe, EU Councillors, Youth Councils, or others) – while essentially requiring only non-treaty measures, may benefit from being anchored in the treaties, thus raising their profile and visibility.
6. From a legal perspective, the EU Treaties can play a dual role in implementing citizens' proposals. On the one hand, in their current wording they can be seen as a kind of obstacle, something that needs to be changed in order for these ideas to come to fruition. The articles that appear in the legal analysis as those that would require amendment are primarily Articles 300 and 305-307 TFEU on the Committee of the Regions, Article 17 TEU on the European Commission, and Article 5 TEU on subsidiarity together with Protocol (No 2). Moreover, the need to add new treaty provisions has most often arisen with respect to TFEU Part Six Title II Chapter 3 on the Union's advisory bodies.
7. On the other hand, the existing provisions of the treaties can be the basis for such changes, providing their legal basis and justification. In this context, Article 10 TEU concerning representative democracy as a cornerstone of the EU together with Article 11 TEU should be mentioned, as well as Article 15 TFEU concerning transparency and access to information. Making good use of these provisions can be crucial to the success of the proposals put forward by citizens.

8. It is also worth mentioning that many of the CoFoE proposals do not so much call for legislative change as for changes in the practice of applying the law. It is important to remember that one is not always related to the other – even the best regulations can be inappropriately put into practice, and the existing legal framework can, in the spirit of the citizens’ proposal, be put to better use than it has been so far.

5. Recommendations

1. The CoFoE was an important inclusive process for citizens. Regarding its outcomes, the CoR should take steps to strengthen the role of LRAs as intermediaries between citizens' voices at local and regional levels on the one hand, and national and European levels on the other. Moreover, LRAs can engage more strongly in communicating about the EU at regional and local levels. Such activities will potentially contribute to building a so-called European civil society or European *demos*. They can be implemented through the creation of institutions postulated during the CoFoE, such as "Europe Houses".
2. However, it is important to note that many proposals focus on a grassroots level closer to the citizens themselves than to their local and regional authorities, as for example the civic participation institutions. Thus, it is possible that only entirely grassroots action, which afterwards receives the necessary support and institutional framework from local and regional authorities, national authorities, and EU bodies, will be recognised by citizens as real change for democratisation. Ideas that might involve shifting the focus of these initiatives to LRAs should be approached with caution, as they could be interpreted by citizens as a misappropriation of their original intent.
3. The CoR should play a (continuously) active part in defining and operationalising the idea of (active) subsidiarity. The differences between the EU Member States in terms of their political system and related internal division of powers should be adequately taken into account in this process if it is to lead to a tangible result.
4. The CoR should also look for ways to propose concrete measures to address the territorial dimension of European policies in the achievement of the EU's overall cohesion objective which would be based on rather vague and general CoFoE proposals.

5. In view of the very uncertain prospects of amending the treaties, the CoR should continue its attempts to strengthen its consultative role in the EU decision-making process.

6. References

The study on “the Conference on the Future of Europe: putting local and regional authorities at the heart of European democratic renewal” commissioned by the CoR to the London School of Economics and published in October 2021, as well as the reports and documentation on the CoFoE multilingual digital platform are a great starting point for the literature mapping. However, the project team has developed a more expansive list of resources which could prove useful in drafting the report (please see the table on the following pages).

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
1	Alemanno, A. (2021). Unboxing the Conference on the Future of Europe: A Preliminary View on its Democratic Raison-d'être and Participatory Architecture. HEC Paris Research Paper, (2021).	As the European Union undergoes a major, self-proclaimed democratic exercise – the Conference on the Future of Europe – this article offers a preliminary assessment of the Conference's participatory architecture and, more broadly, its democratic raison d'être. After reconstructing the genesis of the Conference by rehearsing the standard account of this initiative, it offers an alternative account, aimed at contextualising the Conference within past attempts at reforming the Union and framing it as potentially compensating for the lack of a genuine, pan-EU political and media space. The article then moves to unpack the Conference's participatory design by discussing its legal basis, overall architecture, and governance. While it would be naïve political solutionism to expect that this ad hoc democratic innovation initiative will magically address the EU democratic malaise, the Conference's embedded experimentalism can be seen as a promising first step towards the realisation of the legitimacy-enhancing potential of participation, as it was originally conceived in the Constitutional Treaty and eventually resurrected into the Treaty of Lisbon. A few concluding remarks suggest that the Conference's success should not be measured against the sole prospect of treaty reform, but rather its ability to offer both EU institutions and its citizens a foretaste of a more intelligible, deliberative, and therefore more inclusive, transnational Europe.	Microsoft Word - Unboxing CoFoE Alemanno SSRN.docx (movimentoeuropeo.it)
2	Alemanno, A., & Organ, J. (2021). Citizen Participation in Democratic Europe: What Next	As the European Union undergoes a major, self-proclaimed democratic exercise – the Conference on the Future of Europe – and approaches treaty change, this volume offers a new model of citizen participation to address Europe's long-standing democracy challenge and respond to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Proposed are a set of democratic innovations, ranging from citizens' assemblies to regulatory gaming to citizens'	Citizen Participation in Democratic Europe: What Next for the EU? -

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	for the EU. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers / ECPR Press.	<p>initiatives and lobbying, which are complementary, not antagonistic, to existing representative democracy across the European continent. These innovations are emerging bottom-up across the continent and gaining traction at the local, national, and EU level in a new era powered by technology.</p> <p>This book brings together academics as well as practitioners to give a forward-looking, holistic view of the realities of EU citizen participation across the spectrum of participatory opportunities. They all converge in arguing that, after many years of proven experimentation, the EU must institutionalise supranational, participative, and deliberative democratic channels to complement representative democracy and each other, and ultimately improve the effectiveness of EU citizen participation. While this institutional approach will not magically treat the EU democratic malaise, it should make the system more intelligible, accessible, and ultimately responsive to citizen demand – without necessarily undertaking treaty reform.</p> <p>The attempt to harness citizen participation to help address the current EU crisis needs the type of multi-faceted approach presented in this book. One that recognises the potential of existing and new democratic mechanisms, and also, importantly, the links between different instruments of citizen participation to improve the overall quality of the EU’s democratic system.</p>	9781786612878 rowman.com
3	Alemanno, A., Mackey, J., Milanese, N., &	This brief gathers together proposals put forward by participants in the EUI-STG transnational democracy forum with diverse areas of expertise (in academia, think tanks, policy, NGOs, journalism) and it therefore	PB_2021_16_STG.pdf iue.it

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	<p>Nicolaidis, K. (2021). What's in an experiment?: opportunities and risks for the Conference on the Future of Europe. STG Policy Papers.</p>	<p>serves as a document of collective suggestions and agenda-setting for the academic year 2021-22. The forum, which was set up in the autumn of 2020 as a space for discussion on the aims, methods, and long-term implications of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), does not speak with a single voice. Nevertheless, as “critical friends” of the CoFoE, we agree that – if accompanied by efforts to build bridges among a broad array of pan-European participatory initiatives – the Conference could provide an opportunity for meaningful democratisation. The forum members are also aware that this EU-led initiative carries significant risks of undermining further democratisation efforts if it is badly implemented, poorly followed-up, or cynically instrumentalised. We conceptualise the CoFoE as a transnational experiment that can provide an important learning experience for democratic reform in the EU, albeit an experiment that has real-world effects and so must be conducted responsibly.</p>	
4	<p>Benz, A. (2021). Federal democracy, distributive justice and the future of Europe. European Law Journal.</p>	<p>The Conference on the Future of Europe aims to advance strategic policies and democracy in the EU. Discussions on these issues cannot afford to disregard a fundamental institutional dilemma of the EU's political system, the conflict between intense interdependence and power sharing in a multilevel polity for one, and the autonomy of governments as a condition for democratic legitimacy of power for another. Conceiving the EU as a federal democracy draws attention to this dilemma. This concept suggests democracy-preserving modes of governance instead of coercive coordination (policy adjustment to competition in the common market, joint decision-making among governments, central regulation by law and court decisions), which so far predominate in most relevant policy fields. It also calls for procedures to cope with issues of distributive justice</p>	<p>Federal democracy, distributive justice and the future of Europe - Benz - European Law Journal - Wiley Online Library</p>

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		stemming from territorial disparities in resources and burdens. The article conceptualises these challenges and outlines feasible steps to advance federal democracy in the EU.	
5	Besana, F. (2021). Proposals of European Citizens for Reviving the Future of Shrinking Areas. <i>Quaestiones Geographicae</i> , 40(4), 15-28.	Shrinkage, depopulation, and the related structural decline threaten development trajectories of more than a quarter of European territories from the present until 2050. In April 2021, the European Commission has launched the Conference on the Future of Europe to involve citizens and players beyond the traditional actors in shaping future policy agendas. The initiative consists of a wide-scale citizen engagement policy offering them a digital framework to actively contribute to the most relevant debates from April to December 2021. Given that shrinkage is a neglected theme in traditional policy arenas, this article examines the proposals of European citizens for reviving the future of shrinking areas. Through content analysis, the article highlights a limited relative presence of shrinkage in the Conference debate. Nevertheless, the results offer insights into the thematic concentration and the affinity of shrinkage with the most popular policy debates. The article also discusses the content of citizens' ideas for the future of shrinking areas, thus offering concrete proposals that may fuel the definition of future policy agendas.	quageo-2021-0039 (sciendo.com)
6	Blokker, P. (2021). The Constitutional Deficit, Constituent Activism, and the (Conference on the) Future of Europe. In	The chapter analyses and conceptually clarifies constitutional mobilisation on the transnational level. It discusses the nature of the structural “constitutional deficit” of the EU as well as the constituent roles of organised European civil society. Social movements played a prominent role in the original Convention on the Future of Europe, and have continued to do so in recent years, mobilising for a bottom-up form of constituent politics. The chapter hence elaborates the specific notion of	The Constitutional Deficit, Constituent Activism, and the (Conference on

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	<p>Imagining Europe (pp. 303-340). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.</p>	<p>“constitutional mobilization”, conceptualising different dimensions of civil society involvement in democratic and constitutional politics and relating such involvement to manifestations of constituent politics. It builds on literature on constitutional mobilisation and distinguishes between different constituent practices: constituent articulation, constituent activation, constituent action, and comprehensive constituent or radical constituting claims. Such distinctions help to diversify between forms of mobilisation and a variety of claims, and to bring out the relative distance of transnational actors vis-à-vis formal institutions and processes (of amendment). The distinctive forms of critique, alternative visions, and constitutional propositions of civil society actors will be discussed, in part drawing on interviews conducted in the context of the research project Transnational Populism and European Democracy (TRAPpED). In the final part, the chapter briefly reflects on the experiences of constitutional politics in the EU with regard to the current Conference on the Future of Europe.</p>	<p>the) Future of Europe SpringerLink</p>
7	<p>Bursens, P., & Meier, P. (2021). Representation in Demoiocracies. Contributions from Belgian Federalism for the Conference on the Future of Europe. European Law Journal.</p>	<p>The Conference on the Future of Europe aims at revising the democratic institutions of the EU. This contribution assesses representation in the EU through the lens of demoiocracy, focusing on how the demos and the demoi are represented and how this interacts with the executive-legislative balance and party politics. As the Belgian polity is a living case for the EU but often as flawed as the latter when it comes to democratic standards of representation, we examine whether and how reform proposals for the Belgian polity can inspire the Conference on the Future of Europe. We demonstrate that the direction demoiocracies should head for when strengthening democratic representation should include a balanced</p>	<p>Representation in Demoiocracies. Contributions from Belgian Federalism for the Conference on the Future of Europe - Bursens - -</p>

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		representation of the demos and demoi via a bicameral system, a polity-wide constituency to represent the demos, involvement of the legislatures of the constituent units at the encompassing level, and a specific role for polity-wide parties.	European Law Journal - Wiley Online Library
8	Castaldi, R. (2021). The Conference on the future of Europe and the reform of the EU. <i>Perspectives on Federalism</i> , 13(1), 1.	The Conference on the future of Europe is underway. It may pave the way to a reform of the EU. Or it may go down in history as a lost opportunity, or even as an initiative which backfired, having created expectations that may not be fulfilled. Its success or failure depends on the behaviour of citizens and institutional actors within the Conference, and on the evolution of the European political landscape after the German and French elections.	The Conference on the future of Europe and the reform of the EU - Dialnet (unirioja.es)
9	Citizens Take Over Europe (CTOE). (2021). 10 Principles for a Citizen-Centered Conference on the Future of Europe.	In July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen announced her intention to convene a two-year Conference on the Future of Europe, with the proclaimed aim to involve “citizens, including a significant role for young people, civil society and European institutions as equal partners.” We, the Citizens Take Over Europe coalition, welcome this proposal to “give citizens their say” by means of a structured transnational participatory process. However, it needs to be done right in order to have the intended effect. By means of the 10 principles below, we want to make our contribution to the institutional deliberations on how to shape the Conference on the Future of Europe.	Home - Citizens Take Over Europe
10	Costa, O. (2021). Can the Conference on the Future of	Despite the constant “parliamentarisation” of the European Union, the supranational dimension of European elections remains limited. Forty years after its first elections, the European Parliament (EP) still suffers	Can the Conference on the Future of

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	Europe unlock the EU elections reform? Reflections on transnational lists and the lead-candidate system. European Law Journal.	from two main problems: (i) its democratic representativeness is impaired by the diversity of national electoral rules and by the predominantly national dimension of electoral campaigns; and (ii) the impact of European elections on the appointment of the Commission remains uncertain, as the so-called lead-candidates (Spitzenkandidaten) procedure is only informal. Today, members of the EP (MEPs) are promoting a double strategy to fix these issues. They have decided to relaunch the reform process of the 1976 Act, notably regarding the creation of transnational lists and the formalisation of the lead-candidate procedure, and they encourage the Conference on the Future of Europe to consider these issues.	Europe unlock the EU elections reform? Reflections on transnational lists and the lead-candidate system - Costa - - European Law Journal - Wiley Online Library
11	Costello, A. (2021). Meaningful, but effective? A critical evaluation of Ireland's citizens' dialogues on the future of Europe. Politics.	On 25 March 2017, leaders of the EU27 and European Union (EU) institutions ratified the Rome Declaration. They committed to invite citizens to discuss Europe's future and to provide recommendations that would facilitate their decision-makers in shaping their national positions on Europe. In response, citizens' dialogues on the future of Europe were instituted across the Union to facilitate public participation in shaping Europe. This paper explores Ireland's set of dialogues which took place during 2018. Although event organisers in Ireland applied a relatively atypical and more systematic and participatory approach to their dialogues, evidence suggests that Ireland's dialogues were reminiscent of a public relations exercise which showcased the country's commitment to incorporating citizens into the debate on Europe while avoiding a deliberative design which could have strengthened the quality of public	Meaningful, but effective? A critical evaluation of Ireland's citizens' dialogues on the future of Europe (sagepub.com)

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		discourse and the quality of public recommendations. Due to an absence of elite political will for a deliberative process, as well as structural weaknesses in design, participants' recommendations lacked any clear and prescriptive direction which could shape Ireland's national position on the future of Europe in any constructive or meaningful way.	
12	Dobler, C. (2020). Promise of democratic renewal or shaky idea?: four considerations for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Post-Crisis Democracy in Europe Blog.	Can participatory democracy be the solution to the EU's democratic deficit? This seems to be the European Commission's intention with launching the Conference on the Future of Europe. If this is to work, the Conference must however itself be democratically legitimate. Based on past experiences, Camille Dobler gives four recommendations for citizens' consultations.	Promise of democratic renewal or shaky idea? Recommendations for the Conference on the Future of Europe (uj.edu.pl)
13	Dunin-Wasowicz, R., Cooper, L., & Milanese, N. (2021). Conference on the Future of Europe: civil society should take the lead. LSE Brexit.	The upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe offers a unique opportunity for EU citizens to express their views on the direction of travel for the Union, particularly through the intermediary of civil society. A recently published LSE IDEAS report, "The Rise of Insurgent Europeanism", discusses new visions of Europe emerging in civil society and what they mean for democracy and the European Union. In the report, Roch Dunin-Wasowicz, Luke Cooper, and Niccolò Milanese argue that the Eurozone and migration crises, Brexit, and the pandemic have fundamentally changed the fabric of civil society in Europe and its attitudes towards the European project. In this blog, they explore these	LSE Brexit: Conference on the Future of Europe: civil society should take the lead

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		changes, consider their implications for the future of Europe, and formulate policy proposals to be discussed at the conference.	
14	Eymard, L. (2020). From the French Citizens' Convention on Climate to the Conference on the Future of Europe: A participatory science and democracy perspective. <i>European Law Journal</i> , 26(1-2), 136-140.	The Citizens' Convention on Climate (CCC) gathered 150 people, randomly selected but representing the diversity of French society. Its mandate was to formulate a series of concrete measures aimed to achieve at least a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared to 1990) while preserving social justice. The citizens auditioned experts on various topics from climate to economics and then formulated their own proposals, thus building an effective consensus, beyond individual specific interests. Moreover, proposals formed a coherent whole, and in this regard fare much better than previous attempts to tackle environmental and climate transition through public debates. This methodology shows how citizen science can produce efficient and quality outcomes. This opens new perspectives for democracy on the basis of new interaction channels between lawmakers, professional experts, and citizens. This seems to be the approach chosen for the Conference on the Future of Europe as well. Gathering citizens from all EU countries to work on important topics for Europe and Europeans could be a way to build a common vision and contribute to the creation of a true European common good. Citizens' direct involvement in science and democracy might be one of the keys to meaningfully and thus successfully address their shortcomings.	From the French Citizens' Convention on Climate to the Conference on the Future of Europe: A participatory science and democracy perspective - Eymard - 2020 - European Law Journal - Wiley Online Library
15	Fabbrini, F. (2020). <i>Reforming the EU Outside the EU? The Conference on the Future of</i>	This contribution to the Dialogue offers a first analysis of the recent initiative to establish a Conference on the Future of Europe – discussing whether it can become a new model to reform the EU, and if so, how it should be designed to succeed. The contribution examines the technicalities of the EU treaty amendment rules and emphasises the	EP-CE-QE (europeanpapers.eu)

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	Europe and Its Options. European Papers-A Journal on Law and Integration, 2020(2), 963-982.	challenge that the need to obtain unanimous approval by all Member States poses towards reform. The contribution then assesses the increasing tendency by Member States to use international treaties outside the EU legal order and underlines how these have introduced new ratification rules, overcoming unanimity. Drawing lessons from these precedents, the contribution suggests that to achieve its ambitious reform objectives the Conference on the Future of Europe should consider the option to reform the EU outside the EU, by drafting a new, separate treaty with an entry-into-force rule which replaces unanimity with a super-majority vote.	
16	Fabbrini, F. (2020). The Conference on the Future of Europe A New Model to Reform the EU?. Brexit Institute Working Paper Series – No 12 / 2019.	The paper offers a first analysis of the recent plan to establish a Conference on the Future of Europe to reform the European Union (EU), comparing this initiative with two historical precedents to relaunch the EU – namely the Conference of Messina and the Convention on the Future of Europe – and considering the legal rules and political options for treaty reform in the contemporary EU. To this end, the paper overviews prior efforts to reform the EU, and points out the conditions that led to the success or failures of these initiatives. Subsequently, it examines the technicalities of the EU treaty amendment rules and emphasises the challenge towards treaty reform resulting from the need to obtain unanimous approval by all Member States. The paper then assesses the increasing tendency by Member States to use inter se international treaties – particularly in response to the euro-crisis – and underlines how these have introduced new ratification rules, overcoming unanimity. Drawing lessons from these precedents, finally, the paper suggests what will be a condition for the success of the Conference on the Future of Europe and argues that this	Microsoft Word - WP 2019-12 Fabbrini Charlemagne.docx (charlemagneprizeacademy.com)

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		should resolve to draft a new treaty – a Political Compact – designed to push forward integration among those Member States that so wish.	
17	Fabbrini, F. (2021). The Conference on the Future of Europe: Process and prospects. European Law Journal.	The article examines the Conference on the Future of Europe, discussing the process set in motion by the Joint Declaration adopted by the EU institutions in March 2021 and reflecting on its prospects. Drawing from precedents such as the Conference of Messina and the Convention on the Future of Europe, the article shows that the Conference on the Future of Europe is an out-of-the-box initiative originally combining bottom-up participatory features and top-down elite decision-making mechanisms. Nevertheless, the Joint Declaration launching the Conference leaves its constitutional mission unsettled, and its institutional organisation uncertain. As such, the article suggests that the prospects for the Conference will depend on political leadership and legal inventiveness and discusses what may be the options ahead.	The Conference on the Future of Europe: Process and prospects - Fabbrini - - European Law Journal - Wiley Online Library
18	Fabbrini, S. (2021). Differentiation or federalisation: Which democracy for the future of Europe?. European Law Journal.	Differentiation has become a central topic of debate in the EU. Generally, it is considered a positive device for advancing integration in crucial policies, letting the unwilling states opt out from the new regimes. However, the debate has not sufficiently acknowledged that policy differentiation has been made possible by governance differentiation. It was the 1992 Maastricht Treaty's decision to inaugurate an intergovernmental regime for core state power policies, distinct from the supranational regime regulating single market policies, that allowed differentiation to flourish. Differentiation and intergovernmentalism are thus inter-connected. During multiple crises of the last decade, intergovernmental governance has shown its undemocratic effects, thus soliciting a critical reappraisal of the	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/eulj.12384

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		differentiation logic. The federalisation of the EU appears a more promising alternative strategy for advancing integration and, at the same time, meeting the democratic expectations of the EU. This analytical exercise speaks to the Conference on the Future of Europe.	
19	Fabbrini, S., Fossum, J. E., Góra, M., & Wolff, G. B. (2021). The Conference on the Future of Europe: vehicle for reform versus forum for reflection?. Bruegel-Blogs, 15 Jun 2021.	The approach of the European Union's institutions to the Conference on the Future of Europe is muddled, with risks for the outcome.	The Conference on the Future of Europe: vehicle for reform versus forum for reflection? - Document - Gale Academic OneFile
20	Guérot, U. (2020). Europe of the Regions. A Genealogy of an Ambiguous Concept. In European Regions (pp. 231-244). transcript-Verlag.	Once again, the future of the EU is up for debate. Ursula von der Leyen, who took over the EU Commission in late 2019, has announced a Conference on the Future of Europe, starting in 2020 and lasting for two years. Citizens and civil society are to have their say as equal partners alongside European institutions. While the concrete scope and objectives of the conference still have to be agreed on, von der Leyen has already declared her readiness to follow up on what the conference decides – be it legislative action or even treaty changes. While the latter requires consensus among Member States – something hard to imagine in the current situation – the public space was already flooded with manifestos	European Regions - Perspectives, Trends and Developments in the 21st Century (ssoar.info)

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		and proposals for a European Constitution in the weeks around the May 2019 European Parliament elections.	
21	Hierlemann, D. (2019). Citizens for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Policy Brief 4/2019 - Conference Talk. Brussels: Bertelsmann Stiftung.	Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has announced a two-year Conference on the Future of Europe. Even citizens ought to participate. But how? In order to make participatory democracy a reality, it is essential to avoid only paying lip-service to the idea of participation – and give citizens a real say.	ZD Einwurf 4 2019 EN Conference Talk.pdf (bertelsmann-stiftung.de)
22	Józson, M. (2020). The Future of Europe: The Beginning of a New Era in EU Governance?. European Journal of Comparative Law and Governance, 7(4), 408-434.	The paper offers insight into the current practice of the passerelle(s), the enhanced cooperation and the flexibility clause, which may serve in the future the implementation of the Commission’s White Paper on the Future of Europe (2017) without treaty revision, in light of recent developments in the policy of the new Commission, Council, and European Parliament on the future of EU integration. The ex-ante and ex-post control mechanisms available at the Member State level concerning the freedom of their governments to support such European initiatives are also discussed from a comparative perspective. The paper concludes by presenting the risks associated with the activation of these mechanisms of integration.	The-Future-of-Europe-The-Beginning-of-a-New-Era-in-EU-Governance.pdf (researchgate.net)
23	Le Saëc, O. (2021). The Potential	Initially planned for 2020, the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe has been postponed indefinitely due to the pandemic. Scheduled to	The Potential Outcome of the

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	Outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe in a COVID-19 World: Strengthening European Democracy. European View, 20(1), 110-111.	run for two years, this conference will bring together European institutions, civil society representatives, and citizens of all ages to debate on the future of Europe. Thus, this conference has the great merit of facing the issue of citizen participation, confirming the constant desire of strengthening European democracy. Similarly to the European Convention on the Future of Europe, this conference would also include citizen consultations, supported by a digital platform allowing online debates and contributions. Although it is difficult to predict the concrete outcome of this conference, major changes are not expected, but rather more reform proposals on the EU's architecture and its decision-making processes, which will lead to deeper European integration. However, before the conference can start, the three main EU institutions must still agree on its modalities and, importantly, its chairmanship. It clearly reveals that the main difficulties barring the road to the conference are not of a technical nature, but rather political. Nonetheless, launching the conference as soon as possible would be a tangible, major achievement, confirming that democracy is still fully functional in Europe, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. It would confirm the European Union as an advanced democracy, and probably the biggest democracy in the world.	Conference on the Future of Europe in a COVID-19 World: Strengthening European Democracy (sagepub.com)
24	Luis de Castro Ruano, J. (2021). Buscando un nuevo modelo mas satisfactorio de insercion de las regiones	1. INTRODUCCIÓN. LA OPORTUNIDAD QUE BRINDA LA CONFERENCIA SOBRE EL FUTURO DE EUROPA.—2. LA INSERCIÓN POLÍTICA DE LAS REGIONES EN LA Unión Europea.—2.1. La reforma operada por el Tratado de Maastricht.—2.2. La Gobernanza Multinivel.—3. EL TRATADO DE LISBOA: NUEVA FASE EN LA CUESTIÓN REGIONAL.—3.1. Retomando la agenda regional.—3.2. Las Regiones y el control de la Subsidiariedad.—4. LAS	BUSCANDO UN NUEVO MODELO MÁS SATISFACTORIO DE INSERCIÓN

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	<p>constitucionales en la Union Europea. La oportunidad de la Conferencia Sobre el Futuro de Europa. Revista Española de Derecho Internacional, 73(1), 83-110.</p>	<p>DEBILIDADES DEL RECONOCIMIENTO REGIONAL EN LA Unión Europea.—4.1. La fatiga regional en el debate comunitario.—4.2. Las limitaciones del Comité de las Regiones.—4.3. La ineficiencia de la Gobernanza Multinivel.—5. LAS «SOLUCIONES» INTERNAS.—6. OTRAS PROPUESTAS DE INSERCIÓN REGIONAL EN LA Unión Europea.—7. CONCLUSIONES.</p>	<p>DE LAS REGIONES CONSTITUCIONALES EN LA UNIÓN EUROPEA. LA OPORTUNIDAD DE LA CONFERENCIA SOBRE EL FUTURO DE EUROPA (jstor.org)</p>
25	<p>Mavrakos, C. (2021). Conference on the Future of Europe. ELIAMEP Policy Brief #150/2021.</p>	<p>The Conference on the Future of Europe aims to give Europeans a greater say in what the EU does and how it works for them. While listening to Europe’s citizens is indeed very important, politicians in the Member States as well as at the EU level should also become creatively active by taking a stand on its scope, its procedure, and its objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for the scope of a Conference on the Future of Europe, the Member States, as “masters of the treaties”, should take a clear stand, each for itself, on the question of whether ambitious new political priorities and projects for the Europe of tomorrow can actually be realised through the old institutional vehicle, or whether, rather, a new, more integrated institutional structure, such as a European Political Union (EPU), would be more appropriate. 	<p>Policy-brief-150-Mavrakos-final-1.pdf (eliamep.gr)</p>

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As regards the procedure for such a Conference, the Member States, which would be convinced of the need for Europe to equip itself with a new democratic, effective and solidarity-based institutional structure, would be well advised to follow, instead of the revision procedure provided for in Article 48 TEU, an alternative procedure, which would enable them to move forward without being dependent on the Member States hesitating to embark on this path. • As for the objectives that a Conference on the Future of Europe should strive to achieve, it is argued that institutionally such a Conference should produce strong political institutions and effective decision-making procedures, and substantively provide an EPU with substantial means of action in a number of policy areas, including common foreign and defence policy. • Which political forces in today’s Europe are ready to speak out in favour of a democratic, efficient, and solidarity-based EPU? European citizens, especially the younger generation, have the right to receive a clear answer to this question. 	
26	Müller-Graff, P. C. (2021). The Conference on the Future of Europe. ERA Forum (Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 465-473). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.	The agenda of the Conference on the Future of Europe contains the potential for numerous legislative recommendations. This raises the question of the future resilience of Union law. The article, which is based on the author’s introductory speech of the ERA’s webinar on the Conference, assesses the challenges and chances of the Union’s capacity to engage in proper rule-making, to experience compliant rule-implementation, and to benefit from a judiciary which reliably settles disputes. It concludes that as long as the demanding requirements of an	The Conference on the Future of Europe SpringerLink

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		enlightened legal civilisation are fulfilled, there is no reason not to trust in Legal Europe's future.	
27	Ondarza, N. V., & Ålander, M. (2021). The conference on the future of Europe: obstacles and opportunities to a European reform initiative that goes beyond crisis management. SWP Comment, 19/2021. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit.	Since the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Union (EU) has been struggling to implement structural reforms. New steps towards integration have only been possible under intense pressure during crises, and treaty change has become taboo. The Conference on the Future of Europe is supposed to open a new path and generate new ideas for the development of the Union through a hybrid format of inter-institutional negotiations and citizen participation. However, its launch has been delayed considerably – and not only by the Covid-19 pandemic; the aims, level of ambition, and structure of the Conference have also been the subject of controversy among the EU institutions. To create the momentum for lasting reform, the Conference must overcome four obstacles: the scepticism of many Member States, the taboo of treaty change, inter-institutional rivalries, and past difficulties that the EU has had with citizen participation.	The Conference on the Future of Europe. Obstacles and Opportunities to a European Reform Initiative That Goes beyond Crisis Management (ssoar.info)
28	Pirozzi, N. (2021). How the Conference on the Future of Europe can still be saved.	The Conference on the future of Europe is faltering, but EU institutions and Member States can still save it. And they should, as it could be a key tool to re-engage the citizens, writes Nicoletta Pirozzi.	How the Conference on the Future of Europe can still be saved –

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
	Euractiv. 15 Nov 2021.		EURACTIV.com
29	Pirozzi, N. (2021). The Conference on the Future of Europe: Tackling Differentiated Integration. Istituto Affari Internazionali.	The democratic participation promoted by the Conference can lay the foundations for a new Europe of the future. To be truly effective, however, this event needs to be turned into a meaningful reflection on the direction, purpose, and ambition of the EU's integration process. Such a process may ultimately lead to a reform of the EU's policies and institutions, which should rest on an active and constant engagement with European societies and citizens.	The Conference on the Future of Europe: Tackling Differentiated Integration IAI Istituto Affari Internazionali
30	Schimmelfennig, F. (2020). The Conference on the Future of Europe and EU Reform: Limits of Differentiated Integration. European Papers-A Journal on Law and Integration, 2020(2), 989-998.	There is considerable uncertainty about the outcome of the planned Conference on the Future of Europe, especially regarding possible treaty changes. This contribution to the Dialogue comments on the possibility of an intergovernmental agreement outside the EU treaty framework on the basis of theoretical and empirical knowledge about differentiated integration. It argues that such an agreement would deviate from the traditional logic of differentiated integration venues, and that differentiated integration is generally of limited value for overcoming decision-making blockades on constitutional and redistributive issues.	EP-CE-QE (europeanpapers.eu)

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
31	Steuer, M. (2021). Judges. Neglected Actors at the Conference on the Future of Europe. Verfassungsblog.	Judges are prominent actors with a significant impact on European integration. Yet, no references to them appear in the Joint Declaration on the Conference authored by the Commission, Council, and the Parliament. This corresponds to a view unsustainable in the age of extensive access to information, that judges sit in ivory towers and speak exclusively through their decisions that other actors then explain to the broader public. Moreover, the exclusion artificially reduces the relevance of judges in shaping the future of the EU and the potential of impactful interactions between the Conference participants on the status quo and development of judiciaries in the EU. The ambition of the Joint Declaration to “strengthen[.] the link between Europeans and the institutions that serve them” via the Conference is, however, compatible with including judges alongside other stakeholders who are explicitly mentioned, such as regional parliaments, social partners, and academics.	Judges Neglected actors at the Conference on the Future of Europe.pdf (jgu.edu.in)
32	Tosiek, P. (2020). The Prospects for Institutional Reforms of the European Union: a Liberal Intergovernmentalist Perspective. Српска политичка мисао, 1(2), 141-163.	The purpose of the article is to determine the probability of institutional reforms resulting from the debate on the EU’s future held as a part of the “Conference on the Future of Europe” initiated in 2020. In the theoretical dimension, the analysis is based on the application of the liberal intergovernmentalist approach with its three assumptions: the strict categorisation of intergovernmental decision-making built on the triad “preferences-negotiations-institutions”, the concept of democracy, and the need for differentiated integration. On this basis, three hypotheses for each reform are presented and verified, which leads to a determination of their possible implementation. The main thought is the statement that, when adopting the liberal intergovernmentalism, the EU will remain an intergovernmental organisation, founded on societies organised in nation	Srpska-politicka-misao-2-2020.pdf (ips.ac.rs)

No.	Bibliographic description	Abstract	Link
		states, but at the same time internally differentiated in terms of the quality of membership.	

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Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.

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