

Report



- Date and time: 7 December 2020, 14:15 - 15:45
- Title of the session: **The Conference on the Future of Europe: How to reflect the new reality?**
- Format (select one): Workshop
- Moderator: **Dominik Hierlemann** (Senior Expert, Bertelsmann Stiftung) / Speakers: **Sixtine Bouygues** (Deputy Director General, European Commission, DG Communication), **Christian Mangold** (Director for Campaigns, European Parliament)

Main topics discussed

The panel explored the key idea behind and the need for the Conference on the Future of Europe and emphasised that its approach combines a listening exercise in the form of a large public debate with the possibility for citizens to directly affect political decisions due to the involvement of decision-makers in the process. However, the scope, objectives, timing and phases are yet to be decided and the associated declaration is still to be signed by the institutions.

The Conference has three main aspects, which amplify each other: it is **"for all"** – for citizens to debate the challenges and priorities of Europe in a Pan-European debate – it focuses on the importance of **"feedback"** – all responses will be monitored, collected and published – and political leaders have committed to **"follow up"** on the results of the two-year long process.

Key messages from each speaker

Sixtine Bouygues (Deputy Director-General, European Commission, DG COMM)

The major difference between the Conference on the Future of Europe and previous initiatives is that it will provide an online platform linking citizens to each other all over Europe, resulting in proposals that are made visibly and transparently, and allowing immediate feedback and multilingual accessibility.

Christian Mangold (European Parliament, DG COMM)

The Conference on the Future of Europe has the potential to make democratic participation widespread at European level but it is up to communicators and all citizens to make a difference. If there is engagement, making a difference is possible.

Questions from the audience

Questions from the audience focused on the roles of the various levels such as local, regional and European, as well as the outreach of the communication activities. The speakers pointed out that the value of the exercise lies in bringing together all the different initiatives into a single process with a single outcome, which will be a joint declaration by political leaders acting within their remit, but there is no predetermined outcome.

All the citizens taking part will be able to connect to each other. This is already the strength of the new process and might lead to the development of new participatory methods in the future. The goal is not only to have individual debates but to provide access to everyone and to share information between national and European levels in the EU public sphere.

Take-away messages

The Conference on the Future of Europe is not merely a communication exercise but a new approach to reach out to all EU citizens and engage them in EU politics. It needs to be an inclusive and transparent process in which communication plays a very important role.