

## **THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: A REFORM OF THE TREATIES “FOCUSED ON CITIZENS”?**

The Conference on the Future of Europe was established by the Joint Declaration of 10 March 2021 and defined in that Declaration as “a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise” which will give citizens “a greater role in shaping the Union’s future policies and ambitions”. The Conference, which is expected to complete its work by the spring of this year, has two significant differences in the role it accords to citizens versus the well-known Laeken Declaration of 15 December, 2001. Firstly, the Laeken Declaration, which called into being a “Convention on the Future of Europe”, excluded citizens from participation in the Convention itself. It provided only for a Forum composed of organisations representing civil society and which would be informed and consulted. Quite differently, the Joint Declaration provides that citizens should take part on an equal footing with the European and national institutions at Conference Plenary sessions.

Secondly, and again this is different to the Laeken Declaration, the Joint Declaration of 2021 is vague as to whether a revision Convention will be called to follow up on the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe. However, as foreseen by Art. 48 of the TUE, a revision Convention would be needed in order to put into effect the Conference’s conclusions and its “guidance on the future of Europe”.

Given the risk that such a revision Convention might ignore citizens’ specific requests, this article proposes that, drawing on recent practice, the European Council should give a mandate to the Intergovernmental Conference to respect the conclusions of this “citizens-focused exercise”.