



Dear President Michel,
Dear President Von der Leyen,
Dear President Sassoli,
Dear Members and Observers on the Conference's Executive Board,
Dear Chairman Tajani,

Brussels, 22 December 2021

Give citizens EU-transparency for Christmas!

Christmas is but a few days away and more than half a year has passed since the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The three EU institutions hosting the exercise are spending public funds and staff resources to promote and facilitate it but transparency with regard to financing of the Conference has been almost entirely absent. In order for the exercise to retain any legitimacy we believe it is necessary to inform taxpayers how their money is being spent.

While the Commission continues to reiterate “its strong commitment to transparency”, it on multiple occasions¹ has refused to confirm that a full financial disclosure pertaining to the Conference will be published, for example, on the ‘About’ page of the digital platform.

After multiple inquiries by MEPs the Commission recently confirmed that “as of early October 2021, the total budget contracted by Commission services under contracts specifically signed for the purpose of the Conference is EUR 17.7 million.”² The Commission also confirmed that “various existing budget lines have been used to contribute to the Conference’s working strands” and that “Conference activities are supported via the existing administrative structures of the Commission.” It could not, however, provide any estimate of “working hours spent or workload associated with the Conference”.

The EU Parliament has awarded at least EUR 1.7 million of public funding as media and communication grants to federalist pro-integration organizations such as the Young European Federalists, the Jean Monnet association, the European Movement and Friends of Europe last year. Social media activities by grant-funded activist organisations and publicly available ad-spending data indicate large sums are used both online as well as offline to generate public engagement in Conference activities. Calls for proposals confirm that activities funded by Parliament include promotion of events in relation to the Conference³.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002935_EN.html

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004172_EN.html

² Answer given by Vice-President Šuica on behalf of the European Commission 3 December 2021

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004172-ASW_EN.html

³ CALL FOR PROPOSALS COMM/SUBV/2020/E “Online and offline Communication actions to promote the process of the Conference, spread information about youth consultations and all the side events to the Conference;”

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/contracts-and-grants/files/grants/ex-post-publication/en-list-of-grants-awarded-2020.docx>

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/contracts-and-grants/files/grants/media-and-events/comm-subv-2020-e/call_for_proposals_engagement_2020_comm-subv-2020-e.pdf

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/contracts-and-grants/files/grants/media-and-events/en-dgcomm-work-programme-for-grants-2020-2021-revised-January-2021.pdf>

The Council's Conference website also makes no mention of the budgetary impact or the taxpayer funded nature of the project.

As the Conference proceeds and comes to a conclusion institutions should lead by example and deliver on their promises of transparency and accountability to the public. The leadership of the Conference should therefore urgently address the grave shortcoming with regards to financial transparency.

Would it not be nice to start the new year having delivered to the citizens of Europe the Christmas gift of real transparency by confirming that all participating EU institutions will live up to their public commitments to transparency as well as their Treaty obligations by ensuring that proceedings are transparent?

We, the undersigned, therefore call on the Council, Commission and Parliament to:

- publish all information on the amounts of public financing of the Conference as well as how the funds have been spent and what organisations have received funding in one prominent place, for example on the 'About' page of the digital platform;
- provide estimates for staff working hours spent in conjunction with or in support of the Conference or any activities relating to it
- provide a half-time report outlining the total expenditure incurred and the expected costs until the conclusion of the Conference for each institution as well as a final report outlining the total budgetary impact of the Conference

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year full of sunshine, transparency and light,

Charlie Weimers, ECR
Jessica Stegrud, ECR
Emmanouil Fragkos, ECR
Jorge Buxadé, ECR
Hermann Tertsch, ECR
Eugen Jurzyca, ECR
Carlo Fidanza, ECR

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Laura Huhtasaari, ID
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