

The Federal Committee of the Union of European Federalists,

gathered on line on December 19, 2020

underlining

that the current crisis has shown the significance of acting united as Europeans in an effective and supportive way, also to become able to act globally;
that in tackling the pandemic, the Union has decided to face this unprecedented challenge indicating the need and showing the will to strengthen its political unity;
that the need to act together as one becomes even more evident in the face of the second wave of the pandemic we are; experiencing since autumn 2020;

welcoming with relief

the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris to the White House;

stressing

how this turning point in American policy needs to be supported in Europe by an acceleration of the European Union's capability to be an authoritative partner in redesigning multilateralism;
the opportunity that this election constitutes for a new Atlantic Pact based on an equal partnership, with a view of promoting a more democratic global governance;

welcomes

the agreement reached by the European Council on the Recovery Plan on 21 July 2020 which incorporates many of the indications contained in the resolutions adopted on 17 April and 15 May 2020 with a large majority by the European Parliament and in the proposals put forward by the Spanish Non-Paper on the Recovery Strategy on 17 April 2020 and the Franco-German Recovery deal on 18 May 2020 and relaunched by the European Commission on 27 May 2020 in its communication Next Generation EU, constituting an embryo of a financial union by way of the common issuance of debt by the Union;

stresses the importance of

the launching of a European Health Union on the basis of article 168.5 of the ~~Lisbon Treaty~~ TFEU announced by the Commission on 11 November 2020, as also requested by the Union of European Federalists in its Federal Committee resolution of 4th July 2020;

recalls

that in tackling the coronavirus the Union has also decided to act as a responsible and committed global partner, supporting among others the global initiative for equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX Facility);

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that the coronavirus pandemic is a transnational public bad with great health, economic, and social consequences that requires global coordination by a reformed, strengthened and more democratic and efficient United Nations system, with a particular role for the World Health Organisation;

expresses its satisfaction

at the agreement achieved between the European Parliament and the Council on 10 November 2020 on the new MFF 2021-2027 and the Own Resources package that increased the previous proposal in more than €15 billion on conditioning European funds to respect for democratic values and the Rule of Law, thus correcting the Council's original position;

notes with regret, however

the veto of the Hungarian and Polish governments to the proposed 2021-2027 MFF and new Own Resources Decision of 16 November 2020, in order to dilute the said Rule of Law mechanism;

underlines

that the Hungarian-Polish veto recalls the urgency of reforming the Treaties in order to abolish unanimity in key financial, budgetary, and fiscal matters, and therefore the need to convene the Conference on the Future of Europe as soon as possible;

highlights

the crucial role of the European Parliament to reach a satisfactory agreement to correct the cuts in the budget lines for European youth programmes, (Erasmus programme, +€2.2 Billion), research (Horizon, +€4Billion), cultural sectors, (Creative Europe, +€600Million), citizenship (Rights and Values, +€800Million) and health coordination programmes (EU4Health, +€3,4Billion) aimed at building the future of Europeans;

emphasizes

the importance of the reform of the system of own resources, as a condition for making permanent an instrument such as the Next Generation EU, which provides the EU: i) with a stabilisation mechanism capable of structurally supporting the convergence and the overall resilience of the Euro area, as repeatedly requested by the ECB itself; ii) with a rallying point for national programmes of increased public investment;

strongly supports

the confirmation of a binding timetable for the introduction of new own resources in the form of new European taxes as the following: tax on non-recycle plastic will enter into force in 2021, the border adjustment mechanism for carbon emissions, and the Digital Service Tax in 2023 and the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) and the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) in 2026;

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and while it affirms that

increased competences for the European Parliament, in particular concerning the revenue side of the EU budget, must be grounded in a significant enhancement of its democratic legitimacy and, as a consequence, it becomes urgent the establishment of the necessary legal framework to ensure the election for the European Parliament cease to be a collection of national elections and become truly European,

strongly highlights

the need to give the European Parliament the power to share decisions on the collection and spending of the European Union's own resources. This implies a reform of the Treaties aimed at attributing a fiscal competence to the European Union. This is also the request by the European Parliament in the legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the system of Own Resources of the European Union adopted in plenary session on 15 September 2020, in which it is stated that *"In view of future deliberations about treaty changes, and using the momentum of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the democratic legitimacy, accountability, resilience and alignment with major policy objectives of the Union budget's revenue side, should be further strengthened by granting the European Parliament enhanced competences in the legislative decision making and a more active role in the monitoring of the implementation of the own resources system as well as in the underlying sectoral legislation"* ;

recalls

that the pandemic has reminded Europeans of the need, in front of common transnational challenges, of supranational responses, of common action and co-ordination of policies, and has shown the damage done by the multiple vetoes and complexity which defeat projects and block long-term visions; therefore, the importance of federalisation and of affirming the principle of subsidiarity, allowing efficient action while guaranteeing open and constant democratic participation to legitimate a sense of common destiny, and with information and consultation devolved to the lowest appropriate levels;

recalls moreover

that the nascent financial and fiscal union embedded in the Recovery Plan for Europe poses fundamental democratic and accountability dilemmas; that the French government aims to present, during the first half of 2022, the proposal for a "Common Security and Defence Union", with or without revision of the Treaties.

In this framework, the Federal Committee of the UEF claims strongly the start of *Conference on the Future of Europe*

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The *Conference on the future of Europe* is a unique and urgent opportunity to launch a concrete project for a stronger political Union of a federal nature, as the necessary complement of the steps already taken in the direction of a financial and fiscal union, involving citizens in a transparent and participatory process.

It is the ideal political framework in which to address the question on how we, as Europeans, can lead a successful transition towards a new model of sovereign political Union, strengthening the functioning of participative democracy, rule of law and sustainable development.

In this context, we can also address how we can become a stronger international player in an increasingly unstable world and promote peace, democracy, regional and global integration, human rights and sustainable development.

At the same time the Conference offers the opportunity to define and discuss concrete proposals for opening a Constitutional process, with a view to develop a federal constitutional pact, in order to strengthen the European Union in front of the challenges of our time and the needs of its citizens. In this perspective the Conference should also include in its conclusions proposals on how to implement its results.

The Conference is also the ideal framework to develop the concept that, in the future of Europe, the necessary drive for subsidiarity - both strengthening competences and powers by joining forces at European level, and devolving new responsibilities to sub-national levels - must always be combined with an increased truly democratic participation. In this perspective, it also offers at European level the opportunity to experiment new forms of citizens' democratic participation and involvement in shaping and sharing key political and institutional decisions, taking also examples from the consultative assemblies experienced at national level in some Member states, also on the occasion of constitutional changes. On the other side, this also implies that, in order to develop a real European public space, movements and parties need to become transnational, with membership, funding, policy generation, procedures, all raised to a new borderless level.

Having all this in mind, the FC of the UEF believes

that during the Conference it will be possible and necessary to discuss how Europe can:

- guarantee the pursuit of its value, interests and its citizens' security in the international framework, ensuring the respect of human rights and promoting multilateralism and international cooperation;
- accelerate the development of an autonomous European defence, as a concrete basis for an influential European foreign policy and a greater capacity of action at international level;
- define a truly European migration policy;

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- make Europe a model of sustainable development and of successful ecological and digital transition;
- strengthen the Single Market, ensuring a level-playing field and a new model of corporate governance, fairer internal competition as well as harmonising certain taxes;
- make the Recovery Plan permanent;
- complete the Economic and Monetary Union
- promote inclusion, non-discrimination, gender equality, effective social justice and solidarity;
- implement a successful mechanism for the protection of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights in all EU member States;
- define the foundations of a genuine European democracy, both from an institutional point of view by abolishing unanimity in Council and extending co-decision with Parliament, (including more competences developing the right of Initiative and the right of inquiry of the EP) and from the point of view of the creation of a common public space, promoting transnational European movements and parties also through the creation of a joint pan-european electoral constituency with transnational lists, formalising the Spitzenkandidaten system and considering the creation of cross-border constituencies.

The FC of the UEF is also persuaded

that in order to respond to citizens' questions, concrete proposals for a new Treaty must emerge, even if some countries and some political forces might not immediately share this view. These reforms must be focused on:

- the creation of a fiscal capacity of the European Union, so that it can collect the resources it needs to implement its policies on its own. The fiscal power to be exercised in line with the priorities of the European political agenda is a necessary condition for the emergence of a European sovereignty able to operate in the name of the common interest of European citizens and to achieve fairer taxation within the European Single Market.
- the attribution of new competences to the European Union so that it can be sovereign, according to the subsidiarity principle, at macroeconomic level and in foreign and security policy and in research, health and training;
- the reform of the decision-making process in a way to grant the Union with sufficient autonomy to act in the new areas of competence, i.e. through an extension of the ordinary legislative procedure, with the co-decision of the European Parliament and the Council;
- measures to safeguard the democratic principles and the rule of law underpinning the European Union with regard to possible illiberal drifts in the Member States;

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- the question of ratification by qualified majority of the EU Treaties. Since some member states might not initially share the project for a federal Union, the time has come for the majority of countries that agree to share a part of their sovereignty - in those fields that are no longer manageable at national level - to go ahead to build a Europe open to all, safeguarding the unity of the European Union, but at the same time restructuring EU in a way that it provides for different levels of integration and participation.

The Federal Committee of the UEF therefore calls

on the European Parliament

as the Assembly representing European citizens and thus having the institutional vocation to promote this agenda within the Conference and to nurture and guide the political debate within the Conference and with the citizens, in a constituent perspective;

on the entire UEF organisation, and in particular the national sections,

to commit themselves to the convening and success of the *Conference on the Future of Europe* and to work together to establish the broadest possible alliance among political forces, civil society organisations and citizens in the framework of a joint campaign that claims on behalf of the federalists, and on behalf of the citizens, ***Our Federal Europe, Sovereign and Democratic.***