**MoU partners meeting – preparatory meeting to CoFoE Plenary – 17/12/2021**

Please prepare a short list of priorities for CoFoE, dividing by categories listing up to 5 targets.

| **Current situation – functioning of CoFoE (critical issues and possible improvements)*** Whole Conference appears like a ticking the box exercise and not enough care is taken to organise citizens' panels properly – citizens/experts are invited last minute this is reflected in two main aspects: accessibility and timing:
* **Accessibility** - The formal Conference platform is still receiving a very small audience, overwhelmingly based in the European bubble, which is concerning given it is the main tool through which grassroots engagement in the Conference will be heard. The Digital Platform on the Conference on the Future of Europe is not easy to navigate and for people to actually engage with it and it is unclear how relevant contributions are. It is important to provide access also for persons with disabilities to participate in the platform. We would like to raise awareness about the importance of personal assistance for persons with disabilities, who should not be obliged to ask their close collaborators to take that role. Accessibility issues regarding the COFOE Digital Platform also needs to be resolved as soon as possible. Organised civil society organisations (including philanthropic organisations) are very underrepresented and not consulted on their experience and expertise. We are experiencing specific challenges concerning our contribution to the working groups given the mis-match between the number of working groups that exist, and the number of plenary places allocated to us. In the CoFoE working groups CSOs should be allowed to also participate in several working groups and more seats should be allocated to them. Citizen panels are not fully representative: racialised and marginalised communities, people without EU passports, etc. are excluded (see ‘other proposal’ section below for the calls of our joint letter).
* **Timeline** - the tight timeframes mean that many of CSOs members will not have concluded until later next Year (2022), after the ECP’s have released their recommendations, which it sounds like will become the dominant source of ideas for debate at Plenary level. There will be only two more Platform reports - one compiled from all the ideas committed to the Platform before mid-November, and a ‘final’ report in the early half of next year - but there is a concern that these will be side-lined when the ECP recommendations appear.
* **Organisational processes**: Chairs' inconsistent approaches at each Working Group meetings are conducive to effective citizen participation. Operational processes applicable during the Plenary were not adequately communicated to citizen participants. Last minute invitations sent out to Experts and Observers of the Citizen’s Panels. Late delivery of informative materials for each session, and ineffective communication between Common Secretariat and participants. The Secretariat’s inability to ensure that the correct translations are available for each session of the CP.

**Suggestions:** * Universal guidelines should be made available to all the Chairs in order to better ensure that meetings are sufficiently prepared.
* COFOE should develop better explanatory documents for the Plenary processes. Also approaches/procedures for Working Groups must be clear and transparent for all in particular to citizens and experts. Late delivery of invitations and information materials should be avoided.
* Support for the preparation of citizen participation should also be provided in advance of the Plenary.
* We urge the Executive Board to provide additional assistance and human resources to the COFOE Common Secretariat Team.
* Have more interim reports, dividing the proposals between citizens’ ideas and civil society organisations’ idea;
* Clarify the criteria of the qualitative assessment criteria of the proposals put in the interim reports;
* Invite to the Working Groups of the plenary civil society organisations to be heard on their field of expertise;
* Provide with the possibility to establish caucuses within the Plenary and give them administrative resources as well as to the working groups in the Plenary;
* Allow the Plenary to adopt a resolution on how the EU institutions should follow up with their proposals.
* ***Participation of CSOs*** *in the working groups of the COFOE Plenary*: Allowing CSO representatives to participate in more than one working group
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| **Key ambitions for the Conference on the Future of Europe** * The ambition was to make more space for people and civil society organisations in shaping the future of Europe and to highlight their priority areas, fears and concerns as a basis for future EU action. Due to the points mentioned above, we consider this ambition not reached so far.
* In addition, the CSOCOFOE primary goal is to ensure that the outcomes of our Convention act as complement to the Citizens' Panels and Working Group instruments aiming to represent ourselves as a source for citizens' opinions and suggestions.
* That the COFOE **respects its own ambitions** to ensure this Conference acts asa “*bottom-up exercise”* for European citizens.
* The plenary must recognize the central role that education plays in the future of Europe and the need to boost financing to it, in order to make it more inclusive, of better quality and with a wider impact on society;
* Recognize the existence of the climate crisis and the need to enforce actions to avoid its worst effects;
* Have each of the proposals adopted by CoFoE to be initiated as a policy action by the EU institutions.
* Commitment to legacy - the institutions to commit to following up on the Recommendations captured in the final Conference report, for proper accountability and respect of the ideas young people have taken the time to share during the process.
* A meaningful youth participation structure at EU level that continues beyond the lifetime of the Conference.
* A prioritisation of a Quality Youth Employment Journey for every young person in the Conference recommendations - including:
	+ The right to employment, further education or training
	+ Replacing unpaid internships with quality jobs
	+ Equal access to social protection on par with other age groups
	+ The right to disconnect from the digital world
	+ Recovery and Resilience Funding for and consultation with youth
	+ Recognition of non-formal/informal learning, including volunteering by employers
* Clear commitment to and better implementation of the civil dialogue (Article 11) and engagement with civil society including philanthropy/foundations
* Stronger collaboration on programme design/collaboration opportunities
* Strong agenda for Article 2 Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy
* Ensure that AML/CFT policy is risk based and proportionate …
* Need to create better framework conditions of CSOs/Social Economy/Philanthropy and better enable their cross-border operations…
* Better implementation of the non-discrimination principle…
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| **Priorities in the working groups - working group on education (list of top target priorities)*** In the Social Europe working group the priorities for us are poverty reduction and improving the working and living conditions to ensure a decent life for all, through:
* Adequate minimum income for people outside employment
* Adequate minimum wages for all workers
* Access to quality and affordable social and essential services
* Ensuring that the green and digital transitions do not leave people, and especially those in the most vulnerable situations, behind
* A European Student Rights’ Charter, which should lay out students as key stakeholders at all the levels of governance, and it should be implemented at the national and institutional levels. Its implementation should be a prerequisite for accessing the European funds for education - for that, the role of the student unions to co-design its implementation and raise the case of breaches to the provisions of the Charter is fundamental.
* The establishment of a European scholarship scheme for students at risk, which should serve as a unified gateway of several national scholarship schemes in order for applicants to find their match in terms of study field and language of learning. The scheme should take a two-folded approach: a ‘student’ approach, in issuing student visas, and a ‘refugee’ approach, in collaboration with international organisations like the UNHCR, in order to guarantee the right to education also to those students who do not hold the conditions to obtain a visa (e.g. not holding a passport).
* Reach automatic recognition between all the programs and institutions evaluated and approved according to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), as a part of the regulated professions on the EHEA level, by the time of EEA creation (i.e. 2025). The automatic recognition should be based on the thorough implementation of the Bologna tools. Therefore, a joint effort to implement these tools should also be made at the EU level via a specific EU Bologna implementation task force. Within this task force, representatives of all the stakeholders, including student unions, should be present.
* Proposal for the adoption of a clear commitment to legally recognise democratic student representation within the governance of the Higher Education Institutions and to promote ways of effective involvement of student unions in the governance system of Higher Education at the different levels of policy-making while respecting the diverse traditions of student organising and self-government. Student representation in all cases must be free of any governmental, political or social influence. The European Universities must involve a democratic representation of students from the different partner Higher Education Institutions within the governance framework of the Alliances, and the European Education Area must involve democratic and representative student organisations both at the national and at the European levels.
* YFJ President Silja Markkula is chairing the Working Group on Education, Youth, Culture and Sport. Our structural priority is that the working groups are enabled to operate more flexibly and meaningfully - to allow for the possibility of sub groups to work on different themes vs the miniature plenary we saw in October. We would also want there to be spaces for the working group chairs to come together to discuss overlapping priorities - particularly given our priority themes for the Conference lie in the remit of different working groups.
* The idea of a Quality Youth Employment Journey to be discussed and committed to by the Stronger Economy, Social Justice and Jobs Working Group in the context of the ‘transitions’ priority that has been identified by the corresponding Citizens’ Panel.
* Lowered voting age and e-voting/other democratic participation tools that will make democratic participation more accessible and inclusive to be discussed and committed to by the Democracy Working Group.
* Civil dialogue – implementation of Article 11 throughout all groups
* Annual Rule of Law report.
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| **Expected final results from the COFOE*** Strong messages on the social dimension of Europe leaving no one behind
* Strong message on fundamental rights, rule of law and democracy
* Strong message on the climate/green dimension
* Strong message on the need for a vibrant civil society including philanthropy
* Follow-up on suggestions by all EU institutions
* Channels for more regular engagement and structured civil dialogue (it should not be a one-time exercise)
* A resolution with a political vision and a series of concrete policy proposals
* All our ambitions set out above are captured in the final Conference report.
* EP Manifestos for 2024 elections capture of asks.
* Priorities identified during the CoFoE to be followed up during the European Year of Youth 2022 and beyond.
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| **Other proposals** * Diversity assessment of the Citizens’ Panels
* Creation of a safe space for all Citizens’ Panel participants
* Conference Inclusiveness Council and representation of marginalised communities in the Conference Plenary
* Invite the Coordinator on Anti-Racism as member of the Conference Plenary
* Extend the timeline of the Conference
* European Digital Higher Education platform, open to accredited Higher Education Institutions of EU Member States and partner countries, which would facilitate the access to courses, credentials and materials for the whole European academic community, as well as serve as the single repository for MOOCs, digital credentials, open access scientific papers and other research and educational material for the broader society, in the spirit of Open Science.
* Specific action to ensure broader access to inclusive physical mobility and to tackle structural inequalities within Europe and its education and training systems that lead to brain drain;
* Prioritisation of Direct Democracy - Longer term concern that direct democracy will be the preferred tool at EU level seen as having the greatest legitimacy following the European Citizens Panel exercise, at the expense of the future involvement of representative organisations. YFJ would be interested in hearing other organisations thoughts on this and whether this is something that others would like to be involved in responding to more closely
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*(max 2 pages)*