The Conference on the Future of Europe: Limits and Potential of a Supranational Experiment in Deliberative Democracy

Between May 2021 and 2022 representatives of the EU institutions, national parliaments and governments as well as civil society and randomly selected citizens discussed reforms of the EU in the so-called Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). They came up with 49 recommendations entailing more than 320 concrete reform proposals.

Since then, the EU institutions discuss about the best way to implement these reforms, as there is wide agreement that the EU has to respond to citizens’ demands expressed during the CoFoE. The European Parliament has triggered art. 48 Treaty on the European Union to reform the EU treaties – the de facto constitution of the EU. In her State of the Union Speech 2022, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed support for the parliament’s push for treaty reform. The member states are more hesitant to open the “Pandora’s box” of treaty reform.

While a few governments are in principle open to treaty reform, 19 mostly Northern and Eastern European countries are concerned that it is not the time for reforms, when a war takes places in Europe. However, the EU’s decision to grant Ukraine and Moldova the perspective of becoming EU member states in the future is turning the debate. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Commission President von der Leyen, both underlined that treaty reform is a precondition for future enlargement.

During the seminar the participants will be briefly introduced to the Conference on the Future of Europe and the underlying conflicts between the EU institutions – most notably between the European Parliament and the member states in the Council of the EU. Following a brief update on the state of discussion on the question of treaty reform and putting other recommendations of the CoFoE into practice, the participants will discuss from their perspective about the necessity or desirability of treaty reform.

Recommended readings:


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