



Webinar - "Future of Europe: 450 million Europeans to engage, an impossible challenge?"

10 June 2021

Introduction

On the webinar held by the Association Civic Tech Europe (ACTE) of June 10th: "**Future of Europe: 450 million Europeans to engage, an impossible challenge?**", European Union representatives alongside civic tech professionals addressed the challenge of engaging more European citizens in the democratic process of the European Union (EU).

As [Anguel Beremliysky](#) explained it, the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) will be a pioneer as it will reach an unprecedented level of participation in terms of scope, scale, methods and ambition. The CoFoE follows the current tendency of people wanting to have a better dialogue with the EU institutions and a greater say in EU policies.

Participants

The moderation of the webinar was ensured by **Louis Dailencourt**, Business Development Director at Novoville, Founding member of ACTE.

The panelists who led the discussion during the webinar were:

- **Helmut Scholz**, Member of the European Parliament and Observer of the Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe
- **Declan McDonnell**, Member of the Galway City Council (Ireland), Member of the European Committee of the Regions, Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External affairs
- **Anguel Beremliysky**, Member of the Common Secretariat of the Conference on the Future of Europe
- **Janica Ylikarjula**, Member of European Economic and Social Committee from Employers' Group (Group I)
- **Frank Escoubès**, Co-President and Co-Founder of bluenove, Member of ACTE
- **Chloé Pahud**, CEO & Co-founder of Civocracy, Founding member and Vice-President of ACTE



ASSOCIATION CIVIC TECH EUROPE

The conclusion was given by **Axel Dauchez**, Founder & CEO of Make.org, Founding member and Vice-President of ACTE.

Main points and issues raised during the webinar

Some of the issues that are faced by the EU institutions for the organization of the CoFoE were addressed by the different EU representatives present.

First of all, Helmut Scholz addressed the need to **better integrate direct citizen's participation at all levels** (Member states, local authorities, political parties, civil society and associations...) but also and foremost to make conclusions from this participation. These conclusions should then be used to both **give feedback** to the participants but also from the participants to the EU institutions.

To address the issue of having greater levels of participation and more inclusive ones – representing citizens from all socio-economic backgrounds, age range, geographical location, gender -, Anguel Beremliysky has pointed out the key role civic tech organizations play.

Indeed, as Frank Escoubès has responded, civic tech organizations can help:

- Reach critical **mass and minimum volume of contributors** (with beforehand determination of the number of persons needed to participate in the conference for it to be satisfying);
- Address the issue of **representativity**. As Frank Escoubès pointed out, the current digital platform, local panels and workshops put in place by the EU institutions are dissatisfying because people self-select themselves. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that people who are usually not present at these participating events such as unemployed people, immigrants, and the youth, are incentivized to participate more. As Declan McDonnell said, the people the EU institutions need to reach out to the most are the silent majority to whom attention should be paid and feedback is given too. To ensure more diverse participation, civic tech organizations should also reach out to groups that are usually set aside (sporting clubs, trade unions...);
- Address the issue of **transparency**. There is a need to make sure that the organization, the synthesis and the follow-up actions are fully transparent;
- About **analysis**, a few questions can be raised: what kind of analysis will be carried out from the contribution of the different participants? How to compare the outputs of different channels considering the fact that it is technically not feasible? About data analysis, Chloé Pahud and Frank



ASSOCIATION CIVIC TECH EUROPE

Escoubès have been highlighting that ACTE members through their experience as civic tech professionals, have the ability to both **conduct and analyze quantitative and qualitative data**. Analyzing relevant data is a challenge due to the inherent nature of a multi-channel strategy that would involve digital platforms, local and regional events, online surveys and so forth. Indeed, multi-channel data are not comparable. For instance, individual and collective contributions are incomparable – as people individually tend to be less technical and consensus-driven. The methodology is not neutral and should be apprehended carefully, an area in which civic tech organizations are experts.

As Declan McDonnell argued, the CoFoE, aside from being the occasion to strengthen democracy in the EU, could also set a precedent and be the beginning of a more **direct and permanent democratic EU**. The means to ensure great participation should be done through the use of technology in various forms.

Janica Ylikarijula pointed out the need to **engage civil society**. The target is the organized civil society as the EU represents them. Moreover, there is a need to have a proper follow-up process to show them their voice matters. Finally, **partnerships** are essential. For instance, international youth organizations need to collaborate more with EU institutions.

Therefore, there is a need to **refocus Europe on the citizens and the regions** and not only on the Member states. To that end, civic tech organizations are ready to provide the tools and the expertise necessary to help **ensure massive and representative participation** – even from the silent majority -, **transparent and meticulous methods and analysis** that would ensure citizen participation in the EU decision-making and **help build results but also legitimacy**.

As Axel Dauchez concluded: *“We can make Europe more horizontal than vertical. **Let us help you, as expert partners, to make COFOE a success**”*.
