

# Building the Political Structure for Direct Citizen Participation in a European Federation

Manuel Galiñanes 

Academy of Medical and Health Sciences of Catalonia and the Balearic Island, Barcelona, Spain

Email: manuel.galinanes@gmail.com

**How to cite this paper:** Galiñanes, M. (2023). Building the Political Structure for Direct Citizen Participation in a European Federation. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 13, 325-346.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2023.134021>

**Received:** September 13, 2023

**Accepted:** October 4, 2023

**Published:** October 7, 2023

Copyright © 2023 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

---

## Abstract

The European Union suffers from a deficit in democracy. Policy-driven treaties cause insufficient coordination, speed, and efficiency in their response to internal and external challenges. In order to create a more democratic, effective, and integrated policy in Europe, a Citizens' Convention was held between October 2021 and April 2022. The objective of this Convention was to create a European Constitution that might serve as the basis of a European Federation. The Convention agreed on three essential pillars to achieve a robust and stable democratic system in Europe: 1) the transfer of common powers from the European States to the Federation, 2) a strict separation of the legislative, executive, and legal powers, and 3) direct citizens' participation. Underpinned by these principles, a number of structural and functional changes are proposed to achieve strong democratic institutions, greater integration, and effective cooperation between the European States.

## Keywords

Direct Democracy, Division of Political Powers, European Union, European Federation, European Federal Constitution

---

## 1. Introduction

The work performed so far by the multiple actors to integrate Europe has been colossal; however, despite all the successes achieved, the governance of the European Union (EU) through treaties and without a proper structure of its institutions is complex, inefficient, lacks transparency and legitimacy, and is difficult to understand by citizens.

There is no clear separation of powers in the EU. The EU consists of three main institutions: the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission and the Council. The EP is the only elected body of the EU at supranational level and

has co-decision authority with the European Commission. Whilst a succession of EU treaties has gradually increased the EP's powers, its ability to influence and develop policies remains limited and subordinate to the Commission and the Council (Hix et al., 2007; Rittberger, 2005). The Commission's members are appointed by EU member state governments and are responsible for drafting laws and regulations that require approval from the EP and the Council.

A serious problem with the EU is that its citizens generally know little about their elected representatives and lack information on how political decisions are made. The large number of actors and the complexity of institutional linkages, non-transparent consensus decision-making within the Council, and the drafting of laws and regulations by unelected technocrats rather than by the people's elected representatives, are elements that question the democratic quality of the EU and erode its institutions. It is also unclear who decides economic policy, how the interests of the Member States are balanced, and to whom the decision-makers are accountable. It is, therefore, unsurprising that for decades, the EU has experienced increasing political disaffection, which puts in jeopardy or questions the legitimacy of its institutions. This institutional doubt comes precisely from political decisions taken without the participation of citizens evident in low turnout in EP elections (Clark, 2014) and the rise of populist anti-EU parties.

In Europe, while there is still great support for a common project, it is not unconditional and the participation of European citizens in its betterment is essential (Dehousse, 2009). The European Commission has published a "White Paper on the future of Europe" that describes five future scenarios for the EU (European Commission, 2017); nonetheless, the citizens of the EU have not been consulted and their thoughts about the future of the EU and the configuration of its institutions remain unknown. Therefore, any political debate on the future of Europe must include the opinion and participation of citizens with a bottom-up approach.

To overcome the various problems that ail the EU democratic system, it will be necessary to build a common European project where the different powers are strictly separated and citizens have direct participation in decision-making. To this end, a Citizens' Convention led by the Federal Alliance of European Federalists took place from October 2021 until April 2022 to replace all EU treaties with a Constitution for a European Federation (EF—henceforth the Federation) (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022b). The proposal of creating a nucleus of countries with greater unity (European Union, 2019) would be socially, economically and politically counterproductive by establishing a *de facto* two-speed Europe, which could threaten the stability of the continent. Recently, the German Government elected in 2021, aware of the democratic deficit in the EU institutions, pointed out the need to make changes in the treaties leading to a decentralized European federal state in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Mehr Fortschritt Wagen, 2021). However, this proposal does not contain a real change in

the current institutional structures. On the contrary, it calls on the European Commission to be the guardian of the Treaties and use the existing instruments, so that political decisions are rendered more coherent and executed quickly. In reality, the German Government's proposal would mean a continuation of the EU's defects, and hinder progress towards a Federation where citizens are the central political players. More recently, Enrico Letta has proposed the creation of a European Confederation, consisting of the 27 EU member states plus Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, as an intermediate stage towards a federal architecture (Letta, 2022).

The work of the 70+ members participating in the Citizens' Convention was embodied in a Constitution with 10 articles for a European Federation (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a). The present article outlines the Citizens' Convention proposal but delving deeper into the subject, I put forward essential changes to the European institutions based on the transfer of the common policies of the Member States to a Federation, a clear division of powers and transparency of its institutions, and the direct political participation of citizens beyond the simple casting of the vote. To this end, I describe here the structure and composition of the necessary political institutions, so that they can function in coordination and under the same democratic parameters.

## 2. Fundamental Elements of Democracy

First, it is advisable to define the fundamental elements of democracy. The democratic ideal promoted by the French and American revolutions was based on the fundamental principle that there is no higher authority than that of the people, which in turn serves as the fundamental source of legitimacy and governmental authority. However, in our contemporary society, political decisions are often carried out beyond the influence and even the knowledge of citizens, so it is not surprising that they have largely lost confidence in the democratic character of government institutions. This stagnation of democracy contrasts with the fact that people are increasingly aware of their social role, as their democratic expectations grow and they aspire to greater participation in the political process. This means that the participation of citizens cannot be based exclusively on electing their representatives.

In the context of the EU, political equality is particularly complex, given that States and individual citizens are constitutive political subjects (Kröger & Friedrich, 2013; Bolleyer & Reh, 2012), which presents difficulties in resolving constitutional disputes involving the rights of citizens and Member States in a way that is compatible with the political equality of both subjects. Treaties and their revision are carried out by diplomatic agreements between elites, largely excluding popular debate and political participation, except in cases of *ad hoc* national referendums, where popular opinions are underrepresented. To reverse this democratic deficit, it is necessary to reform the institutions, providing people the in-

struments, so that decision-making flows from the bottom up.

It is clear that democracy does not have a simple definition and recognizes a multifaceted identity. Therefore, to achieve a model of participatory democracy where the citizen is central in the political processes, I propose the full integration of the following elements:

1) Representative democracy, where the people are represented by elected delegates. The voting system must be fair, complying with the democratic principle of “One person, one vote, one value”.

2) Deliberative democracy, which allows citizens and social movements to be able to organize meetings with government institutions to assess the effectiveness of current and future policies.

3) Process-driven democracy, whereby citizens have the ability to develop and lead decision-making processes.

4) Direct democracy, by which citizens have the right to popular initiative and to express themselves in referendums. The right of initiative is a special application of the principle of equality, which means that all citizens have the same right to present proposals and to be voted in referendums. It offers citizens the possibility of submitting proposals for an amendment or expansion of the Constitution, thus providing a direct link between individuals and the legislative and executive bodies (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007). The Lisbon Treaty already introduced the European Citizens’ Initiative as a means of strengthening citizen participation in EU decision-making.

5) Accountable democracy, by which citizens have the right to be informed of the work carried out by their representatives in accordance with the electoral programs. Also, it implies the possibility to evaluate representatives’ performance and to determine their suitability to continue in their positions.

All these elements fulfill their own function, complement each other and their combination deepens and strengthens democracy. Hence, they have been taken into account for the design of the Federation’s political structures discussed below.

### 3. Citizens

The principal aim of the Federation is the pursuit of the wellbeing, security, and happiness of its citizens. To achieve this, citizens will have the ability to freely participate directly and actively in political life. The current advances in information and interconnectivity, together with the necessary structures and channels to empower civil society, will facilitate effective interaction between citizens and institutions.

In addition, as contained in the European Federal Constitution (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a), the Federation must ensure that all citizens enjoy the following rights:

1) To reside anywhere in the Federation.

2) To possess the citizenship of the Federation in addition to the State of ori-

gin and residence.

3) Not to be discriminated because of age, sex, race, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

4) To vote and become a candidate in the elections for the federal institutions.

5) To receive consular protection from the embassy of any Member State of the Federation when they are in third countries.

6) To present a petition to any institution of the Federation in any of its official languages.

7) To participate in referendums on initiatives originated by the citizens themselves or by federal institutions, and on modifications to the Constitution.

## 4. Bicameralism and European Congress

The legislative power of the Federation will be based on a dual chamber; the House of Citizens (HoC) representing the totality of the citizens and the House of States (HoS) representing the Member States ([Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a](#)). Both chambers will constitute the European Federal Congress (EFC). They will be connected through mechanisms of checks and balances, being the true co-legislators of the Federation and exercising political control of the executive.

### 4.1. House of Citizens

The HoC will represent the will of the citizens following the principle that the essence of democracy is the government of the people by the people ([Lindberg, 2006](#)). The legislative tasks of the HoC will be shared with the HoS.

#### 4.1.1. Structure

Each elected member of the HoC will have an individual mandate, being incompatible with any other public function, and will be accountable to their constituents. There is universal agreement that electoral proportionality is the main objective of electoral systems, and, therefore, all the votes will have the same weight with the election of a candidate per 1 million inhabitants. This would prevent small states like Malta from having one member in the EP for every 67,000 voters, while Germany has one member representing 857,000 voters.

The number of members of the HoC will be determined by the population census of the Federation, eliminating the use of fixed quotas per States. Each State and its respective regions or autonomous territories will have to determine the electoral districts in accordance with the specified population density, with the possibility of establishing trans-regional or trans-territorial districts. States with a population of less than 1 million inhabitants will be assigned 1 representative. The single-member electoral district or constituency, used by the United Kingdom, Japan and the USA, has the advantages that: 1) citizens know their representatives and representatives know their constituents, 2) it ensures that States with small populations are represented, and 3) it eliminates the system of quotas per States, which *per se* introduces an element of disproportionality due

to the great difference in population's size of European States.

A President and a Vice-President of the HoC will be elected by the members of the chamber. The President will be in charge of the operation of the chamber and the Vice-President will act as deputy of the President. Both will exercise their functions for the duration of the legislature; however, they will be subject to annual scrutiny and renewal by the members of the HoC.

#### **4.1.2. Function**

The laws will be debated in the HoC in the first instance. The approved laws will go then to the HoS for further debate and voting. If the laws are ratified by the HoS, then they will be definitively approved. However, if the laws are not approved by the HoS in the first hearing, then it will make recommendations that will be evaluated by the HoC. If the HoC approves the recommendations, then the laws will definitely be passed. Otherwise, the two chambers will need to meet in a joint Assembly at the EFC in a period not exceeding 15 days for debate and a final vote.

The approval of laws will always be done by a qualified majority of  $\geq 2/3$  of the votes, either in the HoC, the HoS, or the EFC.

#### **4.1.3. Electoral System**

The electoral system must be transparent, simple to understand and apply, reflect the popular will, and guarantee political representation and participation of citizens under equal conditions. Based on these principles, the following electoral measures are proposed:

- 1) Each political party may propose 1 candidate per population district.
- 2) Any citizen may choose to be a candidate independently if they obtain the support of  $\geq 1\%$  of the population they wish to represent (e.g. 10,000 signatures in a population group of 1 million) during the 6 months prior to the election.
- 3) Citizens who have reached the age of 18 will have the right to vote regardless of sex or race.
- 4) The model to be used will be the universal single vote system where each person's vote will have the same weight.
- 5) The elections will be held in a two-round contest. In the first round, each voter may vote for a maximum of 3 candidates from any political party or independent candidates; each vote for a candidate will have the same vote value. Two weeks after the first round, the 3 most voted candidates will enter a second ballot where citizens will cast the vote for a single candidate. The candidate with the highest number of votes will be the representative elected, and the second-voted candidate will act as a substitute if necessary during the legislature.
- 6) The election will be called upon every 5 years on a fixed basis and will take place at the same time as the elections to the Federal Government.
- 7) The members may be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

This voting model will favour the selection of the most qualified and electable candidates within the political parties and the citizens.

#### 4.1.4. Elected Members' Commitments and Obligations

- 1) To exercise their functions independently of the States.
- 2) To be accountable to their electorate.
- 3) Membership of the HoC may be challenged or revoked by calling a ballot at any time during the mandate if the district citizens decide so by simple majority.

### 4.2. House of States

The HoS will be the democratic representation of the States in the EFC, acting as a counterweight in the legislative work to the HoC. The number of members in the HoS will be less than those in the HoC, thus giving greater weight to the citizens' representation than to the States.

#### 4.2.1. Structure

Each State of the Federation will be allocated a number of members depending on its population size, as follows:

State Population (in millions)	Number of Seats
up to 2.5	2
up to 5	4
up to 10	6
up to 20	8
up to 40	10
up to 80	12
>80	14

In this way, all Member States will have a minimum of 2 seats in the HoS regardless of population size. This criterion seems relatively favourable for small States as they end up in a demographically overvalued position and unquestionably favours the relative position of the larger Member States; however, it ensures a global balance and a level of fairness between States.

As described for the HoC, the HoS will elect a President and a Vice-President from the members of the chamber. The President will be in charge of the operation of the chamber and the Vice-President will act as deputy of the President

#### 4.2.2. Function

The HoS will be a counterweight of the HoC sharing the legislative power. The HoS members will represent their respective countries and will have an individual mandate incompatible with any other public function. They will be accountable to their respective States' Parliament, which, in turn, will ratify or revoke their continuation in office annually.

#### 4.2.3. Electoral System

To accurately reflect the correlation of forces resulting from the elections, the following measures will be adopted for the distribution of seats:

- 1) The members will be elected coinciding with the national elections of each

Member State, so that the election will have a national and federal dimension and, as a result, the elected members of the HoS will serve for non-concurrent terms with the HoC members.

2) The selection of candidates for election will be worked up by establishing open lists, whether they are presented by the political parties or by independent citizens.

3) Each party may present a number of candidates that does not exceed 50% of the number of seats corresponding to each State.

4) Citizens deciding to stand for election independently must have the support (signatures) of  $\geq 0.05\%$  of the citizens of his/her State of origin in the last census. The signatures must be collected in a period not exceeding 6 months prior to the election.

5) Each citizen may vote for a maximum of 3 candidates from any political party or independent candidates, with each vote having the same weight.

6) The number of votes obtained by each candidate will determine their final position.

7) The representatives with the most votes will be those who obtain the seat in the HoS. The following candidates who do not obtain a seat will act as substitutes if required.

8) Elected members may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

### **4.3. European Federal Congress**

The EFC brings together the HoC and the HoS to purvey legislative solutions and to exercise conjointly political control of the European Federal Government (EFG). Valéry Giscard d'Estaing already proposed establishing the Congress of the Peoples of Europe, a body that would be made up of representatives of the EP and national parliamentarians, who would meet annually to fulfil purely consultative functions. The idea was not enthusiastically received and was removed from the agenda of the draft Constitutional Treaty (Raunio, 2005). However, this proposal, which represented progress at the time it was issued, falls short of the Federation's current expectations.

The EFC will meet in a Plenary Assembly of the HoC and the HoS 4 times a year to address the economic and social agenda of the Federation, debate the issues determined by the Presidents of both houses, build consensus, and exercise control over the decisions made by the EFG. In addition, it may meet when necessary to discuss any matter, including laws that have not been resolved separately by both Houses.

The EFC will also be in charge of appointing the President of the European Federal Central Bank.

## **5. European Federal Government**

In the EU, the EP elections are not followed by a government formation process and fail to engage the public in a Europe-wide event (Marsh & Mikhaylov, 2010),



so that citizens' satisfaction with democracy does not seem to increase with the holding of elections or electoral victory (Singh et al., 2012), which in turn questions the legitimacy of the executive power of the EU. To reverse this trend and achieve greater citizen participation, the executive power of the Federation will be elected directly by the citizens in elections based exclusively on European issues, as suggested by the European Federal Constitution (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a), and in contrast with the existing rule in many of the European states where the executive power is determined by the winning party of the elections. Importantly, the EFG will be run in a collegiate manner based on consensus, avoiding the interference and influence of large corporations, financial elites, lobbies, and party interests.

### 5.1. Structure

As suggested by the European Federal Constitution (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a), the EFG will be constituted by universal suffrage, in which the entire territory of the Federation will be one constituency. For this:

- 1) The executive branch of the EFG will consist of a Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the President, who together with a first and a second Vice-President will form a Praesidium.
- 2) In the case, the President cannot carry out his/her tasks for whatever reason, the First Vice-President will act as deputy of the President, and the Second Vice-President will act as deputy for the other two.
- 3) The number of Cabinet Ministers to be appointed will be decided by the Praesidium after approval by the EFC. They will be appointed according to the results of the elections, with each Minister heading a Ministry.

### 5.2. Electoral System

Following the principle of having an electoral system that is a faithful reflection of the popular will, the following electoral measures should be adopted:

- 1) Citizens who have reached the age of 18, regardless of sex or race, shall have the right to vote.
- 2) Each political party and independent group that meets the conditions required by the Federation may propose 1 candidate to the Praesidium (President, First Vice-President and Second Vice-President) and a maximum of 8 candidates to become Cabinet Ministers. The candidates for the EFG, both the Praesidium and the Ministers, must be elected in previous internal democratic processes within each political party.
- 3) In addition, citizens may become candidates for the EFG if they obtain the support of  $\geq 1\%$  of the registered population of their own State during the 6 months prior to the election.
- 4) The election to the Praesidium will be made in a two-round contest. In the first round of voting, each voter will be able to choose a maximum of 3 candidates. The 5 candidates with the highest number of votes will go to a second

round, which will take place two weeks later, in which the candidate with the most votes will occupy the position of President, the second will be the first Vice-President and the third the second Vice-President.

5) The election to Cabinet Ministers will be carried out in a single round at the same time as the first round election for the Praesidium.

6) Elections will be held every 5 years and will take place at the same time as elections to the HoC.

7) The members of the EFG may be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

### 5.3. Functions

The portfolio of functions attached to the EFG, which includes those described in the European Federal Constitution ([Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a](#)), will be:

1) The EFG decisions will be taken by consensus and in the absence of it, a simple majority of each Minister's vote will apply. In the event of a vote tie, the President shall decide after consulting both Vice-Presidents.

2) The Praesidium shall ensure that the EFG implements policies that are in the interest of the Federation as a whole and shall avoid extreme political deviations and the influence of unelected power groups and lobbies that may jeopardize democracy or promote oligarchic or partisan decision-making.

3) In addition, as suggested by the European Federal Constitution ([Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a](#)), the President shall exercise the following powers:

a) To be the commander in chief of the armed forces, and security agencies of the Federation.

b) To appoint Ministers, Ambassadors, other Envoys, Consuls, and all public officials of the executive branch of the Federation whose appointment is not regulated otherwise in the Constitution and whose offices are based on a law. The President may remove from office all public officials of the Federation if they are convicted of treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanours.

4) The allocation of the different ministerial portfolios will be taken by consensus among the elected ministers. However, if an agreement cannot be reached then the Praesidium together with the Ministers of the most-voted party will make the assignments.

5) The Ministers will be obliged to observe the principle of "collective responsibility", which means that the policies reached by consensus or by majority vote must be the line defended and followed by all the members of the EFG.

6) The EFG will render accounts to the EFC with which it will hold control sessions every three months and at any time if requested by any of the two bodies.

7) In the event of a minister being removed from office, he/she will be replaced by the next candidate from the same party.

8) The EFG may initiate and propose new legislation that will be passed to the HoC and the HoS for debate and eventually approved or rejected by the EFC Assembly.

9) The EFG, as well as both Houses independently or jointly in the EFC, will have the capacity to request to the Committee of Experts the evaluation of social and economic policies, although the recommendations will not be binding.

## 6. Judicial Power

The Federation's judicial power must be independent of the legislative and executive powers and must be built on the basis of respect for the fundamental rights of citizens, the European Federation, and its Constitution ([Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a](#)).

Currently, the judiciary in the EU is characterized by intertwined and overlapping legal systems that have been a source of conflicts and divergences among the States. For this reason, the legislation of the Federation must recognize the essential functions of the States as autonomous political actors and guarantors of national collective property and assets, avoiding conflict between national and Federation legislation, and coordinating their laws.

### 6.1. Structure and Functions

The current judicial system of the EU is made up of different organisms that will continue to be the basic structure of the judiciary of the Federation. Thus, the following Courts will be operative:

1) The Federal Court of Justice (FCJ), the highest jurisdictional body of the Federation, will ensure the application of the Federation's Constitution and laws, process the infringement procedures by the Member States, and intervene at the request of the national courts.

2) The Federal General Court (FGC) will deal with matters not reserved for the FCJ and specialized courts. It will also handle the appeals against the resolutions of the specialized courts.

3) The Federal Court of Auditors (FCA) will control the execution of the income and expenses of the Federation to ensure correct financial management.

4) The Federal Specialized Courts (FSC), whose number and composition will be determined by the legal needs of the Federation, will dispense matters in specific areas with the possibility of appeal before the FGC.

5) The Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (FPPO) will have the power to investigate, prosecute and bring to judgement crimes against the Federation budget, such as fraud and corruption.

The Federation's legislation shall be superior to the States, so that the judicial power of the Federation may supersede the national judicial power in case of conflict interpretation. The Federation judiciary will also strive to respect and enforce international treaties and standards.

Judicial decisions may not be repealed by the executive or by the legislature

unless there are changes in the Constitution, in which case they have to be endorsed by the citizens.

## **6.2. Election of Members of the Judiciary**

An independent judiciary is considered key, and therefore, judicial appointments by political parties will be prohibited. The selection process will be carried out following criteria of transparency and promotion of diversity, making sure that the candidates show proof of moral probity, and possess the required merits and technical capacity. A judiciary influenced by political parties represents a democratic step backward, as recently happened in the USA, Poland, and Hungary.

Higher-level graduates in philosophy, political science, sociology, and criminology, among other specialties, may also access the judiciary. In these cases, the candidates will be selected by means of a cultural exam and a psychological test. The selected people will have to spend two years in a school of European legal studies. Next, they would have to go through one or more collegiate courts of the Federation where their members will train them for an additional period of three years. Only at the end of this preparation period will it be possible to carry out legal work in the legal institutions of the Federation.

The judges will hold office for a period of six years with a staggered substitution every three years, a mandate that would guarantee the continuity of the Courts. Each of the Courts will be composed of a judge from each State of the Federation with a President of the Court elected among the judges by a simple majority for a period of three years with the possibility of being re-elected for another three years period.

## **7. European Federal Central Bank (EFCB)**

The EFCB, which will be accountable to the EFC, will be responsible for the monetary policy of the Federation while the EFG will have control of the budgetary and macroeconomic policies. The EFCB will have a clear and precise mandate optimizing the coordination of the monetary policies of the Member States. The EFCB will be independent of the EFG but take into account its economic objectives and guidelines, so that together they must be able to provide financial, monetary, and economic stability for the Federation. Importantly, the States' Governments must not instruct or influence their representatives on the EFCB to follow a particular monetary policy.

In order to promote the financial integration of the Federation Member States, give stability to the system and reduce the probability of the appearance of banking crises, the EFCB will manage liquidity and provide a reference price for the credit system in the Federation. It has been shown that there is a significant correlation between the level of central bank independence and the long-run average inflation rate, with the most independent banks producing the lowest inflation rates (Alesina & Summers, 1993; Franzese Jr., 1999). In this way, economic logic will be isolated from political interests.

## Structure

The EFCB Council will be composed of a representative from each State. The EFCB will also have an Executive Board composed of 3 members whose election will be carried out by the members of the EFC from among at least 7 candidates proposed by the EFG. The 3 most voted candidates will form the Executive Board, with the most voted acting as the EFCB President. The decisions will be taken by consensus or, if this is not reached, by a simple majority of the members of the Executive Board.

The members of the EFCB Council and the Executive Board will carry out the mandate for periods of 5 years, corresponding to the elected legislature, with the possibility of extending it for another 5 years, subject to the approval of the EFG and EFC.

## 8. Political Parties

Political parties, as highly developed organizations, must continue to be the main organs that connect federal institutions with voters. Unfortunately, political parties have become monolithic institutions, frequently dominated by personal or group interests undermining basic democratic principles in critical areas like internal management and in the selection of candidates for representation in the institutions; which is paradoxical since the political parties exist to defend democratic values in the institutions. As a result, citizens hold the perception that the party system does not work as expected. The eruption on the political scene of newly created parties winning elections, as has been the case with the parties of Emanuel Macron in France and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, is an indication of the dissatisfaction and weariness of citizens with the established political parties.

At present, the schism between politicians and citizens is so grave that a democracy without elections or politicians has been suggested, so that the government is formed by groups of ordinary citizens chosen through random selection processes (Landemore, 2020). However, this structure, which could be effective for States with a small population, would not work on the scale of the government of the Federation. Therefore, to achieve an effective and truly democratic Federation, it is necessary that the political parties comply democratically with the following rules and principles:

- 1) To establish internal structures adjusted to the basic principles of democratic functioning of the political parties of the States.
- 2) To lay down a democratic selection of competent and suitable candidates for office. Therefore, the use of prefixed lists should be prohibited.
- 3) To present programs with clear objectives to the elections of the institutions and how to achieve them.
- 4) To be financed by activists exclusively. Any other form of financing, whether by the Federation, the State Governments, or other sources, public or private, should be prohibited.
- 5) To be accountable to party members.

Political parties that violate these rules and principles, and conspire to un-

dermine or destroy democracy, should be disqualified from holding public office. In some states, such as Spain and Germany, intra-party democracy is already prescribed in their constitutions, despite some differences between them, and the courts can ban undemocratic parties.

It is important to point out that the existing prevalence of the States' benefit over the supranational interests in the EU's political parties (Bardi, 2002) must disappear and be replaced by a more balanced approach, avoiding conflicting loyalties between the two. At the same time, the development of a supranational European party system where the national formations will have to adjust to agree on common objectives must be encouraged, which would avoid polarization and favour a greater degree of cohesion between the States. Undoubtedly, this will require that the elections have to be oriented on the basis of political issues concerning the Federation. The task is, therefore, a fundamental reorientation of the functioning of political parties in the Federation.

## 9. Ombudsman Office

Due to the large population of the Federation and the great diversity of issues to be dealt with, the Ombudsman will not fall to a single person but to the Ombudsman Office (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a). The Ombudsman Office will control the wellbeing of people and the quality of public administration by exercising independent oversight of the executive branch and of any other federal institution.

The serving members of the Ombudsman Office will be elected by the HoC. Each political party or independent group with representation in this chamber will propose a candidate from civil society, based on professional achievements and personal qualities, and not necessarily belonging to a political party, to serve in the Ombudsman Office. In turn, the elected members of the Ombudsman Office will choose a Head of the Office within themselves by a single majority vote. The Head will hold the responsibility for the workflow and administrative tasks of the Office. The length of service for all members in the Ombudsman Office shall be that of the legislative term.

A rejection of the Ombudsman Office's advice by the executive branch of the Federation gives the Ombudsman Office the power to refer the matter to the Oversight Committee of the EFC.

## 10. Competencies of the European Federation

The federal system is based on a vertical separation of powers where the Federal Authority is competent in matters of common European Interest and all other powers are under the control of the Member States. The areas to be taken on by the Federation will be:

### 10.1. Foreign, Security and Defense Policy

The Franco-British Saint-Malo agreement in 1998 took steps to establish a Eu-

European Security and Defense policy, with more autonomy from the USA, to respond to international crises when NATO was not involved. However, despite the general opinion that the EU should have greater responsibility and independence in building its security, no progress has been made in this regard. The EU's security and defense policies remain in the hands of NATO, which limits its ability to develop policies in line with global European interests. On the other hand, the different European States often defend conflicting geopolitical interests, all of which have contributed to Europe being relegated to playing a secondary role in international politics. The Balkan war at the beginning of the 1990s and the recent war in Ukraine have once again demonstrated the need for Europe to adopt its own foreign and security policies in a world characterized by uncertainty and rivalry. For this, the Federation must aspire to:

- 1) Consolidate independently the common values and interests of peace, social equality, economic prosperity, and public health.
- 2) Defend and strengthen its security from internal and external threats, which would imply the creation of its own army with single command structures without undermining NATO or other existing defense structures.
- 3) Cooperate and ensure peace, security, and human rights at the international level in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and participate in the management of civil and military crises. The Federation must be against all military hegemonism from any power and will cooperate with the UN and other international organizations to achieve the security and stability of the planet. This implies a determined commitment to promoting international disarmament and arms control.
- 4) Promote international cooperation and aid to less developed countries, including promoting development, humanitarian aid and trade policies.
- 5) Develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law in all areas.

## 10.2. Economics and Fiscal Policy

The EU has gradually developed the necessary structures to achieve economic and monetary union. However, the latest economic crises, and the challenges in issues such as climate protection and digitization, have highlighted the need for greater coordination of economic and fiscal policies in Europe. Therefore, the Federation must continue strengthening and deepening the confluence of the economies and fiscal policies of the Member States with the following goals in mind:

- 1) To achieve the unity and sustainability of economic and fiscal policies, capable of adapting in a changing environment.
  - 2) Adopt rules that are simplified, transparent, and flexible, ensuring equity and solidarity among the Member States.
  - 3) Promote both private and public investment, favouring long-term growth.
- Adopting these principles will ensure prosperity in the Federation, will reduce risks, and play a key role in stabilizing the world economy.

### 10.3. Climate Change and Environmental Policies

Evidence clearly demonstrates that climate change is a grave crisis, and that the effects on people and nature are existential. The changes are primarily due to greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities. As a result, decarbonization policies have started to be implemented at a planetary level, which is revolutionizing energy technology and having a considerable impact on the economy, agriculture, transport, and public policies.

Since 1972, the EU has developed important environmental policies through various treaties, ranging from the fight against air and water pollution to the protection of natural resources and innovative models of production and consumption. More recently, significant progress has been made in the field of energy policy aimed at a low-carbon economy by 2050 (European Parliament, 2013), and in 2019, the European Commission launched the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) identifying a number of vital objectives. Further, in October 2021, the EP adopted the Aarhus Regulation to expand access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental affairs (Fact Sheets on the European Union, 2021).

The Federation has to adhere to and promote the commitments so far developed by the EU to environmental policies. In addition, emphasis must be placed on the following objectives:

- 1) To harmonize cooperation between the different political actors and interest groups at all levels of the Federation (local, regional, state, European).
- 2) To promote the role and leadership of the Federation in global environmental governance by promoting a common, coherent, and fair climate policy through a collective and coordinated effort.
- 3) To promote scientific research and innovation for the capture and sequestration of carbon and other pollutants.
- 4) To inform the public on global and local environmental conditions, including levels of air, water, and land pollution.
- 5) To improve existing environmental legislation in the EU to ensure that environmental control measures are complied with.

To carry out these aims, the Federation will appoint an Environment Minister within the EFG and equip itself with a European Federal Environment Agency (EFEA). The Agency can be the continuation of the European Environment Agency which, established in 1990 and headquartered in Copenhagen, coordinates efforts with other European agencies such as the European Earth Observation Program (Copernicus) to provide satellite observation data on land, sea, atmosphere and climate change, and the European Register of Pollutant Releases and Transfers to provide data on pollutants released to air, water, and land.

### 10.4. Healthcare and Public Health

Health systems play a fundamental social role and, therefore, the Federation must guarantee equity and quality, as well as the universality and the cohesion of



healthcare, reinforcing cooperation between the States. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how State policies can affect health outcomes and the importance of improving social infrastructures. Therefore, a priority of the Federation must be the strengthening of a universal non-profit public health system, together with clear and decisive barriers to privatize public services and the reversal of services previously privatized.

Health promotion also implies the design of public policies to improve the social determinants of health (housing, job creation, food security and a clean environment, education, professional development, etc.). It has been estimated that up to 80% of health outcomes are determined by social and environmental factors (Horwitz et al., 2020), and, therefore, the Federation will need to place special emphasis on monitoring and controlling the social determinants of health.

### **10.5. Education, Science and Innovation**

The educational strategy of the Federation must ensure lifelong learning for citizens regardless of age, gender or origin, strengthening the social and cultural ties of its people. In addition, the Federation must guarantee the quality of education while promoting equality and social cohesion, multilingualism, the mobility and exchanges of teachers and students, and also fostering international cooperation. Also, it is necessary to prioritize digital literacy policies enabling people to have greater interconnectivity and facilitating the creation of an inclusive and cohesive society.

The promotion of science and innovation must be a Federation priority of the highest order. The European Commission has been developing this important activity through various programs (FP7, Horizon 2020, etc.) in different fields. Therefore, the Federation must commit itself to continue and expand this type of programs, stimulating cooperation between States and the dissemination of knowledge.

### **10.6. Cooperation for the Development of People, Regulation of Emigration and Political Asylum**

The EU is committed to the UN 2030 Agenda to develop values-oriented and sustainable policies that include the fight against hunger and poverty, climate justice, biodiversity and socio-ecological policy. In addition to accepting these commitments, the Federation will have to increase as much as possible the aid for the development of people. Along these lines, the Federation, in collaboration with other countries, must draw up aid programs to combat poverty and build the necessary instruments to ensure their effectiveness.

## **11. Committee of Experts**

It is recognized that the incorporation of experts in the political process with knowledge, skills and experience superior to those of elected representatives in specific areas can help to improve political results and boost public confidence (Alexiadou & Gunaydin, 2019; Wratil & Pastorella, 2018). Indeed, a recent study

shows that citizens prefer independent experts rather than nationally elected representatives in the design of policies and stages of implementation on specialized topics (Bertsou, 2022). For this reason, the Committees of Experts will be created to assist in the development, adoption and implementation of policies in an objective and impartial manner. However, it will be the elected representatives the ones making the political decisions, thus avoiding the potential conflict between democratic legitimacy and technocracy.

## **12. Information and Dissemination Department (IDD)**

The fact that public opinion polls repeatedly show that less than 60% of European Union citizens have any knowledge of the EP, and less than 5% have an informed opinion of what members of the EP do, is worrying. Indeed, much of the problem with the negative public perception of the EU has been the lack of information that citizens receive from the institutions.

To enable citizens to participate effectively in federal affairs and feel co-owners of the political decisions, they must be informed in a precise, transparent and objective manner of the political alternatives in order to develop critical thinking. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the Federation has an IDD whose main objective will be to facilitate communication and dissemination of matters and procedures among the Federation's institutions and between the Federation and the citizens and the media, allowing a direct link between elected members, political parties and voters. Thus, the IDD is set to play a key role in promoting political debate and facilitating greater citizen participation.

## **13. Discussion and Conclusion**

Bearing in mind the fundamental principles that power and political legitimacy reside in the citizens and that democracy is an evolving and dynamic process, not limited to universal suffrage, I have proposed far-reaching political changes with the intention of enabling better governance of the peoples of Europe within the framework of an EF (Federal Alliance of European Federalists, 2022a). To this end, three main objectives have been pursued to achieve a robust and stable democratic system: 1) transfer of common powers from the States to the Federation, 2) strict separation of legislative, executive and legal powers, and 3) place the citizen at the centre of the political system, all of which are discussed in more detail below.

### **13.1. Transfer of Common Powers to the Federation**

It is clear that the creation of an EF will require the transfer of common competences from the Member States to the Federation in order to adopt robust and homogeneous policies that improve the lives of the citizens and have a stabilizing influence in the international arena. Currently, the EU has a weakened geopolitical influence and there is no doubt that the current economic imbalances and armed conflicts are influenced, at least in part, by the lack of greater and ef-

ficient coordination and integration of EU countries.

Despite the diversity of the European States, there are common interests and challenges, such as the growing economic and technological interdependence, fiscal policy, climate change, pandemics, health and education deficiencies and inequalities, internal and external security threats, or migratory movements, which cannot be adequately addressed in isolation and without a joint and coordinated action. The EF is a common project that has to be built independently of any political ideology and religious belief, allowing it to react quickly and dynamically to the common challenges without undermining the capacity of the Member States to deal with their internal matters. The argument that it might be wrong to move too quickly from the current EU based on treaties to the federalism of the States cannot be sustained and, therefore, the speed of establishing the Federation must depend exclusively on the will of the European citizens.

### 13.2. Strict Separation of Powers

The institutional procedures of the EU are dense and complex, have low levels of democratic accountability, and lack legitimacy. Thus, the Commission is an anti-democratic institution, the presidencies of the EU are also absent of legitimacy and the democratic credentials of the EP, which is the only institution elected by the citizens, are insufficient. In contrast, the structure of the Federation proposed here clearly separates the executive, legislative and judicial powers following the liberal ideal that was so influential in the writing of the Constitution of the United States.

In the proposed structures, the legislative branch, represented by the EFC, is divided into two chambers: the HoC and the HoS. The members of the first chamber are elected by citizens' suffrage in the Federation elections, and they represent the citizens. The members of the HoS, the second chamber, are also elected by citizens in State elections and, thereby, they represent the States. The composition of the HoC will have a greater number of members than the HoS and therefore, the first chamber will have more weight than the second, and the latter will act mainly as a system of checks and balances in the legislative processes and the control of EFG policies.

The executive power, represented by the EFG and constituted by a Praesidium with a President and two Vice-Presidents together with the Ministers, will be elected by universal suffrage in Federal elections. This Government structure avoids the classic presidentialism and the associated problems, since it is recognized that charismatic leaders diminish the power of the people, reduce or eliminate the opportunity to achieve consensus and compromise, and therefore, may not be as effective. In addition, loyalty to a single person and his narrative can affect the vision of reality and undermine institutions (Andrews-Lee, 2021).

To ensure the independence of the judiciary, the judges themselves will elect the members of the different Courts based on the moral probity, merits and technical ability of the candidates, with a ban on judicial appointments by political parties. The legislation of the Federation will be superior to the laws and

constitutions of the States and, importantly, Specialized Courts may be formed as needed to deal with matters in areas that require expert knowledge.

### 13.3. Citizens: Centre of the Political System

The legitimacy of the Federation must emanate from the citizens, so the focus of this proposal is the empowerment of people and their political participation. A direct participation of citizens must include the approval or rejection of policies through referendums or the promotion of new initiatives, without being limited to the simple vote of their representatives. Technological advances in communication will play an important role in facilitating the participation of the civil society, allowing greater connectivity between citizens and between them and the institutions. For this, the proposed IDD will play a vital role. It is expected that a greater implication of the population in political life will promote an inclusive identity and a humanistic feeling in the citizenship of the Federation, and that these values transcend European borders and serve to defend human rights and eliminate discrimination and protectionism in the world.

This proposal attaches great importance to the voting system by using political parties' open lists and giving the opportunity to citizens to become candidates for institutional positions, with elected members being accountable to the public. As a result, the political parties' monopoly of power is reduced with citizens taking political centre stage. Therefore, it is hoped that this proposal will serve for an in-depth debate between academics, politicians and citizens about a European political model that, underpinned by strong democratic institutions, leads to the prosperity and wellbeing of its citizens, and world stability.

### Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the 70+ members of the Citizens' Convention for a European Federation for their invaluable contribution to the drafting of the Constitution document, to Giuseppe Martinico for critical input and for revising the manuscript, and to Dylan J. Cox for his help with the editing of the manuscript.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- Alesina, A., & Summers, L. H. (1993). Central Bank Independence and Macroeconomic Performance: Some Comparative Evidence. *Journal of Money, Credit and Banking*, 25, 151-162. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2077833>
- Alexiadou, D., & Gunaydin, H. (2019). Commitment or Expertise? Technocratic Appointments as Political Responses to Economic Crises. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58, 845-865. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12338>
- Andrews-Lee, C. (2021). *The Emergence and Revival of Charismatic Movements; Argentine Peronism and Venezuelan Chavismo*. Cambridge University Press.

- <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108917353>
- Bardi, L. (2002). Parties and Party Systems in the European Union: National and Supranational Dimensions. In K. Luther, & F. Muller-Rommel (Eds.), *Political Parties in the New Europe* (pp. 293-321). Oxford University Press.
- Bertsou, E. (2022). Bring in the Experts? Citizen Preferences for Independent Experts in Political Decision-Making Processes. *European Journal of Political Research*, 61, 255-267. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12448>
- Bolleyer, N., & Reh, C. (2012). EU Legitimacy Revisited: The Normative Foundations of a Multi-Level Polity. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19, 472-490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2011.610688>
- Clark, N. (2014). Explaining Low Turnout in European Elections: The Role of Issue Salience and Institutional Perceptions in Elections to the European Parliament. *Journal of European Integration*, 36, 339-356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2013.841680>
- Dehousse, R. (2009). Can European Institutions Still Be Reformed? In J. Roy, & R. Domínguez (Eds.), *Lisbon Fado: The European Union under Reform* (pp. 91-102). Ediciones Universal.
- European Commission (2017). *White Paper on the Future of Europe—Reflections and Scenarios for the EU27 by 2025*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ba81f70e-2b10-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- European Commission (2019). *A European Green Deal: Striving to Be the First Climate-Neutral Continent*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)
- European Parliament (2013). *On the Energy Roadmap 2050, a Future with Energy*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-7-2013-0035\\_ES.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-7-2013-0035_ES.html)
- European Union (2019). *2019 European Election Results: European Parliament*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/turnout/>
- Fact Sheets on the European Union (2021). *Environment Policy: General Principles and Basic Framework*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/71/environment-policy-general-principles-and-basic-framework>
- Federal Alliance of European Federalists (2022a). *A Comprehensive Federal Constitution for Europe, Including an Explanatory Memorandum*. <https://www.faeu.eu/wp-content/uploads/Final-Constitution.pdf>
- Federal Alliance of European Federalists (2022b). <https://www.faeu.eu/>
- Franzese Jr., R. J. (1999). Partially Independent Central Banks, Political Responsive Governments, and Inflation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 43, 681-706. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2991831>
- Hix, S., Noury, A. G., & Roland, G. (2007). *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491955>
- Horwitz, L. I., Chang, C., Arcilla, H. N., & Knickman, J. R. (2020). Quantifying Health Systems' Investment in Social Determinants of Health, by Sector, 2017-2019. *Health Affairs (Millwood)*, 39, 192-1988. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.01246>
- Kröger, S., & Friedrich, D. (2013). Democratic Representation in the EU: Two Kinds of Subjectivity. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20, 171-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2013.746112>
- Landemore, H. (2020). *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691181998.001.0001>

Letta, E. (2022). *A European Confederation: A Common Political Platform for Peace*.

<https://progressivepost.eu/a-european-confederation/>

Lindberg, S. I. (2006). *Democracy and Elections in Africa*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/book.3263>

Marsh, M., & Mikhaylov, S. (2010). European Parliament Elections and EU Governance.

*Living Reviews in European Governance*, 5, 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.12942/lreg-2010-4>

Mehr Fortschritt Wagen (2021).

[https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag\\_2021-2025.pdf](https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf)

Raunio, T. (2005). Much Ado about Nothing? National Legislatures in the EU Constitutional Treaty. *European Integration Online Papers*, 9, 1-19.

Rittberger, B. (2005). *Building Europe's Parliament: Democratic Representation beyond the Nation State*. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/0199273421.001.0001>

Singh, S., Karakoç, E., & Blais, A. (2012). Differentiating Winners: How Elections Affect Satisfaction with Democracy. *Electoral Studies*, 31, 201-211.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2011.11.001>

Verhulst, J., & Nijeboer, A. (2007). *Direct Democracy: Facts and Arguments about the Introduction of Initiative and Referendum*. Democracy International.

Wrátil, C., & Pastorella, G. (2018). Dodging the Bullet: How Crises Trigger Technocrat-Led Governments. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57, 450-472.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12234>