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## **Conference on the Future of Europe: membership of plenary conference extended. Citizens' panels starting to work in September**

It has been decided that, at the sixth meeting of the Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the first in the Slovenian presidency of the EU Council, six members representing the regional authorities, six representing the local authorities and four more than the current eight, on behalf of social partners, will be added to the plenary conference. So, the plenary conference will have 449 members overall. Such "update aims to bring Europe beyond its capitals and to give more voice to citizens", Gašper Dovžan, Slovenian minister of European Affairs, one of the three co-presidents of the Board, explained. "We want as many of them as possible, wherever they are, to speak out their minds, so we can hear in what Europe they want to be living in, in 30 years' time". At the meeting, talks also focussed on the massive communication plan that the EU Parliament, the EU Council and the EU Commission have jointly drawn up to support the citizens' participation in the digital platform. "Today's discussions and adjustments of the rules suggest we are nearing the end of the planning stage of the Conference", commented Guy Verhofstadt, who co-chairs the Board on behalf of the EU Parliament. While the call for ideas and projects will continue on the platform in the next few weeks, the Board is looking ahead to next September, when "the citizens' panels will start working", Verhofstadt explained. "We are impatiently waiting for the next step in the process: the resolutions taken by the European citizens' panels are the truly innovative aspect of the Conference", added Dubravka Šuica, third co-president, on behalf of the EU Commission.

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