

Directorate-General for Communication
Director-General
Spokesman of the European Parliament

Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

Proposed schedule of events organised by the European Parliament in Brussels

DG COMM

Mandate and background

The organisation of an event to mark the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, on 25 March 2017, was debated by the European Parliament Conference of Presidents on 18 February 2017. On that occasion, the Conference mandated DG COMM to propose a concept for the event.

The lines of this mandate are as follows:

- organise a “Parliament of citizens” session to highlight the nature of the European Parliament – directly representing 500 million Europeans – and of the European project itself – a project run by and for the European peoples,
- this Parliament of citizens, symbolising the European Union’s geographic, generational and social diversity, must be invited to a dialogue on the current state of the EU and what it means for the current and future challenges that the Union will have to take up, and
- this dialogue bring together 751 citizens and the various political strands of the European Parliament (President and political group representatives).

To achieve maximum impact, DG COMM recommends linking the event’s political and symbolic dimensions. The “Parliament of citizens” must echo and resonate with the elected Parliament.

To mirror a possible formal session, **the “Parliament of citizens” must meet on the afternoon of 21 March** for a debate with the President and the Presidents of the political groups.

The tone of this event, given the current political background, will have to be **sober, serious and emotional** and not purely celebratory.

Schedule of events: "Different times, same values"

Possible mini plenary session (morning of 21 March)

This session, the organisation of which is a matter for Parliament's political authorities, could combine strong symbols and debates:

- musical introduction,
- speech by the President of Parliament on the lessons of 60 years of European history and what they mean for the future, and
- a round of political group leaders and debate in the plenary chamber.

"Parliament of citizens" (21 March, 15.00-17.00)

Duration: two hours

Composition: President of the European Parliament, representatives of groups, a moderator, and 751 citizens.

The "Parliament of citizens » must consist of a **structured dialogue between citizens/organised civil society and representatives of Parliament's political groups**. The four themes of the debate will centre on the economy and social affairs, the environment, security, and Europe's role in the world. It is important that each theme be introduced not by MEPs but by civil society: MEPs listen to civil society, not the reverse.

1. Speech by the President of the European Parliament (10-15')
2. Topic N°1 (25')
 - Introduction/speech by a member of organised civil society (2')
 - Response by two representatives of political groups (2x2')
 - Three questions/contributions by citizens (3x1')
 - Responses by political groups
 - New round of questions, etc.
3. Topics N°s 2, 3 and 4 (idem)
4. Conclusion by the President of the European Parliament

Selecting participants

The time constraint (four weeks for an event that normally would take several months to organise) makes it necessary to use proven financial and organisational procedures.

In view of this, after considering various possible options, DG COMM considers that the only way to ensure the success of the event and the invitation to 750 citizens, within the financial and legal frameworks, is as follows.

The citizens should come via three different routes:

1. Invitation by MEPs.

This entails the President inviting MEPs to propose, from within their annual quotas of visitors, up to five people. The deadline for inviting these citizens will unfortunately have to be very tight.

If places remain empty, then visitors' groups already invited by MEPs on that day will be invited to attend the event.

2. Invitation by members of organised civil society

This entails using contacts, already established by the European Parliament in the context of the European Youth Event, to mobilise young people and members of civil society who represent their organisations and provide a multi-faceted and structured view (not an individual one) of European society. This component will be essential to ensure that the debate is dynamic and conveys the lively energy of society and young people (symbol of the future).

3. Invitation by interested visitors' groups.

Interested (not sponsored) visitors groups will be in Parliament that day and will be offered an opportunity to take part in the event. This component will represent individual citizens who are interested and committed to the demographic life of the EU.

Communication plan

DG COMM will develop a complete communication plan around this event, including in particular:

- Web-streaming, to ensure transparency, accessibility, and participation for citizens who cannot be physically present,
- media relations, based on the relationship of trust long cultivated by the European Parliament with Brussels-based media,
- promotion via social media networks, to reach wider audiences for longer (Parliament has over two million fans on Facebook and several hundred thousand on Twitter, etc), and
- broadcasting via Parliament's information offices (and notably their digital channels).

Furthermore the anniversary of the Treaty of Rome will also be an opportunity, for the European Parliament, to initiate a debate on Europe's memory and challenges. The "My House of European History" online platform (opening end March) and the House of European History (opening in May) will join in this effort, which should continue over several months. Likewise, decorations will be placed on the raised passages around the Brussels esplanade and inside the LOW building in Strasbourg.

The success of this event nonetheless also depends on the approval of this document by the European Parliament's political authorities, as soon as possible.