



G20 Interfaith Forum 2020: European Online Regional Consultation

Preparatory Activities to the G20 Interfaith Forum

Short Concept Note

Latest update: 4 June 2020

1. Introduction

Recognizing the influence of religious identity on the ways in which people design, implement and respond to global policies, the G20 Interfaith Forum offers an annual platform where networks of religiously linked and faith-inspired actors engage with policy makers on global agendas, including those of the G20 host country. This year's G20 Interfaith Forum will be hosted by Saudi Arabia on 13-15 October 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is refocussing current global attention, demanding timely analysis and policy counsel. With the G20 deeply involved in global crisis management, the interfaith community, which is also actively involved in response efforts, will work with experts from different fields to address urgent issues and formulate pertinent recommendations on the themes of the G20 with COVID-19 as an overarching but integrated focus.

The G20 Interfaith Forum 2020: European Online Regional Consultation is one of several preparatory online regional consultations planned by the co-organizers of this year's event— the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (NCIRD). Each consultation will foster exchange among individuals and institutions from diverse disciplines and worldviews (including religious leaders, policy makers, civil society and academics), drawing upon existing mechanisms of cross-sector collaboration. Through such exchanges, the consultations will gather insights and articulate regionally-specific proposals, building on parallel and continuing analytic work on areas of special concern to interfaith bodies. The findings resulting from the discussions will form part of the preparatory process that will present priority recommendations to the G20 Member States before their November 2020 Summit in Saudi Arabia.

2. Objectives

The European Consultation is an integral part of the preparations for the G20 Interfaith Forum and is designed to:

1. Identify immediate, meaningful and evidence-based proposals and initiatives inspired by the COVID-19 crisis, and ways that religious voices can contribute to strengthened European responses in general and in particular through G20 processes. Review important patterns in responses of Europe-wide institutions in conjunction with religious representative bodies to the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Strengthen cross-sector dialogue in Europe by engaging stakeholders from diverse secular and religious worldviews and disciplines in the G20 process.

3. Relevance

Religious actors are well-placed to convey specific priority needs of religious communities, addressing the challenges and identifying opportunities for successful cross-sector collaboration linked to social, political and economic development. In Europe, sophisticated structures in place channel interactions between religious and interfaith networks on the one hand and institutions such as the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CoE) on the other. While the agenda of the European Consultation is influenced by the global agenda for the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum, the individual Ad hoc Working Groups with their focus topics will provide specific conclusions relevant to the European context.

4. Methodology and Approach

The agenda for the 2020 G20 meeting reflects the priorities that the host country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has articulated three themes thus:

1. **Empowering People** by unleashing opportunities for all, including in particular empowering women and youth;
2. **Safeguarding the Planet** by fostering collective efforts to protect our global commons;
3. **Shaping New Frontiers** by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share benefits of innovation, digitalization, and technological advancement.

As in previous years, the G20 Interfaith Forum draws on these themes and highlights specific topics to be considered by the regional consultations. The G20 Interfaith Forum 2020: European Online Regional Consultation recognizes that COVID-19 is now the overriding global concern. Therefore its impact and mitigation of the pandemic's effects (including social and economic repercussions) will be foregrounded in the discussion of every topic. The conversations will draw on the work of three Ad hoc Working Groups.

1. **Ad hoc Working Group 1: Empowering People; Fostering Gender Equality**
 - a) Education on religious and cultural diversity
 - b) Structural inequality and gender inequality

- c) Refugees, migrants, trafficking
- d) The role of religion in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation

2. Ad hoc Working Group 2: Safeguarding the Planet

- a) Practical partnerships to address climate change and its consequences
- b) Recycling and reducing use of plastics: faith in environmental change and policy
- c) Circular economy, Food Waste, Water

3. Ad hoc Working Group 3: Frontiers at the Intersection of Governance, Faith, and Technology

- a) The rule of law, rights and freedom of religion or belief: discord or harmony?
- b) Sharing benefits of innovation and technological advancement to counter hate speech
- c) Protection of sacred sites

5. Format of the Consultation

The European Consultation will **take place online**, in four different phases. Each phase will be tailored to facilitate exchange and deliberation, exploring topics and crystalizing findings of each working group. In Annex 2, a glossary clarifies respective roles in the consultation process.

Phase 1: Introduction

A first plenary event (1.5 hours) will introduce the G20 Interfaith Forum to consultation participants, bearing in mind that not all participants are familiar with G20 processes. Prominent representatives of European political and interfaith institutions will address the audience in this webinar, which will be limited to an invited audience but recorded so that a summary can be made more widely available.

Phase 2: Drafting Process

To produce a short but refined policy document which reflects precise recommendations in language relevant both to interfaith constituents and to the European Union, the Organizing Committee invites a Key Expert in each of the three Ad hoc Working Groups to take charge of the drafting process. These key experts will produce an initial draft policy statement in cooperation with a Core Group of five-to-eight experts from different disciplines. The Ad hoc Working Groups can also rely on a larger pool of a Resource Committee members, selected for their relevant experience. The drafting process will follow the outlined steps:

- A virtual meeting of the Core Group with the Key Expert is held to establish the scope and direction of the policy paper.
- The Key Expert completes a draft, incorporating the findings of the virtual meeting, and circulates it among the Core Group for feedback. Optionally, Core Group or Resource Committee members may be invited to provide contributions for further consolidation.
- Via a conference call or exchange of emails, feedback is given by the Core Group to the Key Expert and a fresh draft of the policy statement is produced which takes that feedback into

account. Ideally the final product is between one and two pages, plus supplementary and evidentiary materials.

Subject to the terms of the task, the Key Expert will have discretion to present the final draft version of the policy recommendations; representatives of the organizing institutions will accompany the drafting process in a facilitating capacity and review the final proposals.

Phase 3: Webinar

The webinar provides an opportunity for the Ad hoc Working Groups' results to be presented and garner feedback from their peers in order to ensure the consultation's conclusions are as inclusive, representative and relevant as possible. One webinar will be held for each ad hoc Working Group. Participants will include at a minimum the members of the Ad hoc Working Group concerned with that track and its topics.

The webinar (1.5 hours) will constitute presentations followed by moderated discussions. Speakers will be drawn from the Core Group itself, who may also recommend and recruit other candidates. The audience will be able to submit questions and comments by email and chat, and the moderator may address these points or allow interventions during the webinar. Emailed written feedback will also be welcomed afterwards.

Phase 4: Formulating policy recommendations

The Key Expert together with the Core Group will consider the feedback received in the webinar and the subsequent conversations and submit the final document to the Organizing Committee by the agreed date. The European policy recommendations, along with those of the other regions, will feed into the global policy recommendations generated by the G20 Interfaith Forum, which are to be presented to the G20 Leaders' Summit. The European policy recommendations will also be shared with urgent and relevant action items directed to key European stakeholders. All findings and recommendations will be summarized in a final report of the consultation process.

6. Participants and Technical Arrangements

The consultation is expected to gather participants from Europe.¹ The Organizing Committee seeks to include diverse profiles of participants to assure religious, geographical, educational, professional, generational, and gender diversity (among others). Special attention is paid to ensuring women's and youth participation. All meetings will take place online; the working language of the consultation is English. Neither interpretation nor translation services are provided.

7. Annex: Glossary of groups and structures

The following terms are further defined for clarity:

Ad hoc Working Group: consists of experts specializing or working in a field relevant to a specific “track” of the G20 Interfaith Forum process. It is comprised of a Key Expert and Core Group members as well as a Resource Committee. Each Ad hoc Working Group is supported by a facilitator and will collectively produce a set of policy recommendations pertaining to the track and its topics.

Key Expert: the lead drafter of policy recommendations in the Ad hoc Working Group; responsible for consulting and incorporating the inputs of the Core Group and Resource Committee into the policy document. The Key Expert is the leader among peers within the Core Group.

Core Group Members: 5-8 experts on the specific topics of each Ad hoc Working Group (sometimes on more than one topic).

Resource Committee: 15-30 people chosen for their diverse perspectives and expertise on the relevant track, but who cannot commit to work intensively at Core Group level. As the drafting process unfolds, the boundary between the Core Group and the Resource Committee will become more flexible.

G20i Organizing Committee: consists of representatives of the partner organizations responsible for the G20 Interfaith Forum globally. Members of the European G20i Organizing Committee will oversee the entire consultation process. The Organizing Committee selects the Ad hoc Working Group Members, oversees and consults with the Key Expert, and approves the final policy document of each Ad hoc Working Group.